Black Internationalism in Trial:
The Specter of Marcus Garvey, Legal Modernity, and the Foreclosed Futures of Justice

by

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Abstract

In America, the rise and fall of the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation has been regularly associated with an intransigent boom and bust narrative. Why is it, then, that the Bureau of Investigation was so intent on bringing the company's founder to trial if the black financial venture was inevitably bound to fail on its own? To make sense of this apparent rift, I return back to the 1923 trial in order to advance an understanding of two competing forms of political organization in the post-WWI opening. The Garvey trial marks a division in historical time. On the one side is the world-historical project of the New Negro movement for black liberation, marking that which was "new," not fully formed, but in the process of forming itself, making global relations appear again as undecided. I also examine the redoubling of efforts by the U.S. imperial state to protect its own power as the arbiter of political life. Utilizing archival documents as diverse as the Bureau of Investigation's records, the company's leaflets, and black literary texts, the findings here reveal how the Justice Department staged a public show trial intended to transform the utopian image of the New Negro, first displayed in Black Star Line advertisements, into an image of ruin.

My claim is not that the legal intervention was solely responsible for the financial insolvency of the black shipping venture. Rather, it marked a revisionist historical strategy to split apart the dream of black advancement from its material realization. Rescuing historical data, this archive of "futures past" is brought into relation with present-day discussions in decolonial studies around catastrophe, revolution, finance, and colonial memory. Each section presents a corresponding dialectical image to demonstrate how the historical present is haunted by the prospects for black self-determination that were deemed to be untenable by the protocols of US national law. Changes to black cultural production are examined alongside the limited evidence

presented in court. This repository of foreclosed futures does not represent the world that already is but realizes a view of the world that has been, and continues to be, actively rendered not to be. For when justice for all members of the human population fails to arrive, the future of the world fails to arrive, because the radical openness of the future ceases to be possible.

Preface

Variously described as an all-black shipping line, a doomed financial venture, a fraudulent investment scheme, and a failed revolutionary struggle for black futurity, the meteoric rise and tragic fall of the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation has become established as a foundational incident in US historical discourse. Some legal researchers have even labeled the guilty verdict handed down by the all-white jury, convicting the corporation's founder, Marcus Garvey, in the 1923 federal trial, as conclusive proof of black internationalism's moral bankruptcy and inevitable financial bust. This dissertation revisits, with renewed urgency, substantial new materials including now declassified Bureau of Investigation surveillance files on the Black Star Line, the company's advertisements, trial transcripts from the ensuing court case, reactions to the events and trial, and the cultural afterlife of these events transmitted in literary texts. This collection of archival materials provides the reference point necessary to expose the real and lasting effects of imperial law's racialization of historical time.

By tracking the redemptive figure of the New Negro, a new utopian construction of transnational black selfhood for a modern global era, first displayed in Black Star Line advertisements as a sign of prosperity and geopolitical renewal, this dissertation aims to create a better sense of how a black cultural sign was strategically repurposed by the Justice Department to remake legal fictions about blackness suitable for the Jim Crow era. Rather than preserving that sign as it had originally animated the hopes and frustrations of black populations seeking a better future, the transnational figure of the New Negro was instead used as a mirror in which America could see itself, marking that which was outside itself to refer back to itself. Revealingly, the new sign of black migrancy gave US government authorities something to refer to, maximizing the indexical power of the bureaucratic state machine. A racialized threat of

otherness was foregrounded by the Bureau of Investigation, cited and recited in internal surveillance records, and later concretely indexed in Justice Department case records. This concretization of black diasporic renewal as a threat to US sovereignty occurred during the post-WWI historical moment when imperial nationalism's hold over the global terrain risked being displaced by a rapidly expanding modern world-system of capitalist finance, one that was extraordinarily abstract, rapacious and speculative, globalized in nature.

The development of new discursive processes, such as drafting surveillance reports on the Black Star Line and filing them in the Bureau of Investigation's expanding system of archival records, allowed the US Justice Department to systematically create its own secondhand history of the New Negro movement. What a critical reading of these discursive practices brings to light is the inextricable interrelation between the law as a corrective force to right the past and the historical urgency to enact this force of law at a time when the Pan-African movement's revolutionary promise for the racial uplift of some "400,000,000 Negroes of the world" threatened to weaken the grip of US political power on black subjects. To excavate the complicated interworkings of this public show trial is thus not merely to come to terms with Marcus Garvey as an isolated individual, a political leader whose heroic status was unmasked, miraculously exposed, by the state as a charlatan preying on a vulnerable black population. Rather, it is to encounter an imperial logic key to retelling the history of the world using a devastating boom and bust narrative, one that lowered future expectations of what was collectively possible.

Not only does the failed promise for the New Negro movement to break free from colonial modernity mark a historical impasse, it also establishes the terms for a remarkable cultural development. The relief of escaping catastrophe was a privilege unknown to black

writers producing works in the wake of the all-white jury verdict. Black cultural producers returned back to explore the Black Star Line, and they responded to its failed historical legacies, charting its impossible futures. Reading government documents surrounding the Garvey trial alongside cultural texts including Jean Toomer's *Cane,* Chester Himes' *Cotton Comes to Harlem,* Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem,* as well as poems by Langston Hughes and Phyllis Wheatley, this dissertation traces the vexed dynamics of writing about a failed global revolution already passed—yet one that remains hauntingly incomplete. Literary texts produced by black writers tested the shape of the rule of law, building a counter-archive to legal modernity, in all the conflicted senses of that phrase. These writers questioned the meanings of the secondhand history created by the US justice system and engaged seriously with the intertemporal limitations put on Pan-African efforts for global reconciliation. Consequently, although cultural references to the black international tend to carry different valences in each literary text, a common insistence on revisiting the 1923 trial marks a persistent cultural ambition to return back to, reengage with, and occasionally even an attempt to remake legal fictions about blackness.

The findings here suggest that the profound significance of the trial was not so much limited to the events of the legal decision, ending with the conviction and imprisonment of the Pan-African leader, as this fundamental shift in the historical map shattered an alternative conception of anticipated futures. To apprehend the lasting repercussions of the Garvey trial, this dissertation contends, is to encounter a limit on the historical imagination key to the unfolding of modern time. Mobilizing Walter Benjamin's conception of the gathering power of the "wish image" allows for an explanation of how the figure of the New Negro, once expressed as a dream symbol, a mass utopian vision of global renewal, one that linked the newness of modern blackness to radical geographies of global affiliation, became transformed and fossilized by the

US imperial state's legal apparatus into an image of "ruin" with the suddenness of a disappearing dream.

Rather than stress the sense of moral victory over those who were defeated, and celebrate the victors of the twentieth century, this study of the legal trial and its historical after-effects examines the fraught legacies of a system of modern jurisprudence that was paradoxically forced to both limit and degrade its own conception of justice in order to outlast the threat of a mass utopian project. When justice for all members of the human population fails to arrive, the future of the world fails to arrive, because the radical openness of the future ceases to be possible. In turn, the promise of an alternative lifeworld conjured up by the New Negro movement was foreclosed. Its time structure was shattered.

In order to reopen the case, and begin to challenge the accepted version of history, a new method is required. The dockets and folios compiled here take the shape of pre-trial materials to be used in the event that a new occasion for a fair and equitable public retrial should ever emerge—be it in a legal court or through some other extralegal process. Its richest findings are at the edge of a new action, a new justice proceeding, one that, to date, has yet to arrive. As a prospective rather than prescriptive enterprise, these preparatory materials for a retrial unearth certain repressions surrounding the historical origins of the Black Star Line and its cultural representations, and thus lay bare the role of racism in both the modern concept of national law and the modern financialized world. As this wreckage of the past accumulates, it also necessitates a qualification: for such a retrial to be successful, we must begin to challenge the territorialist assumptions that link calls for human freedom to national projects, and, in turn, expand our historical imaginations beyond the persistent cultural transmission of lost promises. The structure of that new time consciousness is as exigent as it is untimely. Only by forcing open

the possibility for a new beginning, a historical rupture in the timeline of legal modernity, will we ever begin to liberate our critical practices to match the radical undecidability of a future moment of justice to come.

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For me, this study of the Black Star Line reads like a constellation map of guiding insights navigated, distances crossed, limits traversed, conversations followed, archives visited, sources retrieved, friendships made, alliances forged, advice bestowed, and debts incurred. I am lucky to have so many fine individuals to acknowledge.

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I don't quite know how to thank Jill. Her wit, intelligence, and care have seen this project through from beginning to end. Her influence, immeasurably diffusive, appears on every page. This is dedicated to her. Kibbles Münster supervised.

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Abbreviations

ABB: African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption
BSL: Black Star Line Steamship Corporation
DJ-FBI: Bureau of Investigation Files (declassified and held by the FBI)
MGP: *Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers*, edited by Robert Hill
MGT: *The Trial of Marcus Garvey: Complete Transcript of the Mail Fraud Trial*
NW: *Negro World*
PO: *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, edited by Amy Jacques Garvey
SC-NYPL: Schomburg Center, New York Public Library
SDNY: Southern District Court of New York
UNIA: Universal Negro Improvement Association

Opening Statement

"'Read what was never written' runs a line in Hofmannsthal. The reader one should think of here is the true historian."

— Walter Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History'"

The trial jury's statement of indictment in the federal case of the United States v. Marcus Garvey contains a historical discrepancy, a gap in the record of evidence, a missing piece of information that never arrived in court. Transcripts of the legal proceedings held at the Southern District Court of New York attest to the guilty verdict as it was handed down. At the 1923 trial, a letter envelope was introduced into evidence as US Government exhibit 112.[1] According to the court dockets, this single mailing envelope, on which the prosecution's case for conviction eventually hung, left little doubt that correspondence for a new all-black shipping venture had been sent through the federal mails. Machine inked on the top right corner, next to the triple waved lines of the postage stamp cancel, stood the unique ring postmark clearly identifying the "College Station" branch office in New York City as the point of acceptance into the US mail system. Legibly imprinted on the reverse side of this same envelope was the shipping company's own stamp, listing its name and return address in full:

Black Star Line, Inc.

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[1] This piece of evidence, noted in the jury verdict for case number C-37-31, is also made reference to in the appellant "Writ of Error" filed in the District Court for the Southern District of New York to review the conviction of Marcus Garvey for the misuse of the mails. SDNY lists this case as consolidated for trial as C33-688. The original statement of indictment has been cleared for public access and can be accessed online through the National Archives and Records Administration (https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7388868). It has also been reprinted verbatim in the massive thirteen volume set: *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983-2014). The Marcus Garvey papers will hereon be abbreviated as *MGP*.

56 West 135th Street

New York City (MGP 5: 318)

And yet, despite this seemingly clear substantiation of proof, the federal case against Marcus Garvey can hardly be said to have transpired in an uncomplicated way.

The legal process undertaken to deliver a definitive ruling on the misuse of the mails was significantly hampered by the inability of the US Government to provide definitive material evidence proving that the company had sent deceitful promotional materials with the intent to solicit Black Star Line stock. In fact, the alleged fraudulent contents inside that mailing envelope, according to the court report, had vanished without a trace long before the trial date. Nor had the lost Black Star Line correspondence ever been successfully recovered by government authorities at any point during the lead-up investigation conducted in advance of the legal proceedings. This elision marks the genesis of a structural antagonism, a secret conflict, a jarring dissonance, in the historical record. Rather than treat this contradiction as a sign of improper record keeping, or state ambivalence, my aim here is rather to explore how the gap in evidence points to a fundamental separation between the seductive orientation toward public justice in America—a public desire to neutralize the influential power that the foreign-born leader held over the black masses—and the contestable nature of evidentiary proof actually presented at the 1923 Garvey trial.

What accounts for this fissure in the documentary life of the republic? How could it be that the slow wheels of American justice had come to churn so far behind the astonishing speed of new developments in economic and political thought after the Great War? Evidently, neither the prosecution's investigative team, nor J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Investigation, were equipped to keep pace with the mass public dissemination of documents that accompanied the

meteoric rise of black internationalist activity in America, leaving only a shred of material proof to base a federal indictment on.

The gap in the court transcript thus marks a disturbance in which the linear progression of national time was thrown out of whack. The seemingly instantaneous rise of the Black Star line constitutes the latent cause for which the trial documents produced retroactively in textual form mark the symptom, and our task is to explicate this untimeliness. But, how, in what ways, can we account for this anachronism without canceling the link to the discordant past it comes to designate? The missing letter's absence, its failure to appear in court alongside the other investigatory documents presented by the District Attorney, points to a temporal slippage, a spectral moment in national archive, for which the procedures of American justice were evidently set up to navigate and fix.

There is an immediate paradox: the urgent expectation for justice to preside over the repressed substrate of a previous historical situation always arrives too late to undo the past. The exigent call for justice to come in the near future registers a temporal disturbance. In its aims, that ethical rescue is inherently twofold: a reparative injunction that moves in two temporal directions at once. For the call for justice has been produced by the public desire to redeem the future of political time by returning back to the past to force a corrective. The renewing power of juridical decision, tasked with the responsibility to intervene, if and when necessary, manifests as a concern to reconfigure the two ends of the temporal horizon, past and future, in order for the history of injustice to stop repeating itself in every subsequent moment to follow. But to conceive of justice as both repair and renewal is also to risk the possibility of righting a historical wrong in order to remake the past by way of the limited vantage point of present experience. The discrepancy between opposing possibilities—between remapping the past and covering up the

perceived wrongs of the past—therefore suggests that a logic of revision, of justice as a corrective force, is constantly competing with the wish to preserve the past as accurately as possible in the legal record.

To better discern how the call for justice holds the possibility to force a corrective in two very different directions, either to restore political time or to restart political time anew, we must return this antinomy back into view, make the federal trial visible before its conclusion, as open, provisional, not completed, and promising divergent visions of the future yet to arrive. The objective here is not to free ourselves from historical cause and effect, but rather to relocate the myriad of prior orientations toward the future in the post-WWI opening before that history played itself out. Such a method of rediscovery requires an understanding of legal history as more than simply the recording of trial proceedings and a final verdict. Like a resetting of clocks, the decision is always introduced belatedly, and it marks the beginning of a new movement into the future, moving national time forward as a new era has started, while also suspending the previous chronological malfunction of the historical timepiece. In this slippage, an anachronism is produced. The legal decision demurs as it amends. It interrupts and forces a new start.

This dissertation is a history of that recalibration of clocks, the missing piece of evidence it relied on, the effects of a legal decision based on a letter that never arrived in court, the silences it wrote into the histories of empire and legal modernity, the alternative possibilities for planetary reconciliation of the black diaspora it foreclosed, and the way in which those lapsed possibilities now appear in the continuum of time as historical impossibilities. The ripple effect caused by the legal decision in the Black Star Line trial produced a kind of modification that relegated the project of black internationalism—the call for justice for some *400,000,000 Negroes around the world*—to the stagnant backwaters of political history. Marcus Garvey may

have built the largest mass movement among black people that the world had ever seen, and compelled unprecedented numbers of black Americans to enter a new international phase in their struggles for freedom, cultural identity, and self-determination. Yet, through the prism of national law, that mass mobilization of black diasporic subjects reveals itself as a ruined possibility, even an impossibility, a global project outside national law's parochial self-interest. In the face of this spectacle, imperial time both wavers and reinforces itself.

"In prohibiting revolution," Jacques Derrida writes, the law opposes radical historical openness, and thus prohibits the very undecidability and unpredictability which defines not only justice, but "all revolution, the very idea of revolution" ("Force of Law" 236). Note the divergence between justice as open-ended and the law as regulative here. Closing down possibilities for justice to act as a force free from regulative constraints, the law invokes "an ascending series of formal tautologies centered on issues of jurisprudence" (236). A legal decision involves strict calculation. The law's principled resistance to change, its desire to invoke its own power to control the readability of the past, and above all to guarantee its stable authority as arbiter as justice to come, "marks the place where the very distinction between legality and legitimacy" (236) no longer validates a set of commitments to justice as an incalculable, free decision—that is, a judgement unable to be predetermined or prescribed in advance.[2] Imperial law prioritizes a set of self-legislating claims used to authorize its own

[2] Borrowing a phrase from Stanley Fish, Derrida notes: "Each exercise of justice can only be just if it is a 'fresh judgement'" (251). But this is not the full account for Derrida. Further complicating matters, the legal decision must "preserve the law" in principle in order to maintain its binding commitment to fair judgement; yet simultaneously, and impossibly, the power of the law must "destroy" or "suspend" itself "enough to have [pour devoir] to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, reinvent it at least in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle" (251). This requirement for each judgement to differ from those which preceded it marks the aporia of the law as a *conditional* force that upholds the *unconditionality* of justice. If such a procedure carries its own somewhat over-obvious ironies, then it is a further irony that the imperial state claims to uphold the ideal of justice but fails to deliver justice, because it places itself—its own sovereign endurance, its absolute permanence—as above the law's jurisdiction, thus conditioning the test or ordeal of a fair decision with a "programmable application or the continuous unfolding of a calculable process" (252).

transcendent power to control the historical record. As a result of this suspension of justice by the law, which writes down the authoritative account of past events, history itself becomes encoded with its own limitations. Memory of a previously undecided moment becomes displaced by the act of decision and the previous impasse fades out of view.

Indeed, the events in the rise of the Black Star Line are easy enough to narrate, though their significance to the mass cultural project of black social utopia is difficult to gloss in the wake of the legal verdict. Company founder Marcus Mosiah Garvey was born on 17 August 1887 in the former slave trade port town of Saint Ann's Bay, Jamaica.[3] Garvey quit school at age 14 to apprentice as a printer. He worked for various employers, including a brief stint as a casual worker for the Government Printing Office. After serving as a union representative during a printer's strike,[4] young Garvey's growing desire to get involved in political organizing would cause him to venture far beyond Jamaica's national borders. From 1910 to 1912, he traveled extensively in Central America, editing newspapers in Costa Rica and Panama, before moving to London, where he attended law and philosophy classes at Birkbeck College. He also visited Paris, Madrid, among other European cities.

Garvey wrote to Booker T. Washington after hearing that the American founder of the Tuskegee Institute was expected to travel to London in 1915.[5] Washington wrote back indicating that his European travel plans had been cancelled. "Matters are in such an unsettled condition" due to the outbreak of the Great War, Washington noted, "that I fear I could not accomplish what

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[3] A more extensive chronology can be found in the preface to each respective volume of the *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (MGP). For a more thorough discussion of Garvey's formative years in Jamaica, see Amy Jacques Garvey's essay, "The Early Years of Marcus Garvey," published in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* (Vintage Books, 1974, pp. 29-37).

[4] Labor historian Richard Hart notes that "the Vice-President of the compositor's [union] chapter was the young Marcus Garvey, but he is also known to have been employed as a pressman" (177). For more on the strike and its significance to the post-emancipation labor movement in the Caribbean, see Hart 173-96.

[5] See MGP, vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

I hoped to do" (MGP 1: 71). In lieu, the African American educator kindly solicited an invitation for the young Jamaican to visit the black technical institute in Alabama. On 6 March 1916, Garvey boarded the *S.S. Tallac* for America. He intended to begin a lecture tour and raise funds to establish a black agricultural school in Jamaica modeled after Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Sadly, though, the ship docked in the port of New York just after Washington died.[6]

Garvey's aspirations soon began to adapt themselves to match the turbulent rise of the New Negro movement. He toured America and gave lectures that addressed the situation of black discontent. Harlem, with its high concentration of black residents, was quickly becoming the capital of the black world, and Garvey set up a New York chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. On August 17, 1918, the first issue of the UNIA weekly newspaper was printed in New York. The *Negro World* had a global circulation and it featured a front-page editorial by Garvey, news articles covering current events, reports on the status of blacks in America and abroad, as well as updates on UNIA enterprises. Above all, the newspaper discussed issues surrounding the forms that black representation should take in order for a new political personhood—the New Negro—to emerge to the forefront of the new modern era.

Less than a year later, in April 1919, Garvey announced a plan to start an all-black shipping company. From its conception this was to be a transnational enterprise. "The proposed steamship line," he explained, "will operate between American ports and those of Africa, the West Indies, Central and South America" (MGP 1: 411). The steamship venture was meant to organize the otherwise inchoate and fragmented political diaspora strewn across the world.

[6] A brief statement confirming Marcus Garvey's arrival in New York on 24 March 1916 was handwritten by shipmaster Louis Hansen into the ledger of the *S.S. Tallac*. For a reproduction of this document, see MGP, vol. 1, p. 186.

"Growing up as I did on my own island," Marcus Garvey observed, "I saw that the merchant marines of all countries were in the hands of white men" (Article in the *Pittsburg Courier* 53). It was in keeping with this need to break the economic grip of white commercial power on global trade routes that the Black Star Line was founded in 1919:

> Having travelled extensively throughout the world and seriously studying the economical, commercial, and industrial needs of our people, I found out that the quickest and easiest way to reach them was by steamship communication. So immediately after I succeeded in forming the Universal Negro Improvement Association in America, I launched the idea of floating ships under the direction of Negroes. (53)

Adapting its name from the profitable White Star Line, an oceanic steamship company which carried passengers across the Atlantic, the Black Star Line was incorporated in Delaware on 23 June 1919. The corporation was capitalized at a maximum of $500,000 divided into shares of five dollars each. According to Robert Hill, the "Black Star Line stock was sold at UNIA meetings and conventions, by travelling agents, by mailed circulars, and through circular advertisements" (MGP 1: 363). By October of that same year, enough finances had been raised to purchase a shipping vessel.

The first boat of the line *S.S. Yarmouth* launched in the New York harbor. Recounting the event with his typical grandiose verbal flair, Garvey noted that "Hundreds of thousands of people gathered at the foot of 135th street pier at North River to see the boat sailed under the black captain. People also gathered in thousands on the Riverside drive to witness the wonderful spectacle" (*Life and Lessons* 55). It seems unlikely, if not downright logistically impossible, that hundreds of thousands of Garveyite spectators could ever physically converge onto the cramped shoreline at the foot of the West Harlem Pier. Nonetheless, although crowd numbers may have

been exaggerated, it was still a major public relations triumph. The event was photographed and widely circulated in UNIA promotional materials. It marked a new dawn for black commerce. Photographs like the one below captured proof that New Negroes could benefit by pooling their financial resources together with the objective of developing themselves into an industrial and commercial people.

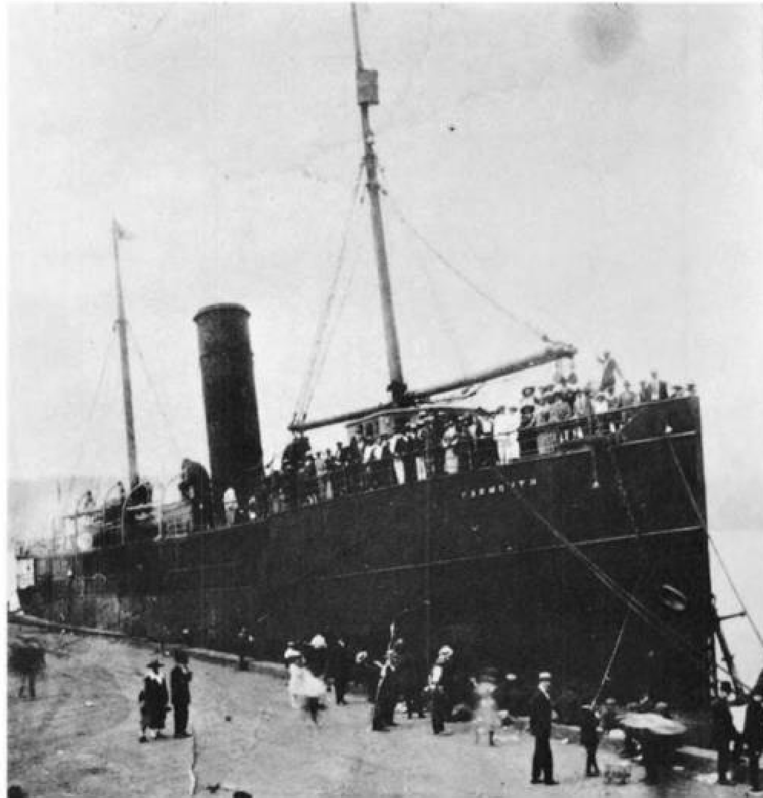

Fig. 1. *Inspection of the S.S. Yarmouth by UNIA members*.
Courtesy of Edward D. Smith-Green family. Photographer unknown. (in MGP: 2: 326)

The new dream of black finance had manifested in a tangible object made of steel and rivets, with five watertight storage compartments for the transport of goods along with ample passenger decks, proving to black investors around the world that the mass utopian aspirations of the New Negro movement represented more than idle hopes. The financial backing of black investors had transformed an abstract scheme premised on venture capital into a ship that now

physically materialized on the shorelines of port cities around the world populated by black people. The company's expanding trade routes now made travel and commercial exchange possible between a growing list of stops in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, and Central America. Symbolically, too, this ship stood for the real possibilities for the exchange of goods and services now attainable under the political banner of black collective advancement. The BSL's symbolic ship formed an integral part in the awakening of the black migratory unconscious. However, from the outset the enterprise was also in financial disarray. "Garvey's ships never made it to Africa," Michelle Stephens explains, "and that failure has blinded us from focusing more intently on the success of the journeys his fleet did undertake in mobilizing the black world's sense of itself as a global racial community" (112). But how, precisely, did that mass utopian dream image associated with the rise of the New Negro movement so quickly become transformed into an image of ruin? What did the law, specifically, have to do with this transformation of utopian hopes into a failed moment in the history of post-WWI modernity?

Now declassified documents indicate that direct government scrutiny of Marcus Garvey markedly intensified once plans for the Black Star Line were set in motion. Furthermore, the US government began working in conjunction with the British Empire to bring direct legal pressure to bear on the company's founder. Together the two global powers highlighted the dangers of this new world-historical project for race reconciliation. A report by the British Cabinet Office on 10 November 1919 indicated that "the Negro agitation is beginning to assume international proportions" (MGP 2: 153). In another confidential report dated 10 December 1919, the British Military Intelligence service verified that crucial information on "negro agitation" was secretly being shared between the American and British agencies: "We are informed that Garvey got his boat through under peculiar opposition. The District Attorney used all his power to have the sale

cancelled, but Harriss, Magill & Co., S.S. Agents, would not listen to any proposition made" (MGP 2: 166). The boat's seller, "Mr. Magill," was known to British Authorities as an "Irish sympathizer," and given that he was "selling boats to Irish syndicates and to negroes" suggested a coordinated effort to take revenge against imperialism by undermining the authority of the ruling world powers after the petitions of both minority groups were not granted a fair hearing at the 1919 Peace Conference.[7] In that same report, British Military Intelligence noted that the all-black shipping company, in particular, was expected to grow rapidly: "A special meeting of the stockholders of the Black Star Line stockholders is announced to be held on Dec. 22nd […] for the purpose of voting on a proposition to increase its capital stock from $500,000 to $10,000,000" (MGP 2: 166). The failure of the U.S. District Attorney to stop the sale of the oceanliner to black ownership placed mounting pressure on the Justice Department to take legal action against the company's founder before the next increase in capital gains.[8] Also unbeknownst to Garvey, British authorities were confidentially assisting the US Government by supplying citizenship documents pertinent to "determining whether this man is subject to the immigration laws" (MGP 1: 486).[9] Despite these unprecedent efforts made by federal offices on

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[7] A year before his assassination, Irish republican Michael Collins wrote an article for the 7 December 1921 issue of the *Guardian* arguing for Ireland's entry into the new international order; it ran with a headline that triumphantly proclaimed, "Ireland as the Pivot of the League of Nations." There is also ample evidence to suggest that minority groups repeatedly stood together in solidarity against the colonial powers that had quickly begun to set the agenda for the new League of Nations. On 1 August 1920, Marcus Garvey stood in front of a large crowd of "25,000 Negro delegates assembled in Madison Square Garden in mass convention" and read a telegram from the President of the Irish Republic that voiced solidarity in the fight against imperial rule (MGP 1: lxxiv). For a good historical account of the events at the Paris Peace Conference whereby the imperial powers systematically excluded Irish and African Americans delegates from the list of minorities recognized by the League of Nations, see Carole Fink's "The Paris Peace Conference and the Question of Minority Rights" (*Peace & Change*, no. 21, vol. 3, July 1996, pp. 273-88).
[8] The trial transcript clarifies that a month after this dire warning was drafted by the British Military Intelligence service the capital stock did in fact increase by twentyfold. The first indictment reads: "That at all times from June 27, 1919 to the time of the filing of this indictment, the Black Star Line, Inc. was a corporation organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of Delaware with an office in the City of New York and Borough of Manhattan; that the capital stock of said corporation at the beginning was $500,000 divided into 100,000 shares of the par value of $5 each; and that on December 22, 1919, the capital stock of said corporation was increased to $10,000,000 divided into 2,000,000 shares of the par value of five dollars each" (MGT 6-7).
[9] Theodor Kornweibel observes: "The Justice Department's efforts to deport Garvey was formally begun on September 15, 1919, when Hoover inquired if the Bureau of Immigration was proceeding against Garvey. Assistant

both sides of the Atlantic to coordinate their vast imperial recourses to deport Marcus Garvey back to the island of Jamaica as an illegal alien, there was not enough evidence to establish deportation proceedings. By early 1920, the background intelligence strategy would shift its approach and henceforth settle on identifying illegal activities conducted by the transatlantic shipping line's founder in the illicit selling of company stock by using the federal mails to disseminate promotional materials.

The trial, however, was repeatedly delayed by difficulties in preparing the case. A special report, drafted some 16 months before the trial began, clearly indicated that that the Bureau of Investigation was committed to pursuing a case against "MARCUS GARVEY" for "VIOLATION SEC. 215—USING MAILS IN FURTHERANCE OF SCHEME TO DEFRAUD" (MGP 4: 853). Yet despite the fact that undercover Bureau agents had secretly infiltrated the ranks of the Black Star Line, and regularly attended stockholder meetings where "the subject of discussion was the negro's future in politics," there was limited material evidence on which to base a federal conviction (MGP 4: 855). Although company and its president had been put under near constant surveillance, the Justice Department lacked the smoking gun they needed for a rushed conviction. Legal arguments would be needed to fill in the evidentiary gaps in order to convince a federal trial jury and, ultimately, to secure Garvey's conviction.

When the mail fraud trial finally commenced on 21 May 1923, the opening statement by prosecutor Maxwell Mattuck tried to separate black political ambitions from the all-black shipping company. This legal strategy served several purposes. First, by reducing the Black Star

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General Anthony J. Caminetti replied that his information had no firsthand information on him" (104). This news was hardly comforting, as the Jamaican-born leader whom Hoover deemed a "negro agitator" and an "undesirable alien" was gaining influence over black American households. In response, the Bureau began contacting the British Government about his citizenship status. The fact that the "British were by now communicating their fears of Garveyism directly to Washington" further indicated that the matter of Marcus Garvey was to be treated with the upmost urgency by the ruling global powers (105).

Line to a for-profit venture, the Justice Department was attempting to hold political discontent at bay as the trial proceeded in the SDNY courtroom—a courtroom not far away from black Harlem, where citizens of African descent lived in economic poverty and endured the generational effects of political disenfranchisement. The government attempted to drive a wedge between such issues of economics and politics because otherwise these concerns might be understood by the jury to be mutually coextensive. This prosecutorial strategy to separate business from politics was an attempt to ensure that Garvey did not have the opportunity to publicly exonerate himself at the public show trial staged by the Justice Department as a worthy leader for blacks seeking both economic and political advancement. Mattuck argued that Garvey had used the mails to circulate fraudulent advertisements for the sale of stock featuring an image of the *S.S. Phyllis Wheatley*—a ship not yet owned by the corporation. As for Garvey's defense, Judith Stein explains that his innocence "rested on an alternative view of BSL history, rooted in politics of racial advancement. He upheld the virtues of black enterprise and argued that its losses resulted from internal incompetence" rather than from elaborate attempts to defraud investors (196). The construction of a new cultural legacy that had yet to fully play itself out helped to soften the abruptness of financial losses that by the time of the trial had put the shipping company into debt. As a start-up venture, one modeled on US war bonds,[10] any financial losses, Garvey affirmed, were only temporary, and such minor setbacks and delays in purchasing shipping vessels were to be expected as the message of advancement encountered

[10] The Black Star Line was not alone in the issuing of stocks and bonds. Many political organizations began to fund their own causes this way after witnessing the effectiveness of the war bond program, which enabled the US treasury to pay for the war effort with funds effectively borrowed from its own citizens. "Even the leftist *Messenger*," notes Jonathan Eburne, "whose editors would become some of Garvey's most adamant critics, themselves launched a funding drive by urging supporters to take out 'a anti-discriminatory bond, an anti-peonage bond, an anti-Jim Crow bond, a bond-of-brotherhood bond, the only real bond worth while, [and] a race liberty bond'" (Eburne 227).

stiff political opposition from the ruling imperial powers who wished to see any autonomous black financial enterprise fail.

The dissonance between these two renditions of the history of the steamship corporation marks a significant divergence in the arguments on either side presented to the jury. It also marks a temporal dissonance between two divergent views of how the expected future of political time could be represented. The US Justice Department wished to spark intense debate about the need to immediately restrict the influence and reach of the black financial scheme, thereby limiting any future losses for black US citizens, and above all to restrict provocations of racial unrest in Jim Crow America. The District Attorney's strategic emphasis on immediacy differed from the future-oriented chronology necessary for the black financial venture to ever succeed. As Jonathan Eburne notes, "Garvey set in motion a speculative operation that functioned along a hypothetical timeline of perpetual prospect, a present characterized of infinite project but also by perpetually deferred completion" (230). Because the success of the shipping line was predicated on "keeping open the possibility of a miraculous reversal of its misfortunes somewhere down the line," the black corporation, part shipping operation, part public relations campaign for black internationalism's fight for racial uplift for Negro peoples around the world, was in both cases forced to operate on the timeline of financial and political speculation (230). The speculative, future-oriented project required to restore black political sovereignty through the selling of stock was itself conditional on world-historical change. Only by changing the material conditions of the world-system could black finance operate to empower the dispossessed population. It was a catch-22. As Stein puts it, "Garvey's politics were hostage to the economic troubles of the BSL. The more difficult it was to operate as a political business, the more frantically he turned to the political arena to gain capital and explain the line's problems" (94). By all conceivable realistic

standards of the day, the BSL was an impossible venture. Notwithstanding, Garvey's symbolic ships had evidently done the impossible by demonstrably changing the demeanor and political expectations of black persons around the world.[11] Company ships reached beyond their initial economic losses as a tool of black diasporic unification.

In an editorial dated 3 December 1919, published in the *Negro World*, Garvey observed:

> Five years ago the Negro Universal was sleeping upon his bale of cotton in the South of America; he was steeped in mud in the banana fields of the West Indies and Central America; seeing no possible way of extracting himself from the environments; he smarted under the lash of the new taskmaster in Africa; but alas! today he is the new man who has proclaimed to the world that the despised and rejected shall rise, not only from serfdom and slavery, but to rule and to teach man how to live. The New Negro has risen [. . .] and he has now determined within himself to hold fast to the material glories of life and play his part as a man. There is no going back today in the progress of mankind. (MGP 2: 159)

The New Negro awakening that Garvey speaks of here—whereby the "dejected and rejected shall rise" and set forth on a new historical trajectory—involves the production a new form of social understanding, an alternate historiography, a different way for black subjects to view their stake in public life beyond a limited inheritance of capital and agency. The very possibility of speculating on a future yet to arrive was predicated on a discourse devoted, above all, to inventing a new image of what was collectively possible. Investing in the tenets of financial

[11] One West Indian reporter assigned to cover the arrival of the *S.S. Yarmouth* at the Jamaican port would note the black crowd's reaction in the 12 December 1919 issue of *Daily Gleaner* in symbolic terms: "They look upon this ship as a symbol of the spirit of enterprise and self-help, and they draw a deduction that what has been done in this particular instance can also be accomplished in other and equally useful directions" (quoted in Bandele 155).

speculation thus began to alter the primary historical mechanisms by which black subjects had come to view themselves in relation a new future horizon yet to play out.

The image of a new social personality—the New Negro—was a suppositional identity, one based on the speculative investments in black finance capital. This future-oriented persona was created by inventing a new category of reference in public life. Now that black folks have begun to embrace this new epistemological framework, Garvey argued, "there is no going back." To which he added: "Verily the Negro has arisen," and indeed this financial revolution has already begun to unfold. Black assets had been pooled together and, in turn,

> The Black Star Line Steamship Corporation of 56 West 135th street, New York, is leading the way for the success of the race in commerce and industry. This corporation desires the assistance of every black man, woman and child. The hope of this corporation is to have ships of the Negro float on ever sea . . . to make it a powerful agency for good. You may buy your shares to day and help to found the empire of greatness for the race. Buy 5, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 100, or 200 (MGP 2: 160-1).[12]

This kind of transformation of paper money into the holding of future assets, stock funds, and credit networks to be repaid at a later date, Ian Baucom argues in his discussion of modern finance, was accompanied and enabled by the birth of a new modern character. The modern subject of finance was "an investment vehicle in whose fortunes the commercial society . . . taught itself to speculate" (71) . More than this, too, although the New Negro character was

[12] Printed in *NW*, 6 December 1919. This editorial was marked "Exhibit #6" as part of the file of exhibits attached to a letter of 11 May 1921 from J. Edgar Hoover to William L. Hurley. In his letter, Hoover is forced to admit a number of embarrassing details which revealed significant gaps in the trail of evidence surrounding the Bureau's investigation into the Black Star Line: "You will note from the inclosure [sic], that exhibits No. 1, 2, 3, and 5 are missing" (MGP 3: 398). Hoover admitted that the Bureau was "unable to secure affidavits" because the individuals named "Davidson and Jeffreys," whom the Bureau had somehow identified as key witnesses, "could not be located and Louis Cantor would not agree to make an affidavit" (398). Despite these evidentiary lapses, Hoover remained intent on bringing the case to trial.

inevitably tied to the program of finance capital, making an investment in the future meant that black personhood was no longer readable nor historically confined by the longstanding codes of racial disenfranchisement. Investment in the promise of living in terms of what might happen gave rise to a speculative revolution in black thought. Like the very invention of the global market system of financial speculation itself, the invention of this new discourse of the New Negro was based on imaginative and speculative desire. It sought to remake fictions about blackness.

The fact that District Attorney attempted to sever this new black global imaginary from the daily business operations of the Black Star Line, and thereby to sever the link between present and future time, functioned as a counterstrategy to restrict the spread of the speculative revolution of black futurity by recoding the mass utopian dream of the New Negro movement as a broken promise. The point at issue here is that the Justice Department sought to delink the black venture capital invested in the transnational shipping line from the black political project of race advancement. Furthermore, what this legal strategy demonstrates is that not only was there more than one competing version of the future at stake, but the very promise of justice as a notional force to be delivered was itself a function of competing understandings of what a just future of the world after the Great War might look like.

To begin to assess these varied expectations is to stake out a precarious border zone, an excess of possible futures, once imagined, which cannot be fully contained by any one judgement. For when the law sutures the missing letter to its destination any commitment to the open future of justice becomes impossible. To move beyond this historical foreclosure, and reopen possibilities for an alternate future to be delivered, we must return back to the moment when nautical maps of prospective trade routes were unfurled, keep in mind the prospect of

uniting the economic and political prospects of a scattered African diaspora, and bring back into view the intense speculation swirling around the Black Star Line as a utopian ideal which promised to regain for the black diaspora a measure of consequential and transformative vitality. The aim of such a project of recuperation, to be clear, is not simply to demonstrate whether or not Marcus Garvey himself, as one individual,[13] was found guilty in US Federal Court of any wrongdoing under national law. The problem with modern law was that it could so quickly and instrumentally be adapted, interpreted, translated in such a way as to silence the calls for justice being voiced by the New Negro movement. That his fate was to be determined by an all-white jury further problematized the delivery of justice.

"[T]he laws of our civilization," Marcus Garvey remarked, "have but one interpretation for the poor or innocent, and for those of wealth or power, there are many interpretations, hence the poor are generally convicted on one meaning, while the rich are freed on the many interpretations" (PO 333). Revealingly, the law can be used to ascribe meaning, imperial hierarchies of credibility, onto past events. Garvey clarifies:

> In modern jurisprudence, controlled as it is, by politics, wealth, and power, the 'marked' person falls prey to the hunter who sets the 'legal' trap that never fails to 'catch' the individual when badly wanted. It is only a question of time when every individual 'sought' or 'wanted' is caught by the legal entanglements prepared for the purpose or rendering harmless and permanently silent those not desired or who may constitute themselves a stumbling block in the way of privileged and hereditary power. (PO 332)

[13] The movement has come to occupy a rather peculiar position in African American history. Its leader is often talked about rather than the political motivations of the UNIA stock investors themselves that made the mass cultural movement possible. Several biographies have recounted Marcus Garvey's life and work. The most widely regarded among them include Edmund David Cronon's foundational text *Black Moses: The Life and Times of Marcus Garvey* (1955); followed by Tony Martin's *Marcus Garvey, Hero: A First Biography* (1983); and Colin Grant's recent reappraisal *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (2008).

The prospect of convicting Marcus Garvey for fraudulent use of the mails therefore followed the structure of a synecdoche: the public downfall of one black individual would stand in symbolically for the collapse of the worldwide effort of black internationalism to "emancipate Millions of Negros all over the world from political and industrial thralldom" (333).

Beyond the question of whether Garvey was innocent or guilty we are thus confronted with a more formidable conceptual challenge. Any prospect of returning back to rethink the unrealized project of global redemption requires nothing less than to confront the costs of its own lateness. The radical speculative investment in black sovereignty was inextricably tied to the purchase of Black Star Line company stock that was supposed to rise in value. And yet, the failure of this connection to be forged in such a way as to remake global history anew introduces a revolutionary negativity that resets the schedule and tempo of its arrival back into a past moment. To venture back, and explore this slippage in time, is to find a past world wherein the black internationalist faction was much larger than any one individual. The movement for racial uplift involved a set of mass utopian motivations much bigger than its party leader, just as the geopolitical realities which necessitated the mobilization of the black mass could not be reduced to the locale of one stock character or political persona. The revolutionary task was immense. Indeed, the past but unrealized project of the Black Star Line sought to install black internationalism as a viable alternative to the American nationalist consciousness. Achievable or not, this public movement, which resonated in the call for global justice for 4,000,000,000 Pan-Africans around the world,[14] had gained momentum by bringing together desires for the black

[14] While this population statistic was hardly verifiable at the time, the mass public black diaspora was certainly fond of Garvey using it in his speeches. It features, for instance, in "The Principles of The Universal Negro Improvement Association." A speech, delivered in New York on November 25, 1922, explains the objectives in marshalling the black members of the African diaspora as follows: "The question often asked is what does it require to redeem a race and free a country? If it takes man power, if it takes scientific intelligence, if it takes education of any kind, or if it takes blood, then the 400,000,000 Negroes of the world have it" (MGP 5: 148).

working poor to look beyond existing imperial borders and toward a common desire for black self-determination that originated outside of and beyond the nation. Consequently, and much more extensively, we must begin to ascertain how the mass public desire for racial justice entered into a competition with a range of very different understandings; in accordance, the power of the law could be deployed to rewrite the relation between past and present. Even the trial itself, when made visible from a variety of competing public ambitions and viewpoints, accumulates not as just one time. Competing views of the future were at stake.

A new body of critical research in decolonial studies has begun to challenge traditional historical conceptions of events and consequences, causes and effects, pasts and futures. David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* draws on a vocabulary of "futures past," first theorized by Reinhart Koselleck, to mark a fundamental separation between the horizon of "expectation" and the present actuality of "experience" that eventually takes the place of future hopes (42). Scott presses this distinction to demonstrate that what we call modern "historical time . . . grows out of a disjuncture and the (consequent) tension between these temporal dimensions, past and future" (42). "[I]t cannot be assumed that there is a durable relation between presents, pasts and futures," and in turn the process of reading "any historical text may be thought of as embodying the reconstruction not only of a given past, but also the interrogation of a given present, and the projection of expectations about a hoped-for-future" (44). Reading between these points to expose failed futures, broken horizons, lost expectations, and utopian promises left behind in the past may induce an alteration in how we think about the linearity of colonial modernity, thus challenging the notion of history as progress on which its claims to political legitimacy and sense of historical inevitability depend.

Gary Wilder's *Future Time* also recovers future promises of black redemption that fade from view as unrealized expectations. But where Scott's earlier project focused on excavating past futures rendered political obsolete by modern orthodoxies that extend across space and time to cancel out an array of alternative political structures in their wake, Wilder's inquiry into the politics of time identifies unsuccessful projects of decolonization, which, however fraught with questions of historical failure, still have a lot to say about how ossified relationships between agency and structure, between actors and their conditions, could ever be realistically challenged. Black planetary thinkers must therefore be read in postcolonial discourse not so much but what they accomplished alone but rather by how their geopolitical think projects innovate new possibilities for alternative lifeworlds. This push to create new democratic federations of decolonized peoples beyond national lines involves an attempt for black thinkers "to awaken the self-surpassing potentialities they saw sedimented within" the deteriorating imperial state system (7). The objective in rescuing these past but unrealized projects, for Wilder, becomes less about verifying the inevitability of historical failure than in exploring how returning back in time allows us to refashion existing perceptions about the permanency of modern nation-states, and ultimately by moving across epochs we can begin to destabilize and expose the temporal limits of the current global system.

My own project mobilizes Koselleck's conceptualization of *futures past* in order to evaluate how imperial law, specifically, coordinates a counter-revolutionary process of rendering historically unavailable its own self-surpassing potentialities. By discarding alternative futures, thereby narrowing possibilities for justice to national durability, the US Justice Department restricted new configurations of historical agency and economic freedom, ruling out emancipatory projects which challenged the oppressive limits placed on black citizenship,

financial self-management, and freedom in Jim Crow America. Locating the complex interworkings of these legal processes that canceled out emancipatory possibilities for political renewal thus extends the scholarly effort to rethink ossified political concepts that have reduced world-historical time to national time.

When history shrinks, revolutionary possibilities for change become reduced. This sliding backwards of diasporic dreams into a missed global revolution registers a kind of historical variance between the originary possibility for radical change of the global order and the attenuation or collapse of that same possibility. Given this change in historical positions, what, exactly, might it mean to undergo an act of justice if the limits of political thinking made an innovative collection of future outcomes for human freedom no longer feasible as before? What does it mean to wait for justice? What does it mean to live and to act in the ruins of time after the promise of justice has passed into a lapsed memory? To ask such questions is not quite the same thing as to say that the traumatic past is entirely off-limits and therefore wholly unrepresentable.[15] Nor is it to say that the Garvey movement must be recovered as wholly

[15] For a searing critique of the politics of "unrepresentability" as this collapse of distinctions has so commonly been put to use in the suggestion that traumatic events disrupt memory, and thereby create a structural wound, "hole or deficit in representation" see Ruth Leys's appraisal of the "antimimetic" conception of traumatic memory (250). The assumption that the past is irremediable gained widespread adherence in the 1990s with the proliferation of historical discourse on trauma, largely in spite of a logical contradiction. Ruth Leys remarks that "the antimimetic paradigm relies on a mimetic logic, rather peculiarly, to articulate, all-too-coherently, its claim of "unspeakablility"—that there can be some original "*literal* registration of the traumatic event" that once existed, but later, "dissociated from normal processes of cognition, [and] cannot be known or represented but returns belatedly" in other forms of psychic disturbance (266). The wider implication is that trauma studies largely remains an institutional formation fraught with inner contradictions that have been repressed by its own proponents to protect a dubiously foreshortened understanding of testimony. Karyn Ball's introduction to the special issue of *Cultural Critique* on "Trauma and Its Cultural After Effects" goes on to demonstrate the requirement to consider how traumatic memory is coded by political contexts as they intersect. Yet this is not to invalidate the past. Quite the contrary, the implication is that historical memory itself must be understood as practiced alongside cultural residues of the past that pervade and shape the mass political sphere. To refuse to confront the "very historical and institutional dimensions" (41) that have allowed "unrepresentability" to flourish in the age of neoliberalism is to mask "the empirical ground" of collective action, to collapse the past into an incessant "slippage of signifiers" that may, at least on its own, accomplish little more than to foster a form of bourgeois liberal "[i]dentity politics based on the premise that the personal is political" (7-8). The implication is that critical judgement, which configures the possibility for historical justice, must be understood as always political to the extent that it remains embedded within the realm of competing representations of the past.

legitimate in such a way as to ignore many of its own internal flaws which contributed, in part, to its own decline before the trial even began. The problem, rather, is that attending to the unfinished business of a failed movement in revolutionary time also points to temporal disorientation. Indeed, it is almost as if matters of justice are themselves haunted by the very insufficiency of the law's internal logic—for any act of justice is, impossibly, two things at once, both a *doing* and an *undoing*.[16]

Not only does the failed promise for the New Negro movement to break free from colonial modernity mark a historical impasse, it also establishes the cultural terms for remarkable new development in African American literature. Telling the unfinished story of the emergence of the New Negro persona substitutes for a new beginning, because this narrative configuration does not enact the promise of revolutionary emergence and see the story through to the point of completion. Emphasis on the newness of the New Negro, in other words, marks the lapsed function of communicative power for writers who live and write in the historical aftermath of a failed revolution. This form of cultural production relentlessly inscribes itself from the historical vantage point of a broken horizon. Black eschatology reaches a limit. Consequently, the New Negro movement's strategic investment in the newness of black consciousness features in African American literature as not so much outside legal modernity as it remains unable to break free, failing to force a new start, and thus seemingly inferior to a particularly resilient set of modern conditions in which cultural differences are inscribed based on access to control the outcomes of justice.

[16] My thinking here is informed by Hannah Arendt's famous notion of forgiveness as both a *doing* and an *undoing*—an impossible activity that serves to undo a harmful deed committed by an individual in the past. This is the impossibility at the heart of forgiving. It stands to reason that any possibility of doing justice relies on a similar historical paradox: the activity of doing justice is premised on the impossibility of ever being able to return back in time to undo a wrongful act, that is, to erase this past deed, as required completely remake the future anew.

In order to better assess the cultural dynamics of this kind of world-historical shift from mass dreamworld to mass catastrophe, Susan Buck-Morss argues that “the whole idea of what constitutes cultural practice may need to be rethought” (276). To think beyond positivist notions which tend to reinforce prevailing conditions, she argues, is to acknowledge the fact that “oppositional cultural practices, if they are to flourish at all, must work within present structures. But, at the same time, they can and do create new cartographies, the contours of which may have little to do with the geopolitical boundaries” that we now take as given (277). The idea of overcoming the ongoing physical limits of modern civilization by calling up the Black Star Line, as a romantic dreamworld, a solace built on new industrial trade routes, constitutes a mass utopian gesture toward the secret potentiality of black industrialization. However, the production of a wish image, emergent in an imagined space of potential, does not directly correspond to the ongoing means of material production. Its fabrication involves a jump, an enthralled fascination with an alternative possibility. Hence the superiority of the wish image of the New Negro as a utopian sign of black redemption over the existing conditions of racial relations. By rising above these physical limits, the sensory image gives life to the imagination, to the ability to place one’s faith in the ecstasy of black futurity. This is, Susan Buck-Morss explains, a demonstration of “[t]he potency of the masses,” and when “channeled into the cosmocratic body creates an endless productivity of more and more” (182). Yet while the power of the mass advertisement demonstrates that “There is no limit to this escalation” (182), because “the collective is enhanced in symbolic form” (181), the problematic gap between the wish image and its failed realization involves a kind of frenzied desire, a paradoxical thrill, that never quite reaches its mark in struggles over the material technologies of production for black agents after the Great War.

“There are other worlds,” Buck-Morss adds, “and they too have dreams” (277). The point of making these kinds of distinctions is to avoid haphazardly reducing the scope, scale, and size of large-scale historical efforts to form a new mass public—namely, a black international diaspora—back into entrenched historical assumptions that reduce emancipation to capitalist development or to elevate it or legitimate it by placing it alongside other attempts to set up an imperial nation-state. The effort requires both locating and looking beyond these knowable boundaries, and, in doing so, activating a potential to multiply the space for new imaginings that may eventually bring forth an understanding of an alternative horizon. It becomes possible, having abandoned all reserves, to assign a new value to human relations:

> In ways that diffuse their power but also have the potential to multiply it, the masses are being transformed into a variety of publics—including a virtual global humanity, a potential ‘whole world’ that watches, listens, and speaks, capable of evaluating critically both the culture of others and their own.” (277)

Revolutionary transformation is thus less a matter of employing a kind of methodological prejudice in order to leap out of the present into a prescribed future than in recognizing within the uneven global present a combined future that is already in formation but is difficult to imagine or discern. As the old dreamwords dissipate, and other power structures extend to take their place, a dialectical view is required to better account for the lost futures—the myriad of lost alternative hopes for revolution toward more just world—that haunt the present with the ghostliness of a displaced dream.

Black literary texts return back to explore the Black Star Line, and they respond to its failed historical legacies. With enthralled fascination these cultural texts point to promises and expectations for black renewal tied to the formation of a new transcontinental polity—configured

by aspirations for nonstate social formations and new forms of economic relations—that were dropped before their eventual realization. These possible futures which opened outwards, toward new radical geographies, were set in conflict with an imperial state apparatus predicated on coordinating the *time of justice* and thereby circumscribing or even downgrading the array of alternative forms of justice on the horizon. To become engaged in a historical task of unsettling rather than reaffirming the present time of justice in legal modernity is to demonstrate precisely how the missing traces of undecided moments—like the missing letter in the Garvey trial itself—remain caught, trapped, lodged, in every subsequent decision of justice to come after it. A repository of failed revolutions does not represent the modern world that already is but realizes a view of the world that has been, and continues to be, actively rendered not to be

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> "Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes you're behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into its breaks and look around. . . . And so I play the invisible music of my isolation."
>
> — Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Folio 1.1 – Frontispiece

In Jean Toomer's *Cane*, an inspired black woman draws a portrait on the wall of the local courthouse. While the image of the black Madonna she inscribes could be viewed by local law enforcement an act of defacement of public property, the charcoal sketch may also signal a symbolic attempt to redeem the very notion of what counts as an inclusive public space, legal terrain, and juridical territory for people of color living in the segregated Jim Crow South.

This new frontispiece to adorn the house of justice appears in the *Cane* text more than once. On the first occasion, we learn that the image of the black redeemer figure was brazenly scrawled onto the law building's external surface by an unknown folk artist who had a vision. Knowledge of this miraculous scene, however, materializes retrospectively and second-hand. Its narrative position remains skewed—several steps removed from the original event. The unknown black woman's representational gesture, her motivations in sketching the portrait, remain inaccessible to our narrator. When the black messianic image is evoked in the "Fern" episode of Toomer's *Cane*, we come to learn that the narrator of this section has recently made a journey from the North down to the South. After following the path of the Great Migration in reverse, the

Northerner arrives to find all things in the Georgia dusk under constant flux:

> Dusk, suggesting the almost imperceptible procession of giant trees, settled with a purple haze about the cane. I felt strange, as I always do in Georgia, particularly at dusk. I felt things unseen to men were tangibly immediate. It would not have surprised me had I had a vision. People have them in Georgia more often than you would suppose. A black woman once saw the mother of Christ and drew her in charcoal on the courthouse wall . . . When one is in the soil of one's ancestors, most anything can come to one . . . (*Toomer's ellipses* 21)

As the sun descends, and landscape dims, the narrator's thoughts undergo a decent into the dark recesses of the South's gothic past. We learn that an unidentified female artist did not so much create or invent the image of the black Madonna; rather, the charcoal figure on the courthouse wall stands as her attempt to accurately represent and give permanence to the fleeting vision of the black mother of Christ whose spontaneous appearance inspired an act of cultural mediation. Yet while the narrator acknowledges that visions like these tend to happen in the Deep South—visions of excess, he admits, which might soon manifest in the Georgia dusk and cause a jolt before his own eyes—these realizations somehow feel out of touch with his rational sensibilities as a visitor from the more industrialized North.

Here it becomes apparent that the narrative his observations give expression to lies situated only adjacent to something that he cannot directly provide witness to. He strains to fathom the layered historical complexity of black salvation in the Jim Crow South. The narrator remains absorbed in his own thoughts, noting the discomfort he feels about his visitor status in Georgia. The closest he comes to breaking free from the binary logic of Northern sophistication and Southern primitivism emerges in an admission: "I was from the North and suspected of

being prejudiced and stuck up" (19). Yet even here his self-absorption stops short of undertaking the kind of self-awareness required to carefully reflect on the cultural assumptions which suffuse his Northern viewpoint. He repeatedly describes the "Deep South" in terms that render it primitive: as basic, underdeveloped, with a "tangibly immediate" connection to the landscape, and likewise marked by an archaic spiritual awareness of the "soil of one's ancestors." This allusion to bygone history, if evocative, also lays bare a missed opportunity. Instead of exploring the possibilities for a light-skinned man of mixed race to return back and discover his lost roots, we find a tacit slippage of black history into historical relativism. Any nostalgia for a racial awakening has degraded and lapsed into obscurity. In place of a new beginning, the Black Belt is figured as that backwards region where inscrutable mysticism rules over history, reason, and technological progress such that "most anything can come to one" in the dark. The narrative break marks a lost potential at the level of communicative power.

So, what are we doing when we read his narration? Where do such divisive moments in Toomer's *Cane* deliberately position us as readers? Do we assume the position of a Northerner who demonstrates an inability to grasp the legal and historical contexts in which the call for black redemption remains embedded? Can we trust the narrative focalization of a protagonist whose observations have been founded on a cultural assumption? In reading his account, do we partake in reproducing the trope of Southern backwardness? This cluster of questions draws into focus the stakes and repercussions to emerge when the Black Belt is relegated to a region of developmental infancy.

Note the errant time structure. History is divided into two phases: that which can be incorporated into the time structure of modernity, synchronized with its rational worldview of history as developmental stages of progress, and that which stands outside the possibility for

incorporation. Here we find a distinctive mode of historical emplotment.[17] Insofar as the narrative journey back to the South invokes historical reflection about a return back to ancestral origins, any positive reconciliation of historical forces is undermined by the narrator's scepticism toward black cultural expression in the region.

In 1940, the year of Marcus Garvey's death, Claude McKay reflected back on the zenith of the New Negro arts movement some two decades prior. After referencing the artistic contributions made during the height of black cultural exploration, McKay directly connects the image of the black Madonna to Garveyite iconography:

> Garvey assembled an exhibition of Negro accomplishment in all the skilled crafts and artwork produced by exhibitors from all the Americas and Africa, which were revelations to Harlem of what the Negro people were capable of achieving.
>
> The vivid, albeit crude, paintings of the Black Christ and the black Virgin of the African Orthodox Church were startling omens of the Negro Renaissance movement of the nineteen twenties, which whipped up the appetite of literary and artistic expression in America for a season. The flowering of Harlem's creative life came in the Garvey era. The anthology THE NEW NEGRO, which oriented the debut of the Renaissance writers,

[17] Hayden White's productive coinage of this term is nearly synonymous with his challenge for historians to confront and lay bare the ways in which the discipline has tended to prioritize the scientific collection of historical facts over interrogations of how these facts are arranged in the act of historical writing. "Emplotment," he explains, "is the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind" (8). Hence, historical texts contain more than the sum of events collected; they are structured to fit a coherent story. In a footnote he clarifies that "[p]recisely because the historian is not (or claims not to be) telling the story 'for its own sake,' he [or she] is inclined to emplot his [or her] stories in the most conventional forms—as fairy tale or detective story on the one hand, as Romance, Comedy, Tragedy, or Satire on the other" (8n.6). Rather than continue to elide this truth which haunts the act of historical writing, White's 1973 book *Metahistory* goes on to explore the tension between how events happen over time and how the retroactive process of chronicling events is determined by a set of ideological assumptions, historical blind spots, political opinions, and so on, all which factor into the mode of storytelling employed to explain the forces influencing the nature of causality.

> was printed in 1925. If Marcus Garvey did not originate the phrase, New Negro, he at least made it popular. (*Harlem: Negro Metropolis* 177)

Historical evidence points in favor of McKay's claim about the popularity of the black Virgin Mary as a mass cultural icon significant to the New Negro movement. Symbols of black divinity featured in UNIA promotional materials, and they were further occasioned by the celebratory event of cultural borrowing described by Robert Hill: "at the August 1924 UNIA convention, Bishop George Alexander McGuire, founder of the African Orthodox Church, enunciated the doctrine of a Black God and unveiled the Black Madonna in Liberty Hall ("Marcus Garvey: Black Moses" 118). Clearly the movement's preoccupation with reinventing the icons of black cultural expression during this period regularly crisscrossed between religious iconography related to spiritual salvation and representations of race pride related to the uplift and redemption of the Negro peoples of the world. Yet what is so striking about reading *Cane* as a historical chronicle of the New Negro movement is that any hints toward the awakening black peasantry—such as those bold claims about a return to Pan-African roots brought forth by black civilization builders like Marcus Garvey—seem to have already lapsed into slow decline by the time the light-skinned narrator ventures into the Black Belt. What Toomer presents instead are the traces of a former project left behind, emphasizing the haunted ruins of lapsed cultural potential which Southern blacks in the region continue to inhabit.

The journey narrative recounted in the "Fern" episode also resonates biographically, signaling the difficulties associated with Toomer's own return back to the South, where he confronted his ancestral origins. In 1921, Toomer traveled south to Sparta, Georgia. He took temporary work as the interim principal of the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute. Many black cultural historians have emphasized this biographical detail, noting that Toomer made his

formative journey to rural Georgia before he wrote *Cane.* In *The New Negro* anthology (1925), mentioned above by McKay, volume editor Alain Locke observes that this landscape serves as a wellspring of artistic inspiration. Black cultural authenticity finds its place in the "vital originality of substance," and this "racial substance" of blackness, which Locke concretely links to the tenebrous Southern dirt, was now undergoing new forms of creative exploration. A new generation of "young Negro writers dig deep in the racy peasant undersoil" of black American experience. To supply evidence, Locke quotes directly from a new writer on the scene. Jean Toomer's travel reflections are printed in a block quotation in the anthology:

> Georgia opened me. And it may well be said that I received my initial impulse to an individual art from my experience there. For no other section of the country has so stirred me. There one finds soil, soil in the sense that the Russians know it,—the soil every art and literature that is to live must be imbedded in. (51)

Fertile dark soil gave birth to Toomer's *Cane*. Yet we must be careful not to oversimplify or misconstrue Toomer's travels as a wholly transformative racial pilgrimage back to his black roots.

David Levering Lewis clarifies that Toomer only lived for a few months in "the Georgian hinterland, peopled by peasants and rednecks." During this relatively brief stay, he mingled with both black and white lower-class inhabitants of Sparta. Consequently, the author of *Cane* had little choice but to confront his mixed and "tangled ancestry" (65). Such observations about interracial tensions in the South are not meant to suggest that Toomer did not additionally experience intense brushes with the black population of rural Georgia. He must have witnessed firsthand the performance of lofty Negro spirituals sung at church, as well as the lower-class economic hardships of sharecropper life on small plots of land with rapidly declining stock

values and cotton harvest yields—all of which feature in the pages of *Cane*. Notwithstanding, Lewis points out that any brief encounters with the complicated realities of life in "Sparta did not convert him into an Afro-American" whole cloth (65). The truth is that for a man of mixed race this was hardly an uncomplicated homecoming back to Black Belt Eden. Due to the enduring legacy of racial antagonisms since slavery, "it would be mistakenly argued that Toomer had written [*Cane*] as a black man on furlough from a torturous racial ambiguity" (64). Given the volatility of the rural Georgian landscape torn apart by the legacy of slavery, Sparta was no brown sanctuary.

Barbara Foley observes that critical responses to *Cane* have failed to appropriately situate and decode the "the sly manner in which Toomer slips in many of his historical allusions" to the barriers to freedom, social justice, and economic prosperity erected in the wake of slavery ("Jean Toomer's Sparta" 767). The effort to assess the situatedness of *Cane* in political debates during the 1920s is problematized by the fact that "Toomer as a writer was reluctant to undertake frontal critique of Sparta's white and black ruling elites" (767). Still, the political subtext of *Cane* must not be overlooked or dehistoricized. Advancing an alternative critical model, Foley reads Toomer's subversive narrative engagement "with the actualities of Southern racism in *Cane*" as they repeatedly pile up with material references and allow the "almost inexpressible burden of the slave past" to surface "far more concretely than is often supposed" (767, 748). *Cane*'s compound historical perspective of Georgian life relies on embedding layers of historical referents—from "cornfield concubines" to "whitewashed shacks," age-worn cement to rotten floorboards in buggies—all which involve grasping the present through the past.

Veiled references and echoed resonances to the New Negro movement, already in steep decline by the time Toomer arrived in Sparta, present a particularly rich site for historical

exploration. The “Fern” section, specifically, portrays the diminution of hope for a change in the material conditions told through the distanced viewpoint of an educated, light-skinned, mixed-race visitor in the South. His waking resentment toward the unsuccessful pilgrimage back to roots, reinforced by faded black cultural signs, and traumatically intensified by his estrangement as a mixed-race outsider who does not quite belong to black sharecroppers nor to rural white folk, cause him to fall back into longstanding assumptions about the inherent social dichotomy between Northern sophistication and Southern backwardness. Such deeply conflicted loyalties thus fail to fit neatly into Alain Locke’s idealized formulation of the New Negro artist’s uncompromised discovery of the Southern “Negro folk spirit,” labeled and classified in his essay in *The New Negro* Anthology titled the “Negro Youth Speaks.” As we will soon see, the youthfulness of the New Negro artist never quite reaches a higher state of maturation in *Cane*. Any sense of completing the historical circle back to roots is precisely what the author withholds. The coming-of-age story is held back in a state of developmental delay.

What is resoundingly clear is that the infantization of the Black Belt—which mobilizes the coming-of-age motif of human development over time only to suspend this same historical possibility of maturation—represents a particularly complex and resilient form of counter-revolutionary discourse, one that undermines, inhibits, and forestalls the possibility for renewal.[18] The limits of narrative form fix the limits of being. This endless sense of

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[18] Joseph Slaughter’s recent discussion of the political uses and abuses of the *bildungsroman* demonstrates how the “historical prominence of the genre—in the globalizing twentieth-, as in the nationalizing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century versions—corresponds to periods of social crises over the terms and mechanics of enfranchisement, over the meaning and scope of citizenship, over, that is, the process and prospects of incorporation” (27). The “idealist *Bildungsroman*,” he adds, “conventionalizes and naturalizes the convoluted temporality of incorporation as the normal process by which historically marginalized subjects” from disparate global regions and cultures are coordinated by a universalist rhetoric that aligns their political futurity with “narrative claims for inclusion in the normative rights regime” (27). But what happens to the radical global networks of political affiliation that appear outside the dominant narrative of incorporation? Surely not every coming of age story is held in the same regard. In the case of the New Negro movement, the classic story of human development over time is mobilized to call forth black political advancement. But the fact remains that this developmental story

postponement and delay carries political and epistemological repercussions. In *Cane,* the promise of black renewal on the courthouse wall has lapsed beyond expectation. Whatever political edge and future potentialities it may have once designated cannot synchronize with the Northern chronotype of modern time.

These are the ideological conditions, it seems to me, in which the primary importance of the "new" associated with the New Negro movement comes forcefully into focus. The new awareness reached a dramatic height in the United States following the First World War. Black troops had signed up to fight in Europe for the cause of freedom only to return home to find the situation of social exclusion worsened in America. Racial lines were redoubled. Whites took exception to calls for the absorption of black workers into labor unions, thwarted efforts for cultural integration, and they cried foul over attempts to undo both tacit and legally enforced forms of segregation in US society. The return back to marginalisation fostered widespread resentment that America's promise to fight for freedom abroad had betrayed the black population by not extending the principle of freedom to resolve racial conditions within the country's own domestic borders.

US Government records indicate that an internal memorandum was drawn up to supply a briefing to the Director of Military Intelligence on the urgent situation of racial unrest, and in doing so it deployed the trope of Negro backwardness. The intelligence report, filed in government archives under the heading "Subject: The Negro Situation," begins by noting that a

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of racial awakening was left unincorporated as an ideological strategy because it did not synch with the vested interests held by the white American power brokers after the war. A range of alternative future expectations were subsequently left behind, cast outside, deliberately foreclosed. The darkest members of the population were held in a state of developmental delay, blocked from future advancement, impeded from full incorporation in American life, and in turn disenfranchised from developing the historical self-determination required to fully gain access to the economic and political benefits of their own labor.

transformation of black consciousness was the direct result of expectations raised by the military's own war propaganda:

> Beyond a doubt, there is a *new negro* to be reckoned with in our political and social life. [...] The emphasis which has been laid down upon the principles of democracy and the self-determination of racially defined peoples, during the progress of the war, has not been without its effect upon the colored people of this country. They have become more sensitive than ever with regard to the practice of lynchings. The fact that their expectations are not being realized is a source of disappointment and embitterment. (MGP 1: 491 *my italics*)

Here the redemptive figure of the *"new negro"*—the sign of black renewal—enters directly into US Government records. In what follows, though, it soon becomes apparent that the act of recitation in the imperial archive performs a crucial translation of meaning that radically alters the discursive force of black futurity it once carried. The term is redeployed in the Military Intelligence briefing in such a way to again naturalize longstanding racial divisions:

> The present situation seems, beyond a doubt, to constitute a critical juncture in the history of the colored race in this country. It is conceivable that this may mark the beginning of what usually happens when a people native to temperate zones come in contact with a people native to the tropical zone, to which the record of this colored race in this country has hitherto been an exception. It is certain that the capacity of the citizens of this country to govern themselves will be severely tested during the next few years. (MGP 1: 492)

A rhetorical barrage of racial essentialisms establishes the historical inevitability of the impending clash of civilizations. The practice or experience of being a New Negro, whatever might be such, involves the renewal of a certain originality or distinctiveness that denotes racial

otherness. This latent expression of otherness long remained dormant, but it has now begun to manifest in the thoughts and activities of black descendants from a "tropical zone."[19] The power of this black cultural sign is not so much denied but rather affirmed on government record if only to mark the New Negro as a direct threat, one incommensurate with the American way of life.[20]

Before signing off, the administrative briefing for the Director of Military Intelligence issues one final word of caution on the new racial awakening: "There is a race consciousness among colored people which is of recent origin and which is susceptible to direction and manipulation by those who have sinister motives" (MGP 1: 493). Similar to Toomer's "Fern" episode, the historical experience of blackness is reduced to primitivism, backwardness, and infantile gullibility. The sign of black futurity has been violently sutured to the tragic timeline of inevitable historical disappointment. Any potent energy of renewal that this cultural sign once called forth in the effort to renew the status of the black population in America has been inscribed in the imperial archive only to symbolically transform, weaken, and other the new character of the New Negro. The discursive work of transformation, followed in all its difficulty,

[19] For an innovative historical account of the tropics as a space produced by the rhetoric of imperialism, see Hugh Cage's *Assembling the Tropics* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[20] Recall that what distinguished the mass emotional appeal of the New Negro movement from the well-mannered style of political activism typified by Du Bois was Garvey's public insistence on non-compromise. In a speech on 1 August 1921, Garvey reminded his audience: "I am not Dr. Du Bois. You will understand that I am Marcus Garvey. I therefore have nothing to apologize for" (MGP 3: 576). This rousing sentiment is then connected to participation in the war: "We desire as a race that opportunity, that freedom, that democracy that is common to humanity—that for which we fought in France and Flanders and Mesopotamia, but that which is denied to us by the people for whom we fought and with whom we fought" (MGP 3: 577-8). If this wasn't enough to raise the eyebrows of the US Military's top brass, Garvey riled up his supporters with a reminder to never again compromise: "We realize that the world discounts us because we have always been compromising. […] The Negro in all history has never hated; he has always returned a smile for a kick; he has always returned a smile for abuse. Let me say to the world that was the characteristic of the old Negro. We are dealing with the new Negro today, the Negro who intends to return a blow for a blow. Mark well! There are 400,000,000 Negroes in the world, and it is a question raised not just with 15,000,000 American Negroes, not with 20,000,000 West Indian Negroes. The question rests not with 40,000,000 South and Central American Negroes. The question is one that concerns 400,000,000 black men. (Cheers.)" (MGP 3: 577-8).

displaces the positive sign of renewal with an old, negative sign that no longer remains cautiously and assertively hopeful.

But how, exactly, is this symbolic transformation possible? How does the imperial archive have anything to gain by writing down that which most threatens it? "The empire never dies," Rebecca Comay reminds us (15). Instead, it marks, translates, and converts the power capable of internal transformation by pushing calls for systematic transformation to a position far outside itself. Through this externalization of the threat of otherness, the empire renews its own symbolic potency. This is the central contradiction at the core of the imperial archive. In the government document in question, this symbolic process does not occur by directly disputing the fact that the New Negro movement gained prominence after the war. On the contrary, the racial awakening stands as a real force "to be reckoned with." Yet rather than elaborate on the specific problematic of black disenfranchisement in order to indicate the urgent need for economic parity and social inclusion as a remedy to race resentment in postwar America, the black cultural sign undergoes a transformation. Calls for renewal, for racial consciousness carried forth by the New Negro, are recorded in the government archive to mark the threat of black insurgency—a threat which originates from the outside. Thus, a certain nominalism cannot be discounted too quickly.

The very definition of empire as that which expands beyond its own territorial boundaries depends on these kinds of symbolic exercises in political legitimation. The tropological processes of imperial expansion constantly push outwards by relocating that which threatens it further into the margins. Moments of crisis supply the opportunity for the imperial state to bolster its own symbolic power through temporal and spatial expansion. Put simply, the modern imperial nation-state cannot endure without these moments of crisis. "While remaining indestructible," observes Rebecca Comay, the empire undertakes "multiple translations as its

center keeps moving" along the continuum of progressive history (15). Like a shark that must continue to swim in order to avoid death, the empire's discursive process of bureaucratic translation is expansive, never-ending, ongoing, and the legitimacy and authority gained in this sequential push forward repeatedly reaffirms and stabilizes its own symbolic center, even as its discursive system paradoxically keeps moving outwards to expand its own authority against that which it denies and relegates into the margins. For this reason, Comay concludes that empire must be reckoned with as "a phoenix rising continually from the ashes, the empire vanishes only to return, wresting victory from defeat, accumulating and consolidating sovereignty as it migrates from site to site, from epoch to epoch" in the effort to "lay claim to the imperial mantle" (15). Viewed accordingly, American empire repeatedly warns of its own loss because fielding this threat allows it to mark itself, again and again, as the obstinate center of symbolic durability in the modern world. This ongoing process of re-centering the core of imperial power, redefining its limits, only occurs by marking the periphery which stands outside of it.

What happens, though, to the array of alternative possibilities for human reconciliation that are left behind, relegated outside, or otherwise foreclosed in the wake of empire? And how do we begin to account for the future dreamworlds once envisioned and cancelled out as empire extends itself over the perceptible horizon? More specifically, how do we begin to explore Toomer's enigmatic signifier of black redemptive power left behind on the courthouse wall? In this cultural afterimage we find the black sign of renewal both unrealized and deadened. Its ability to conjure up potentiality for change in public life has been drained of its revolutionary content. The sign of black redemption lingers, if only as historical detritus. It is an image of ruin, of a failed promise. For it has been detached from the present. A jarring dissonance points to a temporal discrepancy.

Such issues emerged to the fore as the US government undertook a recalibration of clocks in the wake of the First World War. The Military Intelligence report offers no mention of the capable handling of military operations by black soldiers during the war. Nor does it grapple with the failure to realize the promises made in military promotional campaigns to recruit black soldiers to join the war effort. The internal government briefing instead presents a meek characterization of a desperate group of "tropical" people predisposed to fall prey to fallacious scammers and confidence men that lurk in the shadows of modern times. Note again the retrograde externalization of harm. Only the colored race is deemed susceptible to this danger, but their susceptibility also makes America vulnerable. Nonetheless, the political appraisal does appear correct the extent that palpable discontent and hostility after the war supplied the historical groundwork necessary for a new race leader to emerge and exclaim the birth of the New Negro movement.

Amidst the moral panic and renewed hysteria about racial divisions after the Armistice, a new black leader had emerged onto the American scene and sought to confront longstanding illusions about blackness once and for all. Marcus Garvey, the charismatic founder of the first global black organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, emerged out of the historical crucible of 1918 and his rise in popularity quickly captured the political imagination of the black masses. "By 1918," Theodore Vincent clarifies, "Garvey had gathered several thousand followers . . . through speaking tours and the Negro World he had developed a broad base of support, enabling him to build his movement so rapidly after the Armistice that the UNIA could claim two million followers by the end of 1919" (31). The gregarious black leader drew hundreds of thousands of black American followers to his movement by assuring a new destiny for the New Negro. Black power, dignity, and self-respect were crucial to advancement of this

mass movement. The promise of renewal rapidly swept across the country. Membership numbers soared. At its apex, a reported 725 UNIA branches had been set up across the United States, including 26 in the State of Georgia alone.[21]

Yet while an array of aspirational promises—such as self-discovery, spiritual redemption, and global rebirth—powerfully linked the creation of the New Negro character to a new form of black consciousness, such details exist mostly on the periphery in *Cane.* Published in 1923, the same year as the devastating guilty verdict in the Marcus Garvey trial, readers are only presented with a lapsed vision of black rebirth on the law building. Further distorting the appearance of the New Negro movement, the powerful message of black regeneration appears to have already run its course in the American South by the time the narrator arrives. The legal promise of justice it now marks is the hope of a mass cultural renewal that has passed. That future has been foreclosed. The announcement of the coming of the black messiah has lapsed into obscurity.

Thus, rather than being repeatedly bombarded by the mass utopian promise of black renewal, what we encounter instead in Toomer's text is something much more understated but no less profound. Remnants of a transformative black political vision are reanimated only through the distancing effects of literary inscription. To glimpse at the past in this way is to encounter the traces of a transitory vision—historical residues—marking an unincorporated future of the world somehow abandoned and left behind. As Toomer draws attention to the New Negro movement left unfinished in its infancy, he marks out the contradictions that often haunted the UNIA's attempts to realize black political renewal in the historical opening after the Great War. His fragmented prose vignettes in *Cane* confront the difficulty of sustaining the political energy required to confront, discard, and surpass old illusions about race in America. Toomer's

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[21] This figure is taken from Tony Martin's *Race First*, which includes a table listing of the distribution of UNIA branches (p. 15).

fragmentary text sutures the new world and the old. The task of this chapter is to trace this dialectical intersection. The equation of blackness with permanent infancy holds significance for reading the collective dream of emergence, for it underlines the problematic of colonial modernity which made up the living present as much as it redirected aspirations and expectations for a new political character—the New Negro—to emerge in contemporary life. This congruence points toward a pattern of historical determinism which puts limits on the kinds of renewal that could be actively sought. For aspirations for newness can be coordinated and regulated.

Folio 1.2 – The Mark of Infancy

Dreams of a miraculous birth emerge most prominently in the "Esther" section of *Cane.* Here the child functions as an allegory of the possible future personified. But, crucially, there is more than one horizon. For in this prose vignette we learn that Esther has two dreams. Both concern raising an orphaned newborn child. Published in 1923,[22] the same year as the Marcus Garvey trial, the text marks a split, a historical nonsynchronicity*,* between two competing visions of the future yet to come.

First, Esther "begins to dream" and soon the "low evening sun" illuminates the horizon of Sempter, Georgia. The warming effect may well be beautiful, and the drying sugar cane stalks may well fill the air with a musty sweet scent, but the Deep South quickly becomes a crucible. Soon the intensifying heat "sets the windows of McGregor's notion shop aflame" (25). The town's fire brigade, quick to respond, rushes down the dusty streets toward the blaze. Firemen heroically pull a white "dimpled infant" from the second-story window of a burning textiles

[22] "Esther" first appeared in the inaugural issue of the *Modern Review*, no. 1, January 1923, pp. 50-54. The second and most recent Norton Critical Edition (2011) of *Cane* is quoted throughout this dissertation chapter.

building. Upon its rescue, Esther instantly "claims" the orphaned infant "for her own" (26). Only after which she begins to question how the white-skinned baby was conceived.

Even in her dreams, thinking across the color line cannot occur without traversing a web of moral taboos. What seemed like a subjective, personal decision to accept the white baby produces a profound moment of reflection on the nature of this desire. Esther begins to second guess the child's origins: "How had she come by it? She thinks of it immaculately. It is a sin to think of it immaculately" (25). Not only does her desire to transcend the taboo of miscegenation between black and white reach its symbolic limit in the sacred image of the immaculate, white child; the very possibility of that desire, the difference between black and white that makes it possible for Esther, a woman of mixed origin, a "mulatta," to dream of caring for a white baby, is imagined as the product of a moral transgression. She cannot in good faith take custody of the child. For a mother of biracial heritage only sixteen years of age, raising a pure white baby would bring with it immense public scrutiny, inciting guilt and sexualized shame about its origins. Her vision of transformation falls short of achieving a new start. The fantasy of crossing the color line falls back into the same regulated norms about spiritual virtue and human reproduction which evidently functioned to exclude her own ambiguous identity status as a US citizen of impure origin, neither black nor white.[23] Hence, it is a fantasy of maternal possession that cannot be achieved in the Jim Crow South. Its status is no more tangible as a confident sign of renewal than the black Madonna scrawled in charcoal on the courthouse wall. For her own

[23] In *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History,* Charles Scruggs and Lee VanDemarr go so far as to suggest that answering the question "Who gave it to her" would mean "naming her father as *the* father" (151). This hypothesis, while tantalizing and suggestive, remains untested and speculative at best. Whereas other characters in *Cane,* including Becky, directly confront this question of incest, Esther's own familial relations are not addressed in the text with similar detail.

sake, or possibly as a selfless act to ensure maximal fate of the uncolored child, Esther wishes for this rapidly degrading vision of the future to end: “She must dream no more” (26).

From here, though, Esther drifts swiftly and uncontrollably into a second dream. This time, when the fire starts, “There is no fire department. There are no heroic men” (26). Sufficient resources have not been allocated by the community of Sempter, Georgia to extinguish a blaze of this kind. Without an emergency response plan, unemployed black “loafers on the street corner” are left to put out the fire on their own. They “form a circle, chew their tobacco faster, and squirt juice just as fast as they can chew. Gallons on top of gallons of juice they squirt upon the flames” (26). Eventually, the blaze lessens. A black baby appears in the window amidst the smoke. “But what a baby! Black, singed, woolly, tobacco-juice baby—ugly as sin” (26). Presumably, the child’s skin has been scorched black from prolonged exposure to the flames, though its skin color may also be attributable to genetics. Here Esther’s desire to bear King Barlo’s immaculate child crosses the racial divide. Yet the precise source or origin of the child’s blackness remains an unresolved matter in *Cane*.

What does matter in Toomer’s text are the repercussions to follow from this act of recognition. The child has been outed in public. It now carries the mark of *black infancy*. The codification of the infant’s skin marks a formative event, a primal scene, whereby blackness is for the first time publicly inscribed as a social classification onto the newborn baby—a key determination, a master signifier, which will dictate the course of the child’s future in the segregated Jim Crow South. Immediately following this event of recognition, Esther observes the crowds of “Negro women” and “white women” as both groups abruptly disperse, scatter and “scoot in all directions from the danger zone. She alone is left to take the baby in her arms” (26). Esther’s public status as a person of mixed race means that she is the only woman left downtown

whose social identity might be construed as black enough, maternally suitable to care for an orphaned black baby.

This public obsession with the identification of blackness invites, moreover, a suspicion that the infant is not the only one subjected to the gaze of recognition. Indeed, another character in the narrative appears to also have had her public identity transformed by this external pressure which unremittingly seeks to reveal, delimit, categorize, and above all to expose the absolute racial difference of blackness. For the same hierarchical white gaze which recognized the baby as black comes to be subsequently directed at Esther, othering her, classifying her ambiguous skin color all-too-conveniently in this instance as a member of the black population. In a very literal sense, then, both the baby and Esther are "New Negroes." Recognizing this newness, however, becomes wrapped up with a racial determination that carries their political fates backwards in time, as developmentally delayed, primitive, held in a historical position of permanent infancy, and this marker of underdevelopment works to exclude the very possibility for a new kind of emergence, perhaps even stunting all capacity for growth. One may become easily overwhelmed by the futility and omnipotence of it all. Though, as we will see, the "Esther" episode captures the existing situation, the position of backwardness, from which the character of the New Negro must emerge.

Folio 1.3 – Birth of the New Personality

As early as 1894, Reverend W. E .C. Wright would utter the phase: "We are making a new Negro" (25). The prominent clergyman from Cleveland, Ohio emphasized the emergence of a new character in American life: "It is the new Negro of the era of freedom, not the old Negro of a slave civilization, that is here and emerging into a capitalist or a large planter, or a

contractor, or a successful merchant, or a professional man" (24). Wright sung the praises of a religious education for making possible the intellectual, spiritual, and social development of the New Negro. He directly links the development of this new social personality the formation of a new social institution. "In developing individual intelligence and character," he argued, "the schoolhouse can build into society all the elements of a Christian civilization. For the schoolhouse has to do with health and skill and thrift and morals and religion" (23). These statements suggest that a commitment to building new schoolhouses would actively broaden the mandate of education across the nation in order to develop a new social person. Educating a new generation of African Americans would allow for a new kind of personality to emerge: forging a new black subjectivity "in sharp contrast with the absolutely illiterate slave population of less than a generation before" (24). Historian Jeanette Jones has tracked the tendency for Wright's speeches to set up a historical distinction that involves representing "Africa [as] a site of paganism and, as such, one of source of the 'Old Negro's' backwardness" (31). This clear denunciation of a return to African roots as the spiritual source of black redemption was, of course, a far cry from the way in which "the pulse of the Negro world [which] begun to beat in Harlem" would be later traced back to the powerful recognition of common African bloodline in Alain Locke's 1925 anthology *The New Negro: An Interpretation*. The trope of the New Negro to emerge in Wright's nineteenth century formulation was inextricably linked to the post-emancipatory project of making an entirely new social identification for the population group to develop and grow into. He thus looked more toward the future rather than back to the haunted past, giving due credit to "missionary schools for educating a new generation that would challenge the images of the Negro forged during slavery and Reconstruction that justified the

political disenfranchisement and social segregation of the ‘race’” (Jones 31). This new image required a total re-imagination of political and social expressions of Negro-ness.

We must also recall, too, that Wright repeatedly admitted the limited success rate of black renewal at the time of his 1894 pronouncement. The “Old Negro’s backwardness” was in this respect less a thing of the past, or even a woeful cultural assumption, as for Wright it marked the reality of Negro’s ongoing historical predicament. Progress through education was the mode of advancement. He quipped: “we have not yet carried education far enough with the Negro population” (24). Although the influence of missionary schools had begun to show its benefits, there were hardly enough educational facilities spread across the Black Belt to significantly offset the range of prevailing assumptions about the place of the Negro in American life. A structural deficiency resulted in a lack of accessibility to educational training, which continued to hold back and restrict young black adults from maturing into the refined social persona that would uplift and regenerate the race. In an odd sense, then, Wright’s representation of blackness in America was an identity category which functioned to reaffirm the backwardness that he was simultaneously attempting to liberate and eradicate. But spreading this message of backwardness was for him necessary, since it was meant to raise hopes for a different future not yet realized.

While attentive to the upward mobility of black subjects, Wright’s call for the New Negro to emerge was more of a socially legible fiction to modernize the black character in ways yet to take shape than it was meant to describe an already developed social person. The number of individuals who had found ways to reinvent their old black personas and assume higher professional positions and social standing in American life were indeed limited to a remarkably small number. Even by the end of the nineteenth century, some thirty years after abolition of slavery, “The number of these increases,” Wright admitted, was occurring “all too slowly” (25).

The educational processes responsible for the creation of a new social type in America was occurring at such a slow rate of reform that the prospect for growth had been effectively stalled across multiple generations. There were also national consequences to consider. The limited implementation of educational programs failed to train enough black men and women with the advanced skills necessary to foster the character traits which Wright felt exemplified the qualities of the New Negro: refined, educated industrious professionals of Christian character who could contribute and carry America forward into the new century. With his characteristic penchant for detail, Wright explained how a lack of access to missionary schools had led black Americans to fend for themselves, often with catastrophic results. The few "modern" Negro men and women who had, in fact, found personal success without the aid of educational training had failed to lead through example by investing significant time, financial capital, and energy as necessary to assist their fellow brothers and sisters. To force a corrective, it was the primary objective of missionary schools to better train a new generation of individuals to implement skills and handle money necessary to become "practical examples and nobly ambitious in their community" (24). For "New Negroes worthy of all honour are the multitude of our pupils, and pupils of our pupils, who are pushing out into the remoter public-school districts of the Black Belt. They are at once examples and apostles of a new era to the rural millions of the South" (25). For Wright, then, the new spirit of the New Negro was a collective endeavor, "an upward movement" that could only achieve success "when the Negro shall be so completely made new as to become wholly an element of strength and hope in the nation's life and the world's evangelization" (25-6). The salutary link between strengthening the nation and propagating the Gospel around the world was meant to highlight the dedication of his clergy to ensuring that education and social betterment remained centered in the nave of the church.

Folio 1.4 – The Privatization of Dreams

Six years later, Booker T. Washington would publish works on the topic including *A New Negro for a New Century* and “Afro-American Education.” The latter essay, in particular, echoed Wright’s commitment to change the image of the “Afro-American people” from the current position he defined “as less than man, yet more than brute” (34). In order to redirect a public presumption that “had no faith in the possibility of his mental and moral regeneration,” Washington emphasized the importance of developing “principle negro educational institutions” where donations could be made to ensure Negro advancement “at a time of vital need” (“Afro-American Education” 33). The effect was not so much to detach industrial education from the church but rather to separate and privatize education such that a new form of pedagogy could expand beyond the Methodist and Baptist denominations, ultimately beyond religion entirely in order to broaden and maximize education. The objective was clear: “To train selected Negro youth . . . to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands; and, to these ends, to build up an industrial system, for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character” (34). But the emphasis placed on getting a “practical education” in industrial labor as a “healthy sign” of racial uplift displayed a political compromise which tended redress questions of racial inequality and monetary disenfranchisement with an emphasis on cultivating the orthodox liberal conception of proprietary individualism in ways that failed to redistribute both economic wealth and political power. Black individualism trumped the plural “we.” Just as in Wright’s black thought, then, the efficacy of the New Negro as a sign of renewal was largely restricted in Washington’s vision to the realm of the private imagination of each individual.

Folio 1.5 – Garvey's Flight Upward

In an October 16, 1921 speech delivered in the Harlem headquarters of the UNIA at Liberty Hall, Marcus Garvey would catalogue for his audience the ways in which early black leaders such as Wright and Washington had come to popularize and to bring to center stage the question of Negro advancement if only to radically restrict and limit the national conversation while doing so. Garvey pushed his audience to understand how much room there was to maneuver outside the longstanding production of history:

> My subject tonight is "The Flight Upward." We have been discouraged in the past by leaders who had no confidence in themselves. We were made to feel and to believed that there is no use in trying—nothing can be done. Because of such teaching we have struggled on for fifty-odd years in America and eighty-odd years in the West Indies without being able to evolve an ideal through which we would arrest the attention of serious-minded people. The world has been trained to disregard the Negro as a factor—as a force to be reckoned with. Universally, races and nations pay no attention to the action of the Negro because they know it means nothing. They have judged in the past the entire race by the representation of those who have led us, in so much so that the world settled the policy for the Negro, and his limit was industrial education—thus far and no further. The world held up the great hero, Booker T. Washington, as the only leader, and they looked forward to him and his teachings as the leadership of all times, not calculating that the industrially educated Negro would himself evolve *a new ideal* after having being trained by the great teacher—the great sage of Tuskegee. The world satisfied itself to believe that succeeding leaders—should Booker T. Washington die—would but follow in

the teachings of the great sage of Tuskegee, and all that they were to expect from the Negro was industrial serfdom, industrial peonage, and all would be well.

The New Negro Evolving New Ideal[24]

Unfortunately the world is about to have a rude awakening, in that we have started to evolve a new ideal. The new ideal includes the program of Booker T. Washington, but it does not stop there. The new ideal does not mean to exclude anything that Dr. Booker Washington did or said, but we have taken in all that and gone even further. And it seems that the world has been slow in appreciating the fact that there is a new ideal. When we started the Universal Negro Improvement Association many of the races and nations of the world impugned the idea and said it was a crazy dream—it was the work of a visionary who was fit only for the crazy house. Nevertheless, that same world that said it was an idle dream is now realizing that it might be a serious reality. (MGP 4: 119-20)

This demand to evolve a "new ideal" marked the birth of the new spirit of the New Negro. Garvey did not purport to invent the phrase "New Negro," but the kind of collective dream of renewal he envisioned marked a radical departure from the outmoded forms of the political imagination which had plagued the question of race advancement. Renewing the call for action meant shifting the tenor of the conversation from a request to a demand: "we have sent our challenge so far that we are not only asking but we are going to have to demand . . . (Applause.) And the world has got to realize it—the world has got to know it" (MGP 120-1). Here Garvey echoes Wright's suggestion that to begin to change the disenfranchised status of black men and women involved reforming their public image. But he also advances a new position which

[24] The subheading to separate the text here appears in the printed version of Garvey's speech published in the 22 October 1921 edition of *Negro World*.

required demonstrating to the world a set of greater ambitions that would carry the vision for renewal beyond the demand for "industrial opportunity" and extend the New Negro cause toward the ultimate objective of gaining a "political voice" necessary to articulate historical self-determination.

But the curve remained steep. Garvey warned his Harlem audience of "counter programs and counter propaganda" designed chiefly "for the purpose of distracting the mind of the new Negro and preventing him from understanding correctly what he wants" (MGP 4: 121). In the face of scrutiny, the only way forward was to "impress this world by demonstrating to it the seriousness of your intention" (MGP 4: 121). Freedom from the dire situation of historical entrapment involved a resolute commitment. The sheer fact that the New Negro must come into presence as a being capable of introducing something new into the world—a new voice—could save the world from inevitable ruin. But along with this recognition stood an understanding of the grim reality that any process to reconfigure different modalities of presence that characterize the relations of human subjects will be met with public attacks designed to undermine, debase, even worsen the conditions necessary for uplifting and regenerating the race. This is to say that the odds are stacked against subjects of history who seek change. Odious forces are "out to turn the tide of Negro hope—of Negro ambition" from a realizable possibility into an impossible expectation. (121). To hold such hopes, to dream of a better world for black men and women, is to risk being subject to attacks which repeatedly function to reemphasize, recategorize, and reinscribe the difficult knowledge of a long record of failures. Possessing this knowledge of failed renewals gone awry, all the while calling forth a new public image, remained precisely the kind of historical burden that by early twenties characterized "the grim determination of the new

Negro" (MGP 4: 121). The Negro character may still be facing backward, yet this is the paradoxical condition of historical emergence.

Folio 1.6 – Infancy and Development

In "The Negro Emergent," an unpublished essay probably written in 1924, Jean Toomer makes a direct connection between the minority status of black citizens and a dependency on the dominant white community, not simply for recognition of self-worth in exchange for mutual respect, but also for acknowledgement of political maturity, of adulthood and responsibility, which is desirable yet unable to be obtained independently in the Deep South. From this situation of political immaturity, Toomer writes, "The Negro is emergent" (*A Jean Toomer Reader* 87). Despite the warmly persuasive and utopian quality that the word "emergent" possesses, with its suggestion that "The Negro is led through himself outward to the surrounding world" of common concern, it cannot be assumed that the desire for emergence alone is sufficient enough to create a sense of mutual commonality (91). "For the Negro is discovering himself" or herself within the confines of a limited position of the "Negro in America" (89). Here at last is a verifiable case of emergence. How is it possible? Does this new start match Esther's dream of emergence? Toomer explains that the action of discovery, and in this case discovering oneself as emergent, remain inextricable from recognizing the originary position of marginalization from which the black subject must emerge. Thus, the emergence of black identity is figured as a desired negation of the very constraints and protocols that give limited meaning to the expression of race in America. As Toomer puts it: "Generally, it may be said that the Negro is emergent from a crust, a false personality, a compound of beliefs, habits, attitudes, and emotional reactions superimposed on him [or her] by exterior circumstance" (87). The point of this observation is not simply to rescue

black identity from historical oppression by finding redemptive moments that exist outside of the "painful self-consciousness, which makes it difficult for the Negro to meet even the well disposed of another race" (89). On the contrary, such factors "in turn give rise to the Negro's need for defining his own place and attempting to establish" oneself amidst the national community of which he or she remains a constitutive part, however unacknowledged or reduced in stature as the case may be (88). Of course, even if the desire to forget such memories of marginalization were there, "The Negro can no more leave them behind than a gull can leave water" (88).

For Toomer, then, the injunction to remember is inseparable from the desire for change: "The Negro is emerging to a place where [s]he can see just what these factors are, the extent to which [s]he has merely reacted to their stimuli, the extent to which he has been controlled by them" (99). The nonfullness of black experience in political life is precisely what creates a specific feeling of emergence. Incompletion gives rise to possibility. But to begin to contemplate possibilities of revitalization is only part of the structure of emergence. Of equal importance is the containment of a certain personhood that is equally bound up in the activity of discovery. And here, too, the issue emerges right on time as it has to do not only with the question concerning blackness, identity, citizenship and the ensemble of their ontologies, but also with a contradiction at the heart of the question of emergence and its relation to a kind of repeatability that could be said to come into clearer focus against the backdrop of existing historical preconditions.

To make his case, Toomer draws attention to a pervasive metaphor, one which has tended to reinforce the underdeveloped character of black subjectivity and render the population group essentially deprived of agency. He speaks of the "Negro's childlike reliance upon the whites" for

access to even the most basic of human needs, a diminutive status, he adds, which “does not come naturally” (87). In Toomer’s view, this structural dependency is hardly accidental. Since the 1890s, with the passing of a flurry of segregation laws, black Georgians were denied the right to vote, unable to run for office, and refused access to public spaces, relying on white voters instead to make decisions on their behalf. Eligibility to participate in legislative decisions becomes deferred, externally conferred, and thereby open to indetermination. These are the modes of power and dependency by which racial meanings have been produced and circulated in the Jim Crow South. Toomer’s rejection of the race hierarchy as a naturally occurring phenomenon is closely tied to his attempt to communicate the detrimental effects of a structural arrangement of social dependency, one that destroys black self-realization by design and with detrimental effects. He immediately notes that any hope of “transforming rejections to acceptances, denials to affirmations” involves moving the term “Negro” beyond the “false and constricting nature of all superimposed images” responsible for reducing and circumscribing black life (92).

A second and closely related consequence is that the low status of black Americans holds members of this population group in a childlike state, a state of developmental infancy. But unlike, say, Hannah Arendt’s notion of natality, which emphasizes promise of a “new beginning inherent in [the] birth” *(The Human Condition* 9) of every individual, whereby each birth carries with it the capacity to perform “the miracle that saves the world” by opening the political horizon begin anew (247),[25] the “childlike reliance” which Toomer seeks to foreground holds little

[25] In *Between Past and Future,* Arendt further clarifies natality as it involves a “miracle” of introducing an unexpected action into the world: “Every act, seen from the perspective not of the agent but of the whole process in whose framework it occurs, is a ‘miracle’—that is, something which could not be expected. . . . It is in the very nature of every new beginning that it breaks into the world as an ‘infinite improbability’, and yet it is precisely this infinitely improbable which actually constitutes the very texture of everything we call real. . . . It is because of this element of the ‘miraculous’ present in all reality that events, no matter how well they are anticipated in fear or hope,

revolutionary potential to fashion a new moment of political inauguration. Here the black personality can do little more than look on helplessly while its own existence is reduced in place and time. Having no clear future available in Southern Georgia, and with limited recourse to actions of self-determination which may determine their own political future, the Southern black population has been immobilized by a racialized conception of political immaturity. The profundity of black oppression slips through the cracks of time only to emerge as juvenile historiography. "It is reserved to childhood and attended with no more than a child's concern" (*Selected Unpublished Writings* 86). So, another big part of what drives the history of racial oppression in 1920s America is the way in which the pervasive symbol of the black child emanates from a certain restrictiveness embedded in the developmental conception of blackness *as* infancy.

The mark of infancy is a visible, racial mark; it is inscribed onto the black body of the child. The symbolic link between blackness and infancy encrypts a restriction on citizenship, one that inhibits full civic participation and reduces political legitimacy. The retroactive determination of Esther's own identity as the caretaker of the infant works to reinforce the paradoxical situation of her own emergence back into longstanding racial protocols. This new social position as a black mother moves her backwards in time. It is in this sense that Esther's spectacular dreams of renewal deserved greater fates. Hence the racialized sign denotes a symbolic limit, blocking the capacity for a new body politic to emerge. Rather than animate life, and conjure up the political promise of natality, this kind of sign is inherently restrictive. Functioning through a symbolic process of deanimation, the mark of black infancy negates

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strike us with a shock of surprise once they have come to pass. They very impact of an event is never whole explicable; its factuality transcends in principle all anticipation" (168).

possibilities for black futurity to emerge on the national horizon.[26] This deadening effect is the result of semantic displacement. In contradistinction to animated language such as personification that functions to endow material objects with the agency of literal persons, deanimation calls into question whether or not black subjectivity is deserving of agency. The discourse of animation therefore exists on a fault line that may either confirm or reduce the natural life-giving capacity of signs.

For Barbara Johnson, the discourse of animation is tested when certain forms of personhood "put into question what the 'natural' or the 'literal' might be" (233). "Ambivalence about personification" arises in cases where it becomes unclear whether or not certain forms of subjectivity, especially marginalized forms of subjectivity—which circulate in public as "problems" like the Negro Question or the Woman Question—are "grounded in the nature of 'man'" (233). We can observe this ambivalence about the naturalness of black personhood as it manifests in Esther's remarks: "But what a baby! Black, singed, woolly, tobacco-juice baby—ugly as sin" (26). At first, the baby is addressed using exclamatory language that celebrates its appearance as a sacred symbol of life. Its natality epitomises human vibrancy. This irreverent language disappears in the next sentence, though, where profane language is employed instead in the codification of the child's race. The subtle displacement of the natural sign by the black baby involves a number of observations which shed doubt on the prospect of a baby of color to be perceived as pure enough, natural enough, to signify the sacred image of human life that a newborn baby represents. It is also the moment when linguistic expression ceases to make

[26] My conception of animation is indebted here to Barbara Johnson's masterful essay "Toys R Us." Johnson points to the ways in which commodities are animated to enhance their exchange value. Barbies talk, even household cleaners have labels that give the product a face (i.e. Mr. Clean). While animation gives life to material objects above all to increase their market value, deanimation, as I propose it, works in the opposite direction to turn persons into objects. This form of rhetorical address drains life, thereby jettisoning their capacity as humans to have emotions and to take actions, since this deadening effect throws havoc to ontological claims about equal rights as persons.

perfect sense. A slippage has occurred. The black baby lacks confirmation as a proper grammatical subject. Esther notes that the promise of natural innocence attached to the child has been displaced by uncanniness, darkness, and sin. Canceling out its absolute symbolic value, the ambivalent public status of the black baby reinforces the character of black displacement.

But note also, this figurative language reinforces the link between blackness and primitive peoples. The figure of the black child stands in for a deferred presence, marking the incapacity of black folks in the Deep South to develop and one day reach maturation in American life. It deanimates possibilities by reducing innovations of reference. The primitive sign of reduced possibility reaches for a "new beginning" but cannot "break into the world" with enough force to enact the symbolic chain of miracles—the "miracles of everyday language"—which for Arendt carry forth "sheer capacity" for the world "to begin" anew (*Between Past and Future* 167-8). That which is bound by primordial constraints cannot fully turn to view the horizon of future-oriented anticipatory time.

Thus, the figure of the black child shrinks back from a radical temporality that might allow for a new arrangement of participation and belonging in American life. It symbolizes a limited vitality. As an effect of discursive power, black personhood is confirmed by the sign of black infancy. But the limited freedom granted by the conflicting presence and absence of this ambivalent personhood which cannot reach maturity in national life has been produced by the logic of an unresolvable contradiction. This is to say that the process of subject formation involves a paradox: addressing the black child as such may well be an iterative event, a speech act, one that brings black subjectivity into being, but the process of subjection is itself subject to the discourse of segregation which regulates power relations in the Jim Crow South. Hence, the black child in *Cane* is the self-portrait of the discourse that makes it. Rather than expanding the

range of opportunities, boundaries are constrained. New possibilities for freedom are contained. The racialized image of the black child marks the shift from potentiality to impotentiality, making it difficult, if not seemingly impossible, for members of the population to assume a posture of confidence necessary to break deliberately from the legacy of the past. The limited trajectory of the discursive process of subjection becomes a normative and normalizing ideal. Its investure in maintaining ongoing power relations works to redouble the alienated condition facing the black peasantry of Hancock County's sharecropper economy. Additionally, this affliction haunts members on both sides of the color line. It disparages, mocks, and even precludes the very possibility for a new politics of mutual peace to emerge out of the racialized discourse since each utterance proves that the mark of black infancy has been borne out of a conflicting presence that excludes life in order to designate life. Together, these forms of exclusion converge in the dream sequence precisely at the moment when Esther takes on the double burden as both the guardian of a black infant and a black woman. In both cases, she must accept a low developmental ceiling in the Jim Crow South. These racialized subject positions have been produced coextensive with their investure in acrimonious power relations.

Part of the irony that drives this section of the narrative results from the fact that Esther's charitable acceptance of an orphaned black child is what functions to end her own ability to pass as white in the town of Sempter, Georgia ever again. It is an elegant paradox that Toomer has crafted: the very act of taking custody of the child, which eases the burden on the community, is precisely what ensures Esther's own access to privileges in the community will be transformed, thoroughly reduced. Determining her fate, from this moment forward, she can no longer take advantage of the material and social privileges unequally distributed across the racial divide, privileges like access to resources which might have assisted her in raising the orphaned infant.

The text's portrayal of the rural south functions to expose the entangled genealogies of black skin and social patterns of characterization. Esther's fate appears to be sealed. She now embodies a marginal identity position. On a daily basis, she must confront what Toomer's essay describes as "those factors which arise from the conditions of being a black [person] in a white world" (87). Esther must self-identify, in other words, with what Toomer comes to articulate as "a false personality, a compound of beliefs, habits, attitudes and emotional reactions superimposed upon [her] by external circumstance" (*Selected Unpublished Writings* 87). This pattern alone, however, does not appear to adversely influence her affection for the child. Any lingering apprehensions about how the white gaze involves a racial othering, externally conferred, marking Esther as duty-bound to raise this "Black, singed, woolly, tobacco-juice baby," and forcing her to internalize a new set of social restrictions, become quickly dispelled once the child is "held to her chest," at which point she declares it a "miraculous thing: its breath is sweet and its lips can nibble. She loves it frantically" (24). Any compromises or sacrifices appear to be wholly worthwhile.

Yet the most fantastic element of the dream sequence arrives when Esther asserts with confidence that her interracial love for the baby can be demonstrated in public to be so boundless, so definitive and convincing in crossing the racial divide, that maternal care will transcend the most intense public scrutiny—a joy miraculous enough to reconfigure divisive social attitudes. And it almost appears as if Esther's radical optimism about the universalizing power of maternal love to change people's minds about the future of racialized color divisions have already be proven correct. For the second dream sequence concludes with an expression of wish fulfillment narrated in the present tense: "Her joy in it changes the town folks' jeers to

harmless jealousy, and she is left alone" (26). Her maternal love for the infant appears to be so boundless that it crosses the racial divide.

What remains nearly out of sight, though, almost imperceptible within the precincts of the dream structure, is that when Esther eventually wakes up from her dream alone, returning back to reassume her marginal position as a social outsider, neither fully black or white, her feeling of isolation, of immense solitude, will not have changed at all. There is no affirmation of belonging. Rather, the text withholds it. The final phrase—"and she is left alone"—tacitly underscores this vexing problematic. Toomer avoids the plural pronoun "they"—which would have signaled mother and child brought together as one symbolic social unit. The text further underscores Esther's separation from child and Southern community alike with the singular pronoun "her." This semantic displacement—which sets "her joy" apart from both the genderless baby "it" and the "town folks"—provides a particularly chilling reminder of the social isolation that Esther must soon return to face when she wakes up alone, without child, unaccompanied and lacking the clear social position to belong to as a mixed-race person living in the segregated Jim Crow South. The dream of one day having a clear identification, which evidently Esther so desires, even fantasizes about, erupts from the political unconscious of the text's dream sequence. Identification and desire tangle. Esther's wish to take custody of a pure-blooded child manifests from the social reproductive crisis she feels as a mixed-race woman living in a southern state. Her identity remains an inconsistent figure, a metonym for multiple and often irreconcilable positions she must live out in a political structure segregated black and white.

The burden of Esther's historical predicament involves repeatedly confronting the gap between experience and expectation. Her hopes that public perceptions can be reformed are clearly raised and yet on each occasion these dreams fail to be fully realized. Even in sleep she

encounters this ever-shifting horizon of expectations as densely layered and incomplete. To hedge her bets, the futures she envisions are numerous. The two infants, each one standing in for imagined potential, signify two very different futures yet to arrive: one black, one white. Yet their subsequent non-arrival accentuates the crisis that history continues to turn out differently than what can be hoped for in the segregated Jim Crow South. The unevenness of her desire for political transformation, her intense longing for an alternative prospect of a new community to emerge for her on either side of the color line, is thus less a matter of her thinking about a single way to leap out of the present into a prescribed future than it requires holding a range of speculative possibilities about the future from the vantage point of the contemporaneous present.

Folio 1.7 – Expectation and Experience

To speak of forecasted futures which never quite arrive is to concede to a form of historical experience that is no longer experienced as sequential, linear, nor progressive, but rather as a composite of variegated horizons. The point is historical and substantial, not merely notional or thematic, since capitalist modernity itself has emerged alongside a new kind of temporality that is distinctive because it produces expectations—hopes and dreams—that are not so much reached as leaped over before ultimately being abandoned. The issue of speculative time, of shifting perceptions and expectations, particularly with respect to the way in which the modern temporal experience itself has been radically transformed, bears decisively on a historical project of recovering what Reinhart Koselleck calls futures past: “Chronologically, all experience leaps over time; experience does not create continuity in the sense of an additive preparation to the past” (260). Modern time, he argues, is distinctive because it is untimely. “The

one process of time became a dynamic of a coexisting plurality of times" when a linear set of expectations were no longer followed to their logical conclusion (269).

Koselleck traces back the genealogy of this remarkable temporal disruption to its origins. He finds that it first emerged in the Enlightenment's emphasis on human progress as historical advancement:

> Kant, who may have been the originator of the term *Fortschritt* (progress), indicates the shift that concerns us here. A forecast which basically anticipated what had already occurred was for him no prognosis, for this contradicted his expectation that the future would be better because it should be better. Thus, experience of the past and expectation of the future were no longer in correspondence, but were progressively divided up. Pragmatic prognosis of a possible future became a long-term expectation of a new future. Kant conceded that "the task of progressive advance is not soluble directly on the basis of experience." But he added that new experiences, such as the French Revolution, could be accumulated in the future, in such a way that the "instruction of frequent experience" might secure a sustained "advance to the better." (267)

The concept of revolution Kant evokes here is inextricable from the promise it makes to expose the manipulative effects of an antiquated form of history. Kant puts this distinction most bluntly when he poses the following question: "How is history *a priori* possible? Answer: when the soothsayer shapes and forms the events that he had predicted in advance" (Koselleck's translation 39). Revolt springs from the urge to overturn this obsolete method which has maintained its power over the historical record for far too long by judging what has happened by what is already familiar.

The theory and practice of revolution is bound to the way a new temporality emerges as a theoretical possibility out of the very limits of the present order. This is what makes the prospect of exercising a clean break so difficult to achieve. Kant demonstrates the urgent desire to break from the regulative law of known history in *The Conflict of the Faculties* when he writes:

> We desire a fragment of history and one, indeed, that is drawn not from the past but from future time, therefore a predictive history; if it is not based on known laws (like eclipses of the sun and the moon), this history is designated as divinatory, and yet natural; but if it can be acquired in no way other than through a supernatural communication and widening of one's view of future time, this history is called prophetic. If it is asked whether the human race at large is progressing perpetually toward the better, the important thing is not the natural history of man (whether new races may arise in the future), but rather his moral history. (141)

And so, one version of historical experience has dethroned another. History severs. But not without cost. The pursuit upwards toward some moral high ground cannot occur by small steps and instead requires a series of giant leaps forward. Progress for Kant is therefore not so much progressive as that which delinks the future from linear forms of advancement. For it involves making a blind leap from what is known to what exists in the future yet to be fully known. The truly new event does not build on the old progressive history of what has passed but rather breaks from it. This is what Kant means when he says that "We desire a fragment of history and one, indeed, that is drawn not from the past but from future time" (141). Delinking past and future marks the emergence of a new temporality. Synchronicity must be sacrificed.

But Kant also explicitly notes the structure of "desire" in this bid for temporal reordering. Desire involves something which is sought after and therefore orients itself as an aspiration

toward the future, a promise or wish for the “quantity of good in our predisposition [to] increase,” which for Kant “would only happen through the freedom of the subject, for which the purpose of the subject would in turn require a greater reservoir of good than it now possesses (147). To place one’s hopes in the endless broadening of the good is, of course, very different than to act from a clear position of the good. The hope for progress Kant speaks of here requires placing one’s faith in the power of a moral principle which only the future can fulfill. This is what Kant means when he says that to believe in progress toward a better future is to “desire a fragment of history” not inferable from known experience in the present moment. The structure of hope itself must be rewritten as partial in order to open the horizon for a new history of freedom to one day appear.

Koselleck is interested in the effects of this seismic shift in how history is experienced, particularly how the movement from linear to future-oriented modes of time come to rewrite the basis of modern experience. In this experiential transformation, anticipated futures based on promises take on a new role since “experience of the past and expectation of the future were no longer in correspondence, but were progressively divided up” (267). Based on this logic, the future would be different than the past, and thus by necessity it also causes a fragmentary accumulation of temporalities. The conditionality of historical experience takes on a new set of anticipatory relations. What happens, though, when such promises of moral understanding are reached for but never fully attained? Coming to grips with failed futures, Koselleck argues, is the task of the modern historian. The Enlightenment’s promises of human freedom remain in view and yet the actualization of human betterment is or will be in most cases constantly deferred.

Modern historicity takes its shape as a series of displaced promises. Future outlooks, lofty ideals, emancipatory claims, and utopian visions are aspired towards yet never quite

reached as the forecasted future recedes on the horizon and lived experience takes the place of lofty expectations. Accordingly, the epistemic conditions of enlightened thought, which bear immense potential to reshape the history of human relations, must be understood to be accompanied with a disturbing sense of failure on every occasion when the promise of history as progressive, moving toward human freedom, breaks down.

More to the point, it marks a situation in which history itself always tends to fall short of the horizon of expectations. The effect of this conceptual shift carries forth major ramifications for the task of historical inquiry. To help picture this distinction, Koselleck draws on two very different images. The first, which he borrows from Christian Meier, brings into focus a customary approach to historical examination that now appears insufficient and outmoded. Previously, the presumed task of narrating history was "like the glass front of a washing machine, behind which various bits of the wash appear now and then, but all are contained in the drum" (260). The presumption here is that the past is already self-contained, ready-made, materially present and available for examination, because the evidentiary facts about the past remain traceable to material events.

To pose an alternative model, Koselleck draws on a second example, this time involving the legibility of expectations as they recede on the horizon.

> A recent political joke throws light on this:
>
> "Communism is already visible on the horizon," declared Khrushchev in a speech.
>
> Questions from the floor: "Comrade Khrushchev, what is a 'horizon'?"
>
> "Look it up in the dictionary," replied Nikita Sergeevich.
>
> At home the questioner found the following explanation in a reference work:
>
> "Horizon, an apparent line separating the sky from the earth, which retreats as one

approaches it." (261)

The joke, while dry, expresses how the word *horizon* is undermined by the very dictionary definition meant to elucidate its meaning in clear and direct terms. The term *horizon* ironically retreats on the horizon from its own denotative meaning. *Horizon* escapes its own definition. It does so, apparently, because like the word's definition itself it always remains on the edge of the field of view, perpetually held at the furthermost distance on the skyline, within sight, though just barely perceptible. Thus, the horizon is always already yet to arrive. But for all of that confusion, as the word "horizon" also marks the unexpected disappointment felt by Nikita Sergeevich, his inability to find a clear referent serves as the perfect analogy for the way in which communist anticipation never quite reaches its culmination point in Soviet Russia. By definition, the ideal of collective triumph forever falls short of its realization.

Koselleck then clarifies his own intentions in retelling the joke to historians interested in representing the past: "Notwithstanding the political point, it is possible to see that what is expected of the future is evidently limited in a manner different from what has been experienced in the past. Cultivated expectations can be revised; experiences one had are collected" (261). Apparent here is that Koselleck is not so much interested in entirely dismissing the notion of material presence as he is in showing that history unfolds in such a way, so unpredictably, that it gives rise to crucial differences between how we come to experience our material surroundings over time. Most revealingly, what is expected is different than what transpires. Emphasizing this gap may seem like a rather trivial detail, but to begin historical inquiry with the suggestion that the past is not a ready-made unit of events (contained within the sealed washing "drum" of history), but rather experienced as a broken horizon of expectations, has major repercussions for envisioning the kind of work involved in representing a modern picture of historical time. The

objective in recovering "futures past" involves the way in which anticipatory expectations are now "scattered among an infinity of temporal extensions," because, crucially, these forecasted futures are never quite reached.

This antinomy remains a tension internal to the very experience of historical time because the horizon of expectations can never be reached without disconnecting itself from present experience. "The one cannot be transferred into the other without interruption," and to this extent "ever-changing patterns [bring] about new resolutions and through this generate historical time" (262). This is to say that the gap between expectation and experience forms a sense of time. More specifically, the fact that present and future do not align produces the very experience of modern time as internally divided. Accordingly, the past must be read with the assumption that it was never uniform to begin with but wholly divided, untimely. History as lapsed time never quite reaches an expected culmination point. Past stories told about how the world would unfold have been interrupted by events which have effectively taken the place of history as expected and foretold in advance. To live in the time that remains, in the interregnum, is therefore to experience the ongoing present as a by-product of alternative histories that have been assembled together, and which may still exist to some extent, in some latent form, but only to give a sense of the present *now* as radically divided from what was once envisioned and failed to be achieved. It is this temporal heterogeneity that gives the project of narrating modern history its elucidating potential by making past futures the suitable point of reference to begin to reconstruct imagined futures that remain incomplete.

Folio 1.8 – Combined and Uneven Modernities

Given this sense of modern history as divided between experience and expectation, perhaps it is not a sizable mystery why Jean Toomer placed a set of arcs onto the blank pages which divide *Cane* into each of its three sections:

The prefatory arcs do not form a complete circle. Even when overlapped into a single image these curved lines fail to form one closed loop.[27] There is an immediate correspondence between image and text worthy of attention here. The arcs symbolize *Cane's* open literary structure. Indeed, Toomer's experimental modernist text mixes poetry and prose—with lyric poems interspersed between snippets of short fiction. Both must be read together. Yet the overall reader experience is remarkably disjointed. For the text's open structure demands repeatedly traversing the gaps between terse lines of contemplative poetry and situating them against brief narrative episodes featuring a cast of characters in black communities across America who demonstrate varying concerns and driving ambitions. That structural discordance is likely why Toomer wrote to his editor on 12 December 1922 and insisted that the images be included in the publication when it went to press: "Between each of the three sections, a curve. These, to vaguely indicate

[27] That sense of incompleteness has been reinforced by the ironic historical fact that for decades the text's publication record also remained partial. Although these images supplied by Toomer appeared in the original first edition of *Cane,* subsequent reprints failed to include them. Charles R. Larsen clarifies: "In reproducing the plates of the original edition for the 1967 University Place Press hardback reprint and the 1969 Harper paperback, the publisher inadvertently omitted the first of these designs." (215n.79). The Norton Critical Edition appears to have finally corrected this error. The first arc now appears on a separate page before "Karintha," the second before "Seventh Street," and the final double arc precedes "Kabnis."

the design" (*Brother Mine* 86). The experimental literary structure remains as radically fragmented as the open-ended curves themselves.

Elsewhere, however, Toomer almost seems to contradict his own proposition that the visual symbols stand to represent the "design" of his innovative modernist textual practice. For even within the same letter to his editor, Waldo Frank, he also announced that the circle rather than the curve best depicts *Cane* when viewed as a whole:

> The book is done. From three angles, CANE'S design is a circle. Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up into the North, and back into the South again. Or, from the North down into the South, and then a return North. (*Brother Mine* 85)

His literary work, reconsidered as such, does appear to follow a circular narrative logic, at least to some extent. Migratory movements of his characters between geographical regions of North and South are fluid and circular in the text rather than fixed. This feature of circulation has led Charles Scruggs and Lee VanDemarr to remark: "In describing how his narrative 'regionally' circled between North and South, Toomer, of course, was referring not only to compass directions; he also evoked the contrast of different histories, cultures, and societies" (186). The suggestion is that the motif of circular migration stands representative of the endless loops, of departures and returns. The cast of characters in *Cane* find themselves mixing and flowing in circular movements between symbolic geographical locales. It is in this sense that Toomer's writing has the clarity to reveal that racial categorizations are constantly oscillating between regions. A fuller reading might push the significance of the circle motif even further by suggesting that it stands not just for a system of circulation but also as a figure of wholeness or even completion of cultural identity, which can and must be ascertained in order to locate a

collective sense of the larger geographical continuity, of one unifying American folk story, to bring together disparate racial groups across the expanses of the country into kinship and union.

But such a reading can only be taken so far. Although there appears to be an expectation of circular continuity, one that Toomer seems to clutch onto at times, as he was evidently unwilling to fully give up the prospect of completion, such hopeful expectations are tempered by the simple fact that a circle is also a kind of enclosure. “[W]e measure the world” by “these horizons,” says Nietzsche, “within which each of us encloses his senses as if behind prison walls” (*Daybreak* 73). Thus a “concentric circle” is drawn “[a]round every being” and “constitutes my immediate fate, in great things and small, from which I cannot escape” (73). After all, the problem is that blackness, a racial marker which functions as a political designation in Jim Crow America, develops a discrete sense of historical enclosure in relation to what Ernst Bloch has described as “a prevented future contained in the now” (*Heritage of Our Times* 113). Here Bloch refers to the sociohistorical protocols which divide up structures of time in order to prevent the revolutionary “new society” of the future from reaching a point of culmination in the “objectively contemporaneous” now (121). His insight is that this temporal division is a function of the way in which modern time has been bisected, split apart, disjointed in such a way as to inhibit new political formations on the horizon from emerging and taking shape in the time of the present. This method of examination expresses valid truths about the normative categories of modernity which regulate time structures in order to exclude a range of historical actors calling for transformative economic and social change. Hence the reduction of the future horizon operates as a kind of enclosure.

Bloch’s examination of the modern temporal regime exposes unresolvable contradiction, one that demonstrates the uneven distribution of human agency used to reinforce the character of

black suffering. He observes that because "world history . . . is a house which has more staircases than rooms," not all population groups can be understood to have been given the same position or standing (114). Worse yet, marginalized groups remain simultaneously enclosed within the structure of history, while at the same time closed off from the interior rooms where the seats of power are held. Alternate histories are seemingly relegated into obscurity. Yet most crucially for Bloch, these time-changing effects do not simply reverberate backwards into the past. Along with reshaping the prevailing structure of historical memory, a variety of future possibilities are cast outside the foreseeable horizon, with revolutionary futures foreclosed, alternative outlooks rendered obsolete, forced to conform to fit a dominant world picture.

Considering the tension between the past and the future which forms *The Heritage of Our Times*, it is somewhat surprising, if not downright odd, that Reinhart Koselleck's study *Futures Past* does not make a single reference to Ernst Bloch. The elision is all the more curious because what Bloch famously demonstrates is that to compose an accurate account of history requires understanding the covert connection of the bygone with the future. His method of inquiry aligns with Koselleck's claim that the variegated time structure of modernity can only be perceived when one has learned to construct history not only out of the present time of past things, but, just as crucially, to situate these historical observations alongside the past time of future hopes.

But there are some key differences too. Despite their affinities, Koselleck and Bloch part ways on the relevance of hope to the project of historical recovery. Whereas Bloch remained intent on recovering the anticipatory hopes necessary to inspire a revolutionary transformation of the present,[28] Koselleck was much less convinced that hope provided a sufficient enough framework to proceed with the project of historical inquiry. Koselleck clarifies:

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[28] See: Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986). For an excellent discussion of how collective hopes are destroyed when they are transformed into privatized yearnings in the reified present, see also:

> The conditions of possibility of real history are, at the same time, conditions of its cognition. Hope and memory, or expressed more generally, expectation and experience—for expectation comprehends more than hope, and experience goes deeper then memory—simultaneously constitute history and its cognition. They do so by demonstrating and producing the inner relation between past and future or yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

So he widens the field of study from examining past hopes to past expectations. But Koselleck does not entirely leave Bloch behind here either. There remains a decidedly Blochian inflection to his prose in this section. Frequent nods to simultaneity—for instance when Koselleck says that "experience and expectation . . . simultaneously constitute history and its cognition"—match Bloch's theorization of a multi-temporal dialectic. Above all, for Bloch, the process of temporal synchronization is not uniform; nor is it complete. Bloch invokes the "simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous," an idiom often translated as "synchronicity of the nonsynchronous," though perhaps most adequately translated as "contemporaneity and non-contemporaneity" (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen).*[29] Here we encounter Bloch's phrase as it passes through a range of possibilities to emerge in the process of translation.[30] Yet what all three formulations of Bloch's phrase hold in common is an attempt to use language to convey the uneven coexistence of different temporal realities which occur simultaneously within the same epoch.

Peter Thompson, "Introduction: The Privatization of Hope and the Crisis of Negation," in *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*, ed. Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013, pp. 1-20).

[29] For a productive discussion of these three successive translations, and the differences between them as it pertains to critical advances in understanding Bloch's contributions to Marxist theory, see: Shapiro and Barnard's *Pentecostal Modernism: Lovecraft, Los Angeles, and World-Systems Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2017, pp. 40-44).

[30] "Translation," in Walter Benjamin words, "is removal from one language into another through a continuum of transformations." There is no singular definitive translation, and instead for the process to be genuine and maintain its fidelity to the original text it must remain active and ongoing such that "Translation passes through a continua of transformation, not abstract areas of similarity and identity" (WB 1: 70).

Bloch's identification of the radical unevenness of modern time, as it involves different forms of lived experience within the same historical moment, might even be read to supplement and expand Koselleck's claim that "there is no history which could be constituted independently of the experiences and expectations of active human agents" (267*).* For in the course of examining a heterogeneous "temporal 'multiverse' of peoples and cultures," Bloch emphasizes the togetherness of different forms of historical experience. His point here is not simply to celebrate a plurality of multicultural perspectives each with a unique set of traditions and rituals. Rather, the "temporal multiverse" Bloch gestures toward involves the complicated ways in which time is experienced differently by historical actors with varying degrees of geopolitical standing, access to economic resources, and above all the capacities to self-determine and create their own future. The question for Bloch involves asking which human agents take active priority, and therefore which alternative time sequences, which versions of the *not yet* may be dreamt of, whose expectations become realized, while others are excluded to the margins and withheld? An acute differentiation and limited equalization of historical expectations, both between and within national boundaries, leads to questions about who controls the tenor of history and, in doing so, who is excluded from the range of futures as they are made available or withheld. This concern for alternative time sequences radically expands Koselleck's project of recovering futures past to more rigorously examine how actors of history live within and often contend with situations where they find that their own the visions of the future have been radically circumscribed. Above all, the experience of unevenness occurs when marginalized groups remain simultaneously enclosed within the structure of history as their visions of renewal repeatedly fall short. For it is not one scheme but many.

Folio 1.9 – Lost Potentials

Jean Toomer's modernist language performs the stutter sequence which Koselleck and Bloch attribute to the rumpled unevenness of the past/future threshold. It is a record of unfinished dreams, for it breaks the circle of temporal expectations into character arcs which rise and fall but fail to reach completion. A disquieting sense of the unevenness of modern time takes shape in *Cane* as characters like Esther move seductively toward a future moment only to repeatedly find themselves drifting uncontrollably away from the prospect of their own culmination.

When the image of the black messianic vision reappears in *Cane* for a second time, this time in the subsequent "Esther" section, we are told that "an inspired Negress, of wide reputation for being sanctified, drew a portrait of a black madonna on the courthouse wall" (25), though in this case, too, its narrative position is somewhat compromised, albeit for different reasons. The image functions only as the opening portrait, the primal scene, in an extended series of miraculous visions of the yet-to-be-realized future which appear in the section.

The prose vignette opens with Esther walking dully along Maple Street in Sempter, Georgia.[31] She is about to turn onto Broad Street when the narrator observes:

> White and black men loafing on the corner hold no interest in her. Then a strange thing happens. A clean-muscled, miraculous, black-skinned Negro, whom she has heard her father mention as King Barlo, suddenly drops to his knees on a spot called the Spittoon. (22)

While the narrator of this section does seem to be with Esther here, as the scene progresses emphasis quickly transfers away from a brutal and condescending evaluation of her public

[31] Sempter is the fictional name for Sparta, the rural community in Hancock County where Jean Toomer spent eight weeks in late 1921 employed as a substitute principal at the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute.

invisibility and toward the prospect of an alternative identity formation. The young girl aged nine is first classified as uninteresting for the men of the town. The paradoxical terms of her refusal are such that, even in the act of rejection, her social standing as a mixed-race child, which leaves her undeserving of attention from black and white men alike, remains wholly objectified and codified, controlled and fixed, by the male gaze. From here, the text moves rapidly into observations of a new and emergent character whom, for Esther, embodies the messianic possibility for an alteration to her diminutive existence in Sempter.

King Barlo drops to his knees and begins to have a vision:

> White man, unaware of him, continue squirting tobacco juice in his direction. The saffron fluid splashes on his face. His smooth black face begins to glisten and shine. Soon, people notice him, and gather round. His eyes are rapturous upon the heavens. Lips and nostrils quiver. Barlo is in a religious trance. Town folks know it. They are not startled. They are not afraid. They gather round. Some beg boxes from the grocery stores. From old McGregor's notion shop. A coffin-case is pressed into use. Folks line the curbstones. Business men close shop. And Banker Warply parks his car close by. Silently, all await the prophet's voice. (24)

The man whose name her father once mentioned has evidently arrived into town and begins to cause a ruckus. And his spontaneous emergence interrupts the everydayness of routine. He becomes a focal point, commanding the attention of the black crowd as it converges. Even the businesses which service the demands of the cotton economy quickly close shop.

Alongside the clear religious elements of this spectacle, there is also an immediate historical resemblance. The righteous black crusader named King Barlo, who appears in the center of town, and begins to speak of a redemptive vision, bears a distinct likeness to the

notable black leader whose popular image was widely circulated in the black newspapers during the early 1920s when Toomer was writing *Cane.* The historical allusion is unmistakable. Black newspapers including the UNIA mouthpiece *Negro World,* as well as its rival publication *The Messenger,* had circulated images which dubbed the immensely popular black leader Marcus Garvey as "The Negro Moses"—a political redeemer figure.[32] The reverential moniker "Negro Moses" was a title earned by Garvey's talent for delivering impassioned, eloquent public speeches as much as it was bestowed onto him by the evangelistic fervor of his black audience.[33]

Theodor Vincent tracks this offshoot of "Garveyite theology" as follows:

> For many the UNIA itself was a religion and Marcus Garvey "the Black Moses." William Ferris, speaking of the spiritual doldrums into which the black man had fallen, commented: "Then in the spring of 1918 Marcus Garvey appeared on the scene like 'John the Baptist'. The Reverend R. R. Porter, writing in the *Negro World*, described Garveyism as a religion: "I do not know whether Marcus Garvey is aware of the fact that he has given to the world a new religion; nevertheless he has. . . . To me true Garveyism is a religion which is sane, practical, inspiring and satisfying. As with any devout believer, a true Garveyite "holds fast to that which he believes in best—Garveyism. . . .

[32] Even his political rivals had to concede the fact that Garvey's leadership had found spectacular appeal at the local level in the Jim Crow South. One July 1922 article which ran in the rival black newspaper *The Messenger* observed that Garvey's political vision had awakened the political imaginations of the black mass and now held significant influence over "working men and women who believe Garvey is some sort of Moses" (quoted in Watkins-Owens 81). The Moses moniker was further solidified by the movement's early historical reception. See the first landmark treatment of the UNIA leader written by Edmund David Cronon: *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1955).

[33] The Justice Department also took notice that the Moses moniker was frequently mobilized by followers of the movement. Case files for the Circuit Court of Appeals contain the following statements: "It may be true that Garvey fancied himself a Moses, if not a Messiah; that he deemed himself a man with a message to deliver of his people (MGT 487). Moreover, among the evidence exhibited at trial was the Government's Exhibit 37: a copy of the *Negro World* dated 16 October 1920, featuring an article with the headline: "THE U.N.I.A. CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF NEW RELIGION." According to the article, "The masses of the race absorb the doctrines of the U.N.I.A. with the same eagerness with which the masses in the days of the supremacy of imperial Rome accepted Christianity. The people seem to regard the movement in the light of a new religion" (MGT 2510).

> He is true to himself, others and his religion—through the right understanding of One God, One Aim, One Destiny [the UNIA motto] he shall enjoy life and live abundantly in the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and know that Africa shall once more become the land of the Good, the Strong, and the Wise." (116)

While Garvey himself rarely attended Sunday mass, his movement often drew upon the religious motif of the chosen people in the effort to bring a new sense of pride to the black population. His language crossed between the discourse of a political movement and a religious sermon. Garvey's public speeches strategically evoked what he popularized in speaking tours across America as the spiritual awakening and rise in mass consciousness of the New Negro character. As Nathan Huggins explains, Garvey's public image became a kind of rallying symbol for black Americans whose "spectacular dreams" of deliverance "deserved grander fates" (46).

In his 1921 "Address to the Second UNIA Convention," Marcus Garvey declared to his audience: "The world ought to know that the Negro has come to life, possessed with a new conscience and a new soul. The old Negro is buried, and it is well the world knew it" (MGP 3: 736). In the same year, Garvey would directly employ religious language in order to justify his call for the coming of the New Negro awakening:

> God made each and every one of us in His own image. God Almighty when He created us gave us a common right, a common heritage. My right, my heritage I shall demand and if any one attempts or dares to intrude on my rights I shall fight and die in defense of those rights. (MGP 3: 579)

Here Garvey's public persona comes to stand in as a synecdoche for the rightful spiritual belonging of all black persons around the world. His distinction between key phrases—from "Old Negro" to "a new soul" for the "New Negro"—marks the inception of a new, alternative

black subjectivity, one in which blackness no longer rested on European definitions of racial inferiority, and instead the concept-metaphor of the descendent African carried forth an imaginative power for all members of the black diaspora to unite as a self-mobilizing subjectivity. The combined strength of this global vision of blackness superseded traditional national borders in order to envision alternative futures, global forms of collective belonging, religious devotion, and modes of political action which exceeded the terms of racial hierarchy and gave rise to imagined forms of black self-determination beyond the reach of the imperial nation-states. Historian A. F. Elmes described the situation in 1925: "Negroes all over the world have come to think of themselves as a Race—one in hope and destiny, as never before" (125). Rethinking the racial imagination such that collective belonging was no longer understood as restricted to the confines of imperial state borders led Garvey to rally support, and to attract unprecedented numbers of black Americans to buy memberships to join the UNIA movement. The spectacular dream of a politically united black diaspora helped its members envision, imaginatively—as one group, spiritually and politically—a racial community whose salvation circulated transnationally yet still worked together to create new beginnings.

In Toomer's literary dramatization of these speeches by the black visionary leader, we gain access to the black redeemer figure, King Barlo, and by inference to the Garveyite Black Moses, whose language of eschatology veers uncontrollably between the poles of potentiality and actualization. "His eyes are rapturous upon the heavens," and the sermon he preaches connects him with Africa to provide a symbolic link between the ancestral past and a vision of black futurity yet to arrive (24).

Then he finally begins to speak. He declares that a black Christ figure has risen: “I saw a vision. I saw a man arise, an he was big and black an powerful—” (25). As the description advances, it is Barlo who assumes heroic statue in the town square:

> Some one yells, “Preach it, preacher, preach it!”
>
> “—but his head was caught up in the clouds. An while he was agazing at th heavens, heart filled up with th Lord, some little white-ant biddies came an tied his feet to chains. They led him t th coast, they led him t th sea, they led him across the ocean, an they didn’t set him free. The old coast didn’t miss him, an the new coast wasnt free, he left old-coast brothers, t give birth t you and me.” (25)

As Barlo preaches this old story of trans-Atlantic slavery, he begins to find his own voice. It bears an emergent power to rally the mass public. This power of speech surprises him. “Barlo pauses” and soon “Barlo looks as though he is struggling to continue.” “People are hushed” and “Old gray mothers are in tears” (25). He stops speaking and struggles to maintain his position over the audience. To carry this force upward he must continue to speak.

Barbara Bowen clarifies that the escalating sequence of calls and responses between Barlo and his audience allow for a new character to emerge: a figurehead for black unification bearing emergent power to rally the mass public. The black sovereign and black demos emerge together as the new leader and his quickly converted followers in the crowd find the power of their voices by listening for it in the voices of one another. “Listen to the freeing of rhythm,” Barbara Bowen notes, “as Barlo begins to speak” in Toomer’s text:

> The crowd is hushed and expectant. Barlo’s under jaw relaxes; and his lips begin to move.

> "Jesus has been awhisperin strange words deep down, O way down deep, deep in my ears." (24)

To which Bowen adds:

> And, finally, it is Barlo's voice that enables the crowd to speak. Silent until he speaks, the crowd finds voice in response to him. An "old sister" interrupts with "Ah, Lord," and later "Ah, Lord. Amen. Amen," while someone else shouts, "Preach it, preacher, preach it."
>
> Barlo, too, has found voice after hearing a response to his call. Jesus' message is for him not a chance revelation, but an *answer* to his own voice. (12)

He inserts himself into the story of Christian religiosity and reshapes it as political message in response to the crowd's demand for an affirmation to hear their own voice in his voice. Rather than his divine status being preordained, then, these speech acts function as a reciprocal process of call and response—in other words, a performative discourse—which enables King Barlo to discover, phrase by phrase, his own sovereign voice as the people's voice. As he talks, voices in the crowd echo back with affirmations that solidify his new power as leader of the emergent black mass. So, King Barlo does not so much find his own voice as the New Negro leader on his own; instead, his voice over the people is bequeathed onto him; the power of black multitude is channeled through his voice, forging his new public identity as Black Moses, the spiritual leader of the New Negroes, leading them away from servitude through a reciprocal pattern of call and response. That "a voice responds to his call suddenly confirms his own ability to speak" (Bowen 12). Not only that, beyond its formal play of signifiers, the rapturous speech transforms from devoutly religious to politically commanding in influence. Barlo's voice finds its own amplification as a collective rallying cry of race affiliation.

This intensification of public speech corresponds with Tony Martin's account of Garvey's political speeches: "At one demonstration in Harlem an estimated 150,000 people marched and jammed the sidewalks." "The government," Tony Martin adds, was repeatedly caught off guard and routinely "bewildered by the depth of feeling shown by someone they liked to characterize as a crook" (*Race First* 17). And his reception in the South was equally impressive. At one rally, "[f]ive thousand loyal followers were on hand in New Orleans to listen" to Garvey. "They stood in the rain and sang the UNIA hymn, "God Bless Our President," as the ship pulled away, bearing their leader from the scene of his greatest triumphs" (17). A declassified Bureau of Investigation report dated July 10, 1919 confirmed that "He is an exceptionally fine orator" (MGP 1: 455). To which the report adds: "It is surprising to note the excitement which Garvey is causing among the Negro element" (MGP 1: 455).

Through a rhetorical process of call and response with members of the African-American community in the streets, Barlo begins to discover his own sovereign power as the people's leader. Bowen acknowledges that her understanding of the call and response pattern takes its influence from Robert B. Stepto's *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative*, which reads relational conversations between literary texts. But there are unmistakable resonances here as well with Paul de Man's conception of the illogical logic of prosopopoeia. In the etymological sense, "*prosopon-poiein* means to give a face and therefore implies that the original face can be missing or nonexistent" (*The Resistance to Theory* 44). The trope of address that confers life, face, and voice involves a dual confirmation of both subject and object, addresser and addressee. Referentiality works in both directions, while covering up the gaps as words appear to correspond directly between the characters they personify and bring to life. In the Barlo episode, then, both the speaker and his audience have encountered a new public

appearance—a new face for the New Negro, a “smooth black face that begins to glisten and shine”—brought into the world through the process of call and response. A new black self-identity has been founded upon mutual reference. “It is indeed a prosopopoeia,” de Man clarifies, “a giving face to two entities” which become animated and established on the frontiers of language (47). And what Barlo speaks for becomes increasingly redemptive. His voice both celebrates and comes to personify the signifying speech which animates and confirms its own self-identificatory power. The messianic sequence gives life to the New Negro character who preaches the salvation, the gospel, of black self-determination to his followers.

More historically, too, it is Garvey’s call for a new future for the New Negro which Toomer’s character of King Barlo soon embodies, word by word, as he speaks, through a powerful yet mysterious social process of immaculate conception. Public speech gives birth to this potent new black identity. As the Georgian dusk descends,

> Barlo rises to his full height. He is immense. To the people he assumes the outlines of his visioned African. In a mighty voice he bellows:
>
> “Brothers an sisters, turn your faces t th sweet face of the Lord, an fill your hearts with glory. Open your eyes an see the dawnin of the morning light. Open your ears—"
>
> Years afterwards Esther was told that at that very moment a great, heavy, rumbling voice actually was heard. That hosts of angels and of demons paraded up and down the streets all night. That King Barlo rode out of town astride a pitch-black bull that had a glowing gold ring in its nose.” (25)

The conversion story which tells of the awakening of the power of the New Negro persona is ultimately short lived in the “Esther” section. But the possibility for black self-realization, and the search for a new personality brought with it, evidently resonated with enough influence for

the “inspired negress” to translate the iconic Christian image of the immaculate birth from white to black. The face displayed in this black charcoal inscription becomes the cultural end product—the frontispiece—which gives new form to the religious iconography of salvation.

But the redemptive image of rebirth for the New Negro has been transformed in Toomer’s text when repositioned as graffiti on the courthouse wall. It remains a historical residue. We cannot be sure how successful her influence might one day become inside the court chamber. But so threatened are the white town folks with the latent potential of a black lady justice who might someday awaken to rewrite the future of justice anew that “The sheriff, a great florid fellow whose leggings never meet around his bulging calves, swears in three deputies” (22). We must not miss the historical allusion here either. J. Edgar Hoover justified the expansion of the Bureau of Investigation’s surveillance powers on the basis of keeping tabs on the rise of a dangerous public figure whom the government now deemed a *negro agitator.* Marcus Garvey had come to hold increasing power over the black masses. A Bureau report, dated November 1, 1919 warned:

> It is very apparent that Garvey has been preached about so much that the negroes here have beg[u]n to look upon him as some sort of a Savior or divine spirit. […] Garvey is without doubt one of the worst inciters in the United States today among the negroes, who, I believe, would do almost anything for him. If there should be any race trouble in New York at any time there is no doubt that Garvey is sowing the seeds now for it. (MGP 2: 144-5)

The Bureau’s foreboding warning that Garvey had come to hold a dangerous influence over the black mass intersects with Toomer’s description of the additional officers sworn into the police force which coupled Barlo’s rise. The leader’s call and response had unintended effects. For it

has increased both the prospect for Negro redemption, but only alongside the mobilization of a counter-revolutionary force to stop its realization. Therefore, the new deputies appointed by the white sheriff to patrol the streets of Sempter, Georgia can be read simultaneously in Toomer's text as enforcers of the law, sworn in to uphold order and keep the discriminatory Jim Crow system unchanged, and in this sense the expanding police force can also be understood as adversarial to the more loftier ideal of Justice as equity that these protectors of the law are supposed to be tasked to uphold.

One can see the usefulness of the stark contrast between the visionary drawing and its placement on the courthouse wall. On the one hand, the illustration testifies to the redemptive reach and lasting influence of King Barlo's faith in telling the story of the captured African who ultimately finds freedom and immaculate rebirth in Christian values. However, as Nathan Grant adds, the charcoal sketch is also "an announcement of protest against the body of law that obstructs the uniquely American freedom that Toomer sought to express on behalf of all men and women" (48). We must further add, too, that the figure of the black redeemer can be more plainly understood to have been translated by the "inspired negress" into its more secularized figuration as a black personification of Lady Justice. One of the most recognizable legal symbols in American justice, Lady Justice, the feminized personification of the moral force of the law, who holds a sword of punishment in one hand and raises the scales of justice in the other, embodies the dual characteristics of the law as both the disinterested arbiter of *justice to come* and distributor of punishment for those who break its rules.

If the frontispiece on the courthouse is that charcoal sketch of black redemption which in some sense may draw us libidinally deeper into the force of the law, reengaging and scrutinizing the paradoxes of its ideological 'world', however transitory the vision scrawled on the building's

surface, such foregrounding also stands as the marker, the frontispiece, to Toomer's *Cane*. It demonstrates a correlation, and crossover, between visible sign and written word which converge as frontispiece to bind the past to a new vision—a wish image of justice to come—of a just transmission into the future yet to be realized.

The concept of the frontispiece recalls the situation described by Ian Baucom in *Specters of the Atlantic*, in which the discourse of history as it is handed down becomes encrypted with facts that wound or haunt it:

> History's frontispieces identify themselves, like those who testify, as occupying a hinge between times, as neither utterly within the past time they argue (or to which they attest) nor utterly within the future time in which the work of argumentation or testimony is complete. Neither complete proper to nor dispossessed by the work it opens, neither completely something that belongs to the anterior time of the written or the posterior time of wiring, neither completely of one or the other, the frontispiece defines for itself a third space, a third scene, a third time, And in this sense at least the frontispiece is not just contingently (but at least one etymological account) definitionally testamentary. (174)

Whatever the motivations, the rhetorical implications of Toomer's strategy were clear: by introducing a second discourse of law, binding Lady Justice to the figure of the black Madonna, he was able to render possible the testamentary image of a black female artist charged with the task of assuming and transmitting the collective vision of renewal she has taken on as history's observer and survivor. As consequence, the frontispiece on the legal architecture she reinscribes, reworks, redesigns, ultimately speaks to the impossible responsibility she must embody as witness: both to bear witness to the miraculous event beyond representation and to give exact testimony as witness. But this impossible responsibility of the witness remains imperative. For

the testimony contained in this process is a cultural mediation tasked with rendering visible the afterimage of that truth event which once raised a miraculous demand for change.

Folio 1.10 – Unafraid Creation

What defense do we have against the realization that these spectacular dreams for black self-determination deserved grander fates? The type of defence described by Waldo Frank perhaps: a retroactive assertion that dreams for black sovereignty and race pride associated with New Negro movement must be viewed in hindsight—in past tense—as the product of "a restrictive state of mind" now finally open to better alternatives (117). These retroactive attempts to recharacterize the merits of black achievement were made by Waldo Frank, who announced the text's publication. In the original 1923 forward to *Cane*, Frank took the occasion to introduce Jean Toomer to the American public as a new literary voice whose spirit and genius did not express any particular commitment to the lives of those torn by the dilemma of race. For the "Negro Problem," as Frank described it, was best understood as problem only in the sense that it lived on only in the past tense. A new apolitical folk spirit had emerged. Frank's forward argued:

> For Toomer, the Southland is not a problem to be solved; it is a field of loveliness to be sung: the Georgia Negro is not a downtrodden soul to be uplifted; he is material for gorgeous painting; the segregated self-conscious brown belt of Washington is not a topic to be discussed and exposed; it is a subject of beauty and of drama, worthy of creation in literary form. […] It is a harbinger of the South's maturity; of its emergence from the obsession put upon its minds by the unending racial crisis—an obsession from which writers have made their indirect escape through sentimentalism, exoticism, polemic,

'problem' fiction, and moral melodrama. It marks the dawn of direct and unafraid creation. (117-8)

Peter Nicholls notes that Waldo Frank's forward eventually "displeased Toomer," precisely because it insulated the work of literary production from the surging reactionary politics of the day (230). The text became stripped of its incendiary political nuances, and it crowned Toomer as the willful ambassador of black respectability. Consequently, Frank's suggestion that Toomer had crafted a new image of the Negro race, one based on politeness and decorum, to "mark the dawn of direct and unafraid creation," was a statement that took extraordinary measures to redirect, if not silence, the oppressive historical forces that Toomer saw among the black folks living the segregated State of Georgia. The new era of racial equanimity had yet to arrive in Jim Crow America. But this did not stop Frank from treating it as such.

Yet perhaps the most disappointing blow for Toomer emerged from the fact that he had revered Waldo Frank's writings as the literary model for his own aesthetic production. In fact, just one year prior, in a letter dated 31 October 1922, Toomer wrote to their mutual friend Gorham Munson, declaring that "Waldo is the only modern writer who has immediately influenced me" (*Selected Unpublished Writings* 19). It was precisely this adoration for works like *Our America* (1919) and *City Block* (1922) which later caused Toomer to write Frank directly and request he edit *Cane* and write the forward. While other authors, including Sherwood Anderson, had expressed keen interest in the book, Toomer made clear his intentions by sending a letter to Frank, along with a copy of the manuscript entrusted personally to him. "There is not another man in the world that I would let touch it," Toomer wrote, before adding: "You not only understand CANE, you are *in* it, specifically here and there, mystically because of the spiritual bond between us. When you write, you will express me, and in a very true way you

will express yourself. This combination I believe to produce the only worthwhile Introduction" (23). The subsequent forward which graced the front pages of *Cane* was hardly the "natural step in their *expression*" that Toomer had wished for in his letter to his literary hero (23). Based as it was on detaching *Cane*'s characters from the historical situation of a country that remained segregated and deeply divided, it failed to meet the demand to represent what Toomer described to Frank as the "driving force" that would one day be responsible for leaving its cast of "Old Negroes" behind (24). Frank had evidently mistaken Toomer's hopeful expectation in the letter—his wish that "A hundred years from now these Negroes, if they exist at all they will live in art" (24).

Of course, for all of that difference between experience and expectation, the text is structured to speak for itself. Peter Nicholls indicates that readers do not have to strain that hard to observe that "Toomer's lyricism has a darkly elegiac inflection that exposes the deceptive nature of the beauty it so richly evokes" (230). The text drifts away from any clear prospect that the hope for renewal will be carried forward to any natural point of completion. Toomer, in fact, famously described the book not as a new dawn emerging but as "a swan song. It is a song of an end" (SW 24). Alternate futures have been replaced. A fragmented sequence of historical vignettes registers the passing of any one uniform set of dreams and multiplies these expectations for change to occur in a rapidly modernizing America. Hopes for renewal manifest in *Cane's* across a range of narrators who never meet. Indeed, the fragmented modernist text reads as a disparate array of forecasted futures which could not be restricted, controlled, nor aligned with any singular progressivist narrative or singular conception of race. The text's radical discordance, its fragmentation, most of all its rejection of closure, undercut and challenged the very expectations raised by Frank that the American South would at long last reach its eventual

"maturity." The reader is struck and overwhelmed by Frank's liberal progressivist expectations for closure. Anticipations may be used to control the narrative—to recast the narrative as an investment in modernity as progressive. But the failure to reach such anticipations leaves a trace.

Folio 1.11 – Conversion

The "Esther" episode is unique in *Cane* for its narrative breaks. It stands alone as the only prose vignette where each section corresponds to a different moment in the character's life. Each subheading announces a different age: "*Nine,*" "*Sixteen,*" "*Twenty-two,*" "*Esther is twenty-seven*" (22, 24, 25). According to Barbara C. Foley, "Toomer appears to have borrowed from Sherwood Anderson's 'Adventure' [. . .] the device of mapping a character's emotional development into distinct phases, but Toomer deploys these for both psychoanalytical and political purposes" (*Jean Toomer: Race, Repression, and Revolution* 210).[34] Toomer deploys these narrative breaks in such a way that we not only gain a sense of the "distinct phases" of Esther's life. The carefully staged sequence also allows Toomer trace the development of Esther's character over time in order to dangle hopeful expectations for change in front of the reader but ultimately to block the final stage of historical realization. In turn, we are able to

[34] Elsewhere Foley has observed that "the bildungsroman is the classic form" in which "naive protagonists, usually young, encounter various trials that enable them to test their meddle. They undergo apprenticeships in the lessons of life and emerge older and wiser" (*Radical Representations* 321). On the one hand, Foley observes that the formative events which constitute the lives of such characters "serve the functions of synecdochic commentary, for they are 'types' representing the broader lineaments of their time and place. Yet bildungsroman heroes are usually set apart from their peers by a number of distinctive traits—looks, intelligence, ambition. They are at once ordinary and extraordinary" (321). In the case of Esther, her class consciousness emerges early. She as the daughter of the richest black man in town, and this hereditary fact sets up the extraordinary beginning of her own life story. Though, at the same time, perhaps the most distinctive characteristic that sets her apart is her diminutive status as a person of mixed race, neither white nor black. Communicating this marginalized racial status allows Toomer to map out the quotidian experience of his own conflicted sense of belonging, and readers can presumably carry the text's implied lessons about the socially constructed basis of racial categories over into their own lives in order to emerge from their reading of the novel older and wiser.

distinguish complex feelings of emotional discontent which accumulate alongside Esther's recognition of her limited social standing as a woman of mixed race.

Expectations of human development which characterize to the coming-of-age genre of the bildungsroman are both mobilized and circumvented. Esther is the daughter of "Sempter's richest Negro store owner," Foley clarifies, but her own "high-yellow" complexion casts her skin with an alienating hue that inhibits reaching the same level of social consolidation that her own father enjoys (210). She remains an outsider yet one who may simultaneously trade back and forth between groups. It is no wonder, then, that she has been put in charge of the cash register used to ring in the goods purchased with paper currency. Monetary exchange and racial exchange are shown to be indivisible here. In fact, Esther's own ambiguous social currency as a woman of mixed race is somehow analogous with the magical paper money that is exchanged by the black and white town folk who visit her father's general store and purchase a variety of commodities. Like the paper money itself, she fails to rise about her own sense of estrangement. Historical incompletion comes to typify the predicament of alienation that Foley describes as Esther's "inner deadness" (210). The coming of age narrative paradoxically moves ahead from phase to phase in the life story of a character who repeatedly fails to transcend her objective status to become a vital part of the living community.

The first set of anticipations for renewal emerge in Esther's first-hand encounter with Barlo. At nine years old: "'I saw a vision'," she heard him say, "'I saw a Man rise. He was big and black and powerful" (24). This black nationalist vision is left indelibly upon the mind of Esther. From here the narrative sequence jump-cuts ahead in time. At age sixteen she dreams of having Barlo's black child through immaculate conception. Again, at age twenty-two:

She thinks of Barlo. Barlo's image gives her a slightly stale thrill. She spices it by telling

> herself his glories. Black. Magnetically so. Best cotton picker in the country, in the state, the whole world for that matter. Best man with his fists, best man with dice, with a razor. Promoter of church benefits. Of colored fairs. Vagrant preacher. Lover of all the women for miles and miles around. Esther decides that she loves him. And with a vague sense of life slipping by, she decides that she will tell him so, whatever people say, the next time she comes to town. (26)

As she ages, she repeatedly calls back his image if only to repeat a set of melancholic ties to a bygone past. She remains alone. Five years pass. Finally, at age twenty-seven, her resolve appears to have finally faded. She "sells lard and snuff and flour to vague black faces that drift in her store and ask for them. Her eyes hardly see the people to whom she gives change. Her body is lean and beaten" (27). She embodies a life force noticeably emaciated and beaten down.

What becomes recycled in cultural form, lived out by Toomer's characters in snippets of poetry and prose, are the afterimages of failed dreams that have failed to be fully integrated. Futures are abandoned rather than completed. Yet his characters embody, and come to demonstrate, a kind of secondary processing as these failed dreams continue to have lasting repercussions. To call back these unincorporated futures, which remain incomplete, cut off from the ongoing narrative of progress, is to chart the gap between memory and hope, historical expectation and experience.

Nowhere is this premise more thoroughly tested than when Barlo miraculously reappears in the town of Sempter a second time after spending years away. Near the end of the "Esther" section, Barlo returns to the small Georgian town after years spent in the city. From the streets someone shouts: "'King Barlo has come back to town'" (27). It soon becomes evident, though, that Barlo has shed the mantle of a sovereign black king. On the contrary, his prior vision, which

once gave birth to the New Negro imagination, has now been replaced, all too conspicuously, by Barlo's unexpected appearance in the driver's seat of a new automobile.

The set-up of this scene closely parallels one of the most iconic photographs of Marcus Garvey riding in procession.

Fig. 2. *Rev. J. Austin (left) with Marcus Garvey.*
Photographer unknown. 1922. (In *Picturing Us* 180)

Taken in 1922, the image encompasses several layers of meaning. Marcus Garvey is photographed in an automobile during the annual UNIA parade down New York's Seventh Avenue. The dazzling pomp of the black leader's attire allows him stand out as the unmistakable centerpiece in the procession. "Recumbent and regal," observes Robert Hill, "Garvey is photographed as he rides in his high-powered touring car, the symbolic vehicle of the new black affluence after World War I" (182). "At the same time," Hill adds, "as a means of glorifying his movement of African restoration, Garvey hit upon the idea of presenting his movement as heir to

ancient Egypt as the symbol of Africa's sovereignty" (181). The photograph, which ran in a 1922 edition of *Negro World*, marks the "fusion of ancient Africa and modern America," drawing together this "symbolic nexus of Egyptology and speed and power (as represented by the automobile)" (122). "And like the winged figure of classical mythology," the modern car offers a visually stunning complement to the mythical spectacle of the UNIA parade meant to demonstrate the vitality of the UNIA's "twin program of restoration and regeneration" (182).

Yet in contradistinction to the regal self-fashioning of Marcus Garvey, dressed with "gold trimmings and sashes," when Barlo returns to town again he hardly projects the image of a "man with colossal determination" set on restoring the black race (Hill 183). Something about his visage has diminished. His reappearance in the final scene of "Esther" does not mark the miraculous return of the same reverential figure of King Barlo, the black visionary leader. The radical dream of race advancement has been purged, his vision of black redemption tarnished, his image as New Negro redeemer figure hollowed out. This negative portrayal of Barlo presumably reflects Toomer's acquaintance with left critiques of Garvey's capitalist politics. Toomer's critique of the failures of Garveyism, particularly its reliance on the exploitive capitalist system of labor relations, mirrors the horrified reaction of the black left to Marcus Garvey's betrayal of the socialist project for what they saw as cheap financial gains.

At various points, black leaders including Du Bois of the *Messenger* and Chandler Owen and A Philip Randolph of the *Messenger* communicated the urgent need for Garvey to redirect the largest black populist movement in the world toward the socialist cause. But as the business venture of the Black Star Line began to gather momentum, increases in stock sales seemed to only further vindicate the UNIA's resolute commitment to a capitalist solution to racial disenfranchisement through the rapid development of its own global system of black market

exchange. Moreover, Garvey's unwavering insistence on black capitalism as the only solution to end racial domination regularly alienated those who leaned towards the Socialist Party. One advertisement in the *Negro World* for BSL stock plainly declared:

> YOU WORK HARD FOR YOUR MONEY
>
> WHY NOT MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU? (MGP 3: 636)

The advertisement did not mince words about the private rewards that would come from investing in stock of this global transportation venture. In the same advertisement, an image showed Marcus Garvey pointing to a map of the world. On the desk beside him stood tall stacks of money. In the background, behind the map, f a long line of UNIA members with rally signs supporting the cause for "Industrial and Commercial Development" as the "basis and success for any people" (MGP 3: 636). Yet while expanding black commerce as the means to a better collective future certainly garnered immense popularity among the black masses, Garvey's political opponents called out his dubious reliance on a flawed capitalist system, structured by inequalities, one that for centuries had blocked all possibilities for the redistribution of wealth to the poorest black laborers in the economic system.

A particularly noteworthy fallout between Harlem race leaders occurred in 1921. The African Blood Brotherhood, a race-first party with communist allegiances, founded in 1919 by Cyril Briggs, published an article dated 6 August 1921 in the *Negro Congress Bulletin and News Service*. The ABB communicated an ambitious plan to collapse the together all the Negro organizations as one in order to build "A MIGHTY FEDERATION TO MAKE RACE A WORLD POWER" (MGP 3: 637). Briggs announced that he was not alone in these ambitions: "While Mr. Garvey and other officials of the Congress have not yet publicly declared their attitude on the matter, Mr. Garvey and several others when privately approached, expressed themselves heartily

in favor of the plan" (MGP 3: 637). In order to bridge the divide between his own black leftist party and the Garvey's populist movement for black liberation, Briggs sent ABB representatives to the second annual UNIA Convention. The four ABB delegates carried with them a letter from Briggs, addressed to Marcus Garvey, inviting the leader of the UNIA to extend the same courtesy back to the ABB by attending its international Negro Congress (MGP 3: 667-8).

A report of what happened next at the annual UNIA convention was published in the 26 August 1921 issue of the *Negro World*. It ran with the headline "BOLSHEVISM IN FLIGHT." According to the official UNIA account, "There was some excitement during the afternoon session when a delegate from the African Blood Brotherhood" was spotted in the crowd (MGP 3: 691). After recognizing the ABB representative, members of the crowd soon began to question him about the false publication of a supposed alliance between the two black organizations. Sensing the growing hostilities of the surrounding crowd, the ABB member anxiously dashed toward the exit. He was "seen to rise hastily and scurry across the hall, plunge through the doorway, beating his way in the precipitate flight towards Seventh avenue. The erstwhile indignant House rocked with laughter" (MGP 3: 691). After the man had fled, Marcus Garvey quickly seized the opportunity to turn the crowd's attention back toward the stage in order to publicly condemn the ABB's false report. According to the *Negro World*'s news release:

> The Hon. Marcus Garvey then warned the House not to be misled as to the nature of the policy of the African Blood Brotherhood. Through its organ, the Crusader Magazine, he said, it pretended to have at heart the interests of Negroes. It was in reality the advocate of Sovietism, Bolshevism and Radicalism, the paid servant of certain destructive white elements which aimed at expiating Negroes for their own subservient ends. (MGP 3: 692)

Garvey may have skillfully re-solidified his membership's faith at this decisive moment, but his boisterous condemnation of the socialist labor movement as beholden to white imperial power was inscrutable. The *Negro World*'s report was met with scorn and criticism by the black left. Briggs was especially livid. Any chance for the ABB to forge an alliance with Garvey's populist movement had vanished in spectacular fashion. Events such as these also drove away some radical activists and writers on the left, including fellow Jamaican Claude McKay, who had once published writings in the *Negro World*. McKay would go on to pen a searing critique in a 1922 issue of the *Liberator*, noting that Garvey had repeatedly turned his back on the socialist cause.

We see this disappointment play out in *Cane* when Barlo returns back to Sempter. He has not returned to emancipate rural blacks from their situation of economic hardship in the South. Instead, he has made a fortune by speculating on the cotton economy during the war. Esther races to the doorway of her father's store, excited at first, only to notice that those who circle around Barlo form "a group of credulous men" (27). A select group of men are now enraptured with Barlo as the personification of modern capital. All that remains of King Barlo's former regal stature has somehow been monetized and hollowed out. Driving a big car, black Barlo now embodies the bourgeois elitism of private wealth.

Esther is familiar with the contradictions and pitfalls of black capitalism. She works as a clerk behind the counter in her father's grocery store. She is responsible for the exchange of money with customers. From an early age, she learned from her "colored father" to "keep the money in the family" rather than redistributing it back to poorer members in the community who buy their goods (26). The text confirms that "her father is the richest man in town" (152). Yet although her father has kept a close eye on the family business to maximize monetary gains, we soon learn that independent wealth is not the kind of fortune that garners Esther's respect (26).

“There is nothing innocent,” writes Charles Shruggs and Lee VanDemarr, about the cultural betrayal practiced by her father and her siblings:

> Esther’s family turns away from its black past by emulating the white middle class and adopting from the white world the ethos of capitalism, which is always grounded in the present moment. In Marxist terms, the economic arrangements of capitalism insist that the human history that lies behind money must disappear: currency is always both current and colorless, that is, the human exchange on which it is based remains hidden. (152)

Money is colorless. Yet, in jarring contradiction, she is told by her “colored father” that black customers are to be valued solely on how much money they will spend in the store. At one point he goes so far as to tells her to “Be just as black as any man who has a silver dollar” (152). The repercussion is that money not race pride forms the pretense of self-sufficiency.

When Esther peers through the shop window, only to see Barlo drive past in an expensive car, she quickly recognizes that his dream of race renewal has transformed into the kind of shrewd speculation practiced by her father. The form of prosperity that Barlo now comes to represent may pretend to be colorless, but in actuality his maximization of profits has betrayed the black community. She quickly learns that Barlo’s enormous motor car has been purchased from money he made on cotton picked by black sharecroppers during the war. Indeed, Barlo’s wartime profiteering was made possible by the rapid increases in demand for raw cotton and other agricultural materials harvested across the Black Belt by poor landowners and tenant farmers. Barlo maximized his fortunes by speculating on these financial ventures.

Through this realization, the pomp and revolutionary fanfare associated with the black revolutionary current of the New Negro movement has been abandoned for new money. King Barlo is no longer a fearless visionary; his identity has been transformed into a good-time fella.

As Toomer's text rewrites subject positions in this moment, presenting a dialectical view of both the hopeful potential and failure of the Garveyite populist movement, personified by Barlo, we come to learn how identities are both created and transformed in the public eye, and with mysterious after-effects that continue to play out. The logical extension of this paradigm shift being that the fantasies of economic speculation have come to redefine Barlo's public character: his dreams for collective black liberation—to appear in public as "big and black and powerful"—have been reformed as an aspiration for the private accumulation of wealth. Barlo's prophesy of a new black dream has been lost. His pulpit has been replaced by profits. Thus, the birth of the New Negro has not matured to a final culmination point; instead, that dream, too, has been abandoned in its infancy. The sign of collective rebirth has been replaced by a modern dream of independent wealth.

One cannot help but wonder to what extent this newfound interest in profiting from the uneven dynamics of property relations is an extension and prerequisite of his new financial character in the Roaring Twenties. What is made clear is that the terms of exchange between North and South, as mutually informing domains between economic core and periphery, have not been transformed at all in this sequence. The financial hub of the North still remains dependent on the material production of cheap sharecropper labor. The sale of raw goods like cotton and timber harvested by African American workers have for generations propped up the US financial market and traders on Wall Street. But fluctuations in demand for raw materials on the commodity market are such that they often involve catastrophic ebbs and flows. Barbara Foley notes that the region of Hancock Country that featured as the backdrop of Toomer's *Cane* "entered a depression in 1921 ("In the Land of Cotton" 183). "When the market for lumber shrank" and "several Hancock County mills closed in May . . . the ensuing layoffs had a drastic

impact upon a work force already strapped by the collapse of the cotton market" ("In the Land of Cotton" 183). Decreasing demand "drove down the value of labor, compounding the Great Migration of the previous decade and precipitating the remaining sharecroppers and tenant farmers into conditions of increasing dependency" (184). Yet the intelligibility of these material relations—the differences between North and South—remains somewhat hidden to Esther. For one of these domains exceeds the other.

Barlo's New Negro character has undergone an economic conversion, one that links his financial success to different modes of property ownership. But note also the subtle crossover here with Pan-African movements like Garveyism which defined its incendiary actions for economic renewal in opposition to a geopolitical system which for too long had excluded black investors from raising significant wealth of their own. In order to actualize the promise of racial uplift, Marcus Garvey envisioned a new global network of economic exchange for the African diaspora. The UNIA organization founded the Black Star Line steamship corporation, and through its sale of stock sought to engage in global trade, exchange and profit, to unite a vast African diaspora. The move was meant to create the terms of emergence of a new modern era in black political commerce, and ultimately to raise the standard of living for blacks around the world. But this vision of the future has been rewritten in Toomer's text such that the modern form of independence Barlo stands for does not serve as an index for black self-determination as one global unit and market of exchange. Instead of working for the common good, Barlo's speculative profiteering marks a pattern of private accumulation, his profits made off the backs of overworked black laborers.

The modern car Barlo drives through the streets of Sempter may be technologically advanced, the pinnacle of modern technology, but the immense sum of money he paid for it links

him back to a regressive economic pattern of capital transactions in which any accumulation of money by black subjects eventually end up back in the hands of white corporate elites. Indeed, there is something remarkably illogical about the economic logic which has allowed him to purchase a luxury car manufactured in the North in order to drive through the impoverished region of Hancock County. Unlike, say, the steamships of the Black Star Line, which Garvey intended "to be owned, controlled, and manned by Negroes, to reach the Negro peoples of the world," and spread the dream of economic renewal, Barlo's car is hardly the kind of symbol which stands as a collective symbol to carry forth redemptive promise of black mobility (MGP 1: 454).

Barlo's car is modern extravagance, specifically one made for personal use. It may be technologically advanced, the pinnacle of modern innovation, top of the line, with a hefty price tag in accordance with the immense profits Barlo has made on commodities, but for unspecified reasons its exhaust pipe has been "Cut-out open," a technological modification which only causes a noisy disturbance as Barlo's machine roars loudly, and echoes through the streets (27). It eventually transports him past Esther's shop window. This vicarious display of wealth sets Esther's mind back into motion:

> Barlo has made money on cotton during the war. He is as rich as anyone. Esther is suddenly animate. She goes to her door. She sees him at a distance, the center of a group of credulous men. She hears the deep-bass rumble of his talk. The sun swings low. McGregor's windows are aflame again. Pale flame. A sharply dressed white girl passes by. For a moment Esther wishes that she might be like her. Not white; she has no need for being that. But sharp, sporty, with get-up about her. Barlo is connected with that wish.

> She mustnt wish. Wishes only make you restless. Emptiness is a thing that grows by being moved. "I'll not think. Not wish. Just set my mind against it." (27)

Esther describes the rumble of Barlo's voice as it matches the modern rhythm of the car engine. He has transformed. He no longer speaks for the collective birth of the New Negro through the pattern of call and response. His voice still carries influence, but it remains unidirectional only held in reverence amongst "a group of credulous men." She knows better. For the Great War has passed, and opportunities for black renewal once dreamed about in the geopolitical opening closed shortly after it. Yet she cannot help but recall the previous moment when Barlo's message first moved from religious to political in reach and influence over the unified crowd. But now the deep rumble bass of his voice has transformed itself again. No longer does he speak of a New Negro awakening, he speaks with the fast-moving and unpredictable cadence of modern free market economics, which yields a consciousness about self and language, as he personifies the economic subject, and speaks in a machine-like murmur that threatens to rumble and disrupt even the natural ground underneath it.

Esther vows not to be persuaded by Barlo's siren song this time. Not again. Last time, she jumped at the first hope of renewal, but the kernel was not carried to fruition. The dangerous transformative power of that new belief system failed in its redemptive reach to provide more than a brief and fleeting glimpse of the world to come. This time, she thinks, she must "not wish." For Barlo's rather unmiraculous reappearance in the town rings hollow to her ears. Esther must resign herself to the fact that since the age of eight she has been holding onto "Dead dreams, and a forgotten resolution"—both of which she clarifies "are carried up in flames" with Barlo's lackluster return from the North (27). But even this statement sheds doubt on Esther's resolve to finally set her failed expectations into flames, as the reference to fire might allude to

her earlier fantasy of the child rescued from flames, which in her fantasy she claimed as her own.

After she closes shop, and walks home, she finds her room and locks the door. But desire for a new beginning manifests itself again: "Her mind is a pink meshbag filed with baby toes" (27). She departs her room, late at night, her mind still spinning dreams of a new developmental beginning. As she walks through the rural townscape, we sense her struggle to repress vibrant signs of life reanimating itself. The rural South is undergoing a historic process of conversion; transformative signs surround her at every turn. She wants her mind to be cold, and her purpose passionless, unsullied by the external influence of soothsayers, such that her thoughts are "Solid, contained, and blank as a darkened sheet of ice" (27). In this moment, we are told that Esther has reversed her original desire to transcend her own inner deadness: "She will not permit herself to notice the peculiar glitter of the sweet-gum leaves. Their movement would excite her" (27). There is a certain inevitability to what comes next. Her purpose must remain steady. Even though Barlo's sexual vitality appears replaced by capitalist gains, she still gives herself over to the black wartime profiteer, presenting herself to him as a lifeless sexual object. At one point she even propositions Barlo. "I've come for you," she says in contrived speech. (28).

Esther may be the daughter of a Negro merchant, and subject to the one-drop rule, yet her whiteness, and virginity, almost seem too pure for him. Barlo immediately rejects this "lil milk-white gal" and reiterates her humiliation twice in sequence: "Ths aint th place fer y. Ths aint th place fer y" (28). Barlo admonishes her, while the others in the black establishment comment on her repressed virginity, mocking her publicly. No immaculate birth or even profane sexual conquest can follow from this sequence. As a woman of mixed race, she is not black enough to one day carry his New Negro baby.

Here we find another neglected dimension the Garvey movement. Marcus Garvey may have "built the largest mass movement among Black people that this country had ever seen," therefore compelling black Americans to enter "a new phase of their struggle for freedom and national identity" (Clarke 119). Yet Garvey also demonstrated a tendency to repeatedly go on public record exclaiming the exclusivity of blackness as an identity category. This essentialized configuration of blackness as a pure race category left individuals of racially mixed descent—such as Esther and Jean Toomer—in an increasingly precarious position. The New Negro movement gained traction alongside claims that affirmed the purity of blackness. In one sense, an insistence on the primacy of blackness was meant to protect against the arrogant stubbornness of colonial power. At the same time, though, Garvey's distrust of mixed racial bonds was a calculated political move, an organizing tactic that distinguished the UNIA from other organizations who claimed to speak for the darker millions. Chief among these rivals was light-skinned leader of the NAACP. To mark out his own credibility, Garvey often compared his own pure racial stock with the dubious mixed ancestry of the man behind the NCAA, W. E. B. Du Bois, whose questionable skin color posed a threat.

An editorial letter written by Marcus Garvey and published in the 6 February 1923 edition of the *Negro World* draws attention to the ruse of assimilation. The following section appears under the subheading "Primitive Negroes":

> Now we come to the crux of the matter. . . . a small group of men led by Du Bois, who believe the race problem is to be solved by assimilation and that the best program for the Negro is to make himself the best imitation of the white man and approach him as fast as possible with the hope of jumping over the fence into the white race and be completely

> lost in another hundred years; therefore they hate everything Negro and they haven't sense enough to hide it. . . .
>
> We will all remember that in the slave days the Negroes of America and the West Indies were taken from Africa, and that they then represented their primitive tribalness. The emancipation, both in America and the West Indies, has brought us up to our present state, with the majority of our people still bearing resemblance to this tribal primitiveness, while a few have endeavored to make themselves Caucasianized. These men regard it as a crime to be as nature made us, and for us to be as nature made us is to be ignorant; this shows how much love these would-be Negroes have for the motherhood of our race. (MGP 5: 233)

This defense of black culture poses a challenge to the "hidden motives" of the traditional mixed-blood leadership whose assimilationist tactics have double-crossed black Americans by viewing any celebration of blackness as futile and primitive (MGP 224). In another piece from 1923, written in the third person, Garvey recounts his first impression of the social composition of the NCAAP when he first visited to their branch office:

> . . . he was dumbfounded on approach to the office to find that but for Mr. Dill, Du Bois himself and the office boy, he could not tell whether he was in a white office or that of the National Association for the Advancement of "Colored" People. The whole staff was either white or very near white, and thus Garvey got his first shock of their advancement hypocrisy. There was no representation of the race there that anyone could recognize. The advancement meant that you had to be as white as possible, otherwise there was no place for you as stenographer, clerk, or attendant in the office. (*Philosophy and Opinions* 57)

Clearly Garvey positions himself here on the side of the blackness, and more specifically on the side of the impoverished black worker. His populist musings echo the resentment held by those members of the black lower class who believed that the ruling black elite, made up of a small percentage of black professionals, could no longer be trusted. For generations, capitulating to the demands of the white race has done little but to consolidate an upper-caste of colored elites. Note the distinction. Whereas Garvey tapped into the great mass of working-class black Americans, "the so-called cow-tail and hoe-handled brigade" (Grant 299), his chief political rival W. E. B. Du Bois boldly and unapologetically spoke to the "Talented Tenth as they have been worthy of leadership" (*Du Bois: Writings* 842). Du Bois argued that by continuing to make progress toward equality "this 10 per cent would act as a vanguard" leading Negros toward the future, "forcing mainstream American society to integration . . . a process that the historian, David Levering Lewis, summarized as 'civil rights by copyright'" (Grant 79).

Given these tumultuous divisions within the colored race in America, no wonder Barlo's public standing appears so confusing when he arrives back in Sempter abounding in money. Aspirations for newness have been converted into little more than financial profiteering on the backs of black laborers. In this respect, he appears closer in political affiliation to the black assimilationists than the global New Negro project of black financial alliance represented by Marcus Garvey. But the comparison is not quite accurate either since for Du Bois it was the principle of a sound "education" not speculative finance that served as the best remedy to the "Negro Problem":

> Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. […] If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy,

> knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education that must underlie true life. (842)

This section of Du Bois's essay "The Talented Tenth" clearly indicates that *money-makers* like Barlo will not liberate the wider black population from disenfranchisement. The accumulation of wealth into the hands of a few black elites simply exacerbates the Negro Problem.

The transformative change in Barlo's character personifies the paradoxical assumption that black prosperity is colorblind. He rises to the top by doubling down on the capitalist mode of production. Through a kind of cognitive dissonance, he continues to imagine himself in a member of the black community, but the fact remains that his personal wealth is the accrued value of black labor, and this private accumulation of surplus financial earnings is precisely what sets him apart from the poor black workers of Hancock County. So while, on the one hand, Barlo rejects Esther for not being black enough, the narrative also reveals that Barlo is no longer black enough either when he returns back to town. The burning intensity of his sexual vitality which, for Esther, once held open the possibility of racial purity, and black regeneration, now seems fully extinguished. The animated speeches which made him the people's king have been relinquished for little more than assimilationist whimpers.

The progression of Esther's story is haunted by the rather bleak realization that the black night spot is no place for her, but also that there is no place for her or anyone to hide. The entire history of the region is undergoing constant transformations and conversions, dictated by the demands of finance capital, and yet, somehow, the subjugated status and combative social relations for most of the town's residents will remains unchanged. The Black Belt will remain coded as infancy—as a region forever developmentally delayed. Aspirations for newness are repeatedly held back. The history of the Black Belt is a series of broken horizons. This

incompletion persists, relentlessly, even as the global south becomes increasingly fluid, incorporated, its material commodities sold off as fluid assets.

To punctuate this stark realization, Toomer locates a poem about assimilation immediately following the Esther section:

> Conversion
>
> African Guardian of Souls,
>
> Drunk with rum,
>
> Feasting on a strange cassava,
>
> Yielding new words and a weak palabra
>
> Of a white-faced sardonic god—
>
> Grins, cries
>
> Amen,
>
> Shouts hosanna. (29)

To be converted is to accept—as truth—new words and weak talk. And this speculative talk of spiritual redemption appears to be a petty compensation for the black futurity now lost. A white-faced, milk-cheeked god has replaced older spiritual networks. This new god offers liberation through signs of prosperity. But Toomer also highlights the dangerous transformative power of this new belief system. The conversion ceremony is an act of pacification which involves the consumption of alcohol and forbidden fruit. Once these provisions are ingested, belief in the Black Messiah is mysteriously replaced by universal pleas for salvation that offer little in terms of longstanding collective betterment. And this process of incorporation, like the capitalist finance on which the trans-Atlantic slave trade was originally based, remains wholly speculative,

supplanting an African vision with the fated words of "Amen." All this seems inevitable, with no way out. The poem represents the radical asymmetry of a prior message now broken in time.

Toomer articulated his acute awareness that once one set of expectations are replaced by another, there is no clear and direct possibility of ever going back to a past vision of the collective future, at least not the same way. For some versions of the future are left unincorporated and not carried forward. He describes the historical circumstance in 1923:

> The modern world was uprooted, the modern world was breaking down, *but we couldn't go back*. There was nothing to go back to. Besides, in our hasty leaps into the future we had burnt our bridges. The soil, the earth was still there, even under city pavements and congested sky scrapers.
>
> But such peasantry as America had—and I sang one of its swan songs in Cain [sic]—was swiftly disappearing, swiftly being industrialized and urbanized by machines, motor cars, phonographs, movies. "Back to nature," even if desirable, was no longer possible, because industry had taken nature unto itself. Even if he wanted to, a city person could not become a soil person by changing his locale and living on a farm or in the woods.
>
> So then, whether we wished to or not, we had to go on. (*Wayward* 129)

The profound sense of historical foreclosure marks the end of an era. The introduction of the new modern world involves the rapid ending of a previous epoch before it had even gathered steam. It is in this sense that the text of *Cane* characterizes a swan song about what might have been. The fragmented text takes the shape of a series of broken circles. The narrative arcs left behind trace these broken horizons. Blackness is held in a state of infancy.

The question *Cane* raises in the wake of the Garvey trial is how actors of history, black men and women who once held lofty expectations for self-determination, individuals who lived

by the ethos "to be a builder of the world," as Toomer recalled them, could ever live in the present the same way again after coming face to face with the historical knowledge the dreams for renewal they promised both the world, and themselves, were too quickly extinguished as unrealizable possibilities (129). But also, these historical foreclosures are encoded in the restraining language of the imperative. To have to "go on," as if no other choice exists but to leave behind past dreams for a truncated future, "whether we wished it or not," is to sense a powerful and frequently deceptive oscillation of the inevitability of linear progress. The conflicting presence and absence of historical agency creates an unresolvable contradiction. It reveals a fragmented modern world built upon the uneven experience of abandoned futures. Hence the unfinished potential of blackness that gives rise to *Cane's* disjointed narrative form. The dream of a new start, popularized by Garvey, comes to be inherited by African American literature in a diachronic sense as the afterimage of a failed future, serving both to temper and define the expectations of what comes next. This flash of untimely insight emerges with Esther's irreversible fall away from innocence. As the text suggests, King Barlo's discovery of black liberation may have been fleeting, but "[h]e left his image indelibly on the mind of Esther. He became the starting point of the only living patterns that her mind was to know" (25).

Docket 2 – Imperial Law on Borrowed Time

> "Since the First World War, all governments have lived on borrowed time."
>
> — Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

Folio 2.1 – Promissory Notes

To begin, again, with a return. To arrive back in time to hear the restless rattle and tap of the federal court's stenotype machine. Its mechanical, stammering punctuations becoming a steady chorus to cut through the ruckus in the New York court room, audibly resonating over the frequent interruptions in the law's procession: from one witness on the list to another, from one memory trace to another, one scriptural register to another. A flutter of keys against ribbon and ink transform these stops and starts, with synoptic clarity, into the dates and time sequences of an official legal proceeding. The routine execution of these typographical practices during the Marcus Garvey trial, which lasted nearly a month, brought a sense of regularity and ordinariness to an otherwise remarkable and untimely process of returning back to the past to force a corrective.

Court records indicate that when the mail fraud case commenced on May 21, 1923, the prosecution opened with a statement making it clear from the outset that "the government was not interested in anybody's dreams" (MGP 5: 306). Exploring the political motivations or widespread black ambitions behind the New Negro movement was not of relevant concern. Instead, Asst. District Attorney Maxwell Mattuck explained that the evidence and witness testimony would focus exclusively on the technical operations of a business venture that had mailed advertisements for the sale of stock to black investors in a deliberate scheme to defraud.

"Gentlemen of the jury," Mattuck said, although "associations or corporations" envisioned and overseen by Marcus Garvey attracted investors on the basis of social "uplift and advancement of the Negro race, the entire scheme of uplift was used to persuade Negroes for the most part to buy shares of stock in the Black Star Line . . . when the defendants well knew . . . that said shares were not and in all human probability never could be worth $5 each or any some of money" (in Vincent 165). Prosecution for mail fraud, then, provided the legal means to publicly discredit the black leader whom J. Edgar Hoover had repeatedly referred to in government memorandums as America's most wanted "negro agitator" (MGP 3: 236). The Bureau's classified monitoring program had established that Garvey was "the largest and most dangerous figure in Negro circles to-day" (MGP 1: 495)

This was not, however, the Bureau's first attempt to obstruct the political messages of Marcus Garvey, nor were the business activities of the Black Star Line always singled out by Hoover as an urgent matter of national security. Although Garvey had emigrated from Jamaica and arrived in America in 1916, it was only in 1918, when the Bureau commenced its post-war monitoring program of soapbox orators on the street corners of black neighborhoods, that he was added to a watch list alongside many other speakers in Harlem. Yet the name Marcus Garvey only began to noticeably stand out on that watch list of "negro agitators" after Hoover learned of the formative role that the young Harlem race leader had played in envisioning, publishing, and circulating a new black newspaper containing what government agents had flagged as seditious propaganda. An early Bureau report from August 1919 commented on "Garvey's cleverness, trickery, and quick rise in the political field among negroes" and cited the fact that "the subscription list" of the *Negro World* newspaper quickly "rose from 1,000 to its present 50,000 mailing list within one year" (MGP 1: 495). Such observations demonstrate that the Bureau was

playing catch up. The investigative apparatus of the Bureau was limited by the slow creation of its own archive on matters pertaining to Marcus Garvey. For a full calendar year, in fact, the large-scale impact of Marcus Garvey's political messages on the black population went underestimated and largely unchecked by Bureau authorities.

Garvey, too, relied on print technologies. The circuit of desire made possible the mass dissemination of the written word allowed him to broadcast his messages of black advancement. Trained by his godfather in the printing business, Garvey first drew on this technical expertise for the purposes of political organizing in Harlem when he began distributing printed pamphlets at his speeches. But it was the *Negro World* newspaper, which launched its inaugural issue on August 8th, 1918, that would become Garvey's most important contribution to black print history. It would also inaugurate his own public recognizability across America, and the world, as leader of the New Negro movement.

The weekly periodical, typically between ten to sixteen pages in length, was conceived by Garvey to disseminate messages of global race affiliation.[35] Utilization of print technologies allowed him to finally reach a larger audience, beyond the precincts of Harlem, building the kind of numbers he had aspired for ever since 1914 when he first envisioned a plan "To establish a universal confraternity among the Race" with formation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (MGP 1: 62). A pamphlet from August 1914 set down the principles of the black communities league, and it also contained a teaser:

Our Motto:
One God, One Aim, One Destiny.

---

[35] Despite the publication's unmistakable importance, only fragments of the *Negro World* remain today. Ramla Bandele confirms that most of the UNIA "office records were lost as the result of the federal investigation," and that "[p]ractically all of the 1919 and a substantial number of the 1920 issues have vanished. This is a significant loss because" the period spans "the prime life of the BSL" (190). The fragments of the black newspaper's coverage that do remain were filed away by government agencies—including the Bureau of Investigation, the Military Intelligence Division, and the U.S. Post Office—before being gathered by Robert Hill for the publication of the *MGP* volumes.

LOOK OUT
—FOR—
The appearance of
THE NEGRO WORLD
(MGP 1: 62)

The notification was premature. It would take four years for this ambition to materialize. When the *Negro World* eventually launched in 1918 as the UNIA's official newspaper, its masthead bore the phrase "A Newspaper Devoted Solely to the Interests of the Negro Race." A rapid increase in sales and distribution numbers quickly solidified the black newspaper's role. It became a popular vehicle to educate a dispersed black population, strewn across vast geographical regions of the United States, and beyond, on how seemingly local issues such as lynching and economic disenfranchisement were connected to a wider global system of colonial rule. "At its highpoint," Rupert Lewis explains, "some estimates put its circulation at two hundred thousand. However, one *Negro World* newspaper was likely to be read by several persons so that its dissemination would naturally exceed circulation" (81). Discussions of topics related to racial oppression were often paired with ideas of black progress and mass affiliation that encouraged black American citizens to stand up for themselves and stake their claims to self-determination and prosperity.

A notice in the *Negro World* issue published 19 July 1919 called for new recruits to join the plan for racial uplift and be trained as black leaders to guide and coordinate followers of the mass movement:

Wanted
10,000 Intelligent Young Negro Men

> and women of ambition to take advantage of the following: The Universal Negro Improvement Association wants 10,000 leaders to send into new fields. A six-month course of instructions will be necessary for each new applicant.
> Apply now in writing to

GENERAL SECRETARY, UNIVERSAL NEGRO
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION,

38 W. 135TH ST NEW YORK CITY

Black individuals were being recruited to be trained and take on new roles as race leaders in the cause for collective betterment. An explanatory statement accompanied this advertisement. Marcus Garvey, leader of the UNIA, wished to clear the air of any misinformation being spread that the communities league was directly affiliated with the Socialist Party. In doing so, he also sought to verify the political autonomy of the New Negro movement:

> Owing to the growing misunderstanding as touching the political affiliation and sympathy of the Universal Negro Improvement Association of the world, I hereby beg to state for the information of all concerned that this organization has absolutely no association with any political party. We do not accept money from politicians, nor political parties. We have never accepted any and we do not want any from that source. Republicans, Democrats and Socialists are all the same to us—they are all white men, and to our knowledge, all of them join together and lynch and burn the "Negro World."
>
> We are Negroes, and we want it clearly understood that persons who endeavor to use the name of the Universal Negro Improvement Association or the name of the "Negro World" for enhancing their individual political fortunes do so without the approval of the association or the management of the "Negro World." (MGP 1: 466)

The course of action undertaken by the UNIA clearly differentiated itself from all previous political organizations. Garvey clarified that the newness of the UNIA was directed and supported only by its own mandate of political autonomy. His public confirmation was also an effort to reduce scrutiny of its financial dealings by separating the independent economic ventures of the UNIA as freestanding from the interests of any other nefarious organization

already in place. These twin features—historical newness and political autonomy—were deemed essential to foster the emergence of a new geopolitical future for black members around the world. “The only pol[i]tics that we indulge in and are supporting” the UNIA leader clarified, “is that of the New Negro Party of all the World. We are four hundred million strong in such a party” (MGP 1: 467). The progressive tone of racial self-assurance was voiced as one that more accurately reflected the democratic interests of a group of black men and women whose collective achievements—industrially, financially, educationally, and socially—were only beginning to show their hidden potential as a force for the greater good across the world.

As far as the US government was concerned, though, such rhetorical tricks made possible by the mass dissemination of the printed word only aggravated racial tensions. *Negro World* was now being mailed to residential addresses across the country and its weekly messages of racial renewal and political salvation were being read by thousands upon thousands of black Americans. So regardless of whether or not the UNIA maintained deep alliances with the Socialist Party, the movement’s growing political influence over the black population was now undeniable to agents at the Bureau. In response to growing civic unrest in postwar America, the federal campaign against black militancy, led by Hoover, set forth a plan to deport Marcus Garvey, the most recognizable Negro agitator in America, as an undesirable alien. The black leader had quickly established himself as the principal spokesperson of the New Negro in Harlem, capital of the black world, and his political messages sought to transform black Americans into black leaders to further unite, direct, and influence the actions of large swaths of the black population. The more general message being disseminated was that to be black was to be part of a formidable black international alliance with a reduced sense of national fidelity and collective belonging to the concept of US citizenship. Blackness for the New Negro movement

transcended traditional concepts of nation because to be black was to be part of the black transnational body.

It was not without a certain amount of geopolitical irony, then, that the Bureau planned to deport Marcus Garvey, a foreign-born black immigrant, whose grievances relied on cultivating the intermediary spaces beyond the nation, and whose message of racial renewal depended on mobilizing the political valences associated with blackness as migrancy. Early plans for new black financial ventures like the Black Star Line and Back-to-Africa movement were beginning to solidify the promises of the UNIA into tangible projects. But for the US Government such promises of black renewal raised the specter of a new world order by rewriting the terms of sovereignty. And this extension of the threat of blackness as it pertained to the transformation of identity categories—particularly with the repudiation and loss of American identity and its claims to racial purity—manifested after the Great War in the kinds of nativist fears that Klansman and eugenicist Lorthrop Stoddard would decry in his contentious 1920 historical study *The Rising Tide of Color.* Stoddard infamously pointed to the "statistical disproportion between white and other colored worlds" (5), noting the formidable ratio of the "ethnic make-up of that world of color . . . outnumbers the white world two to one" (7).[36] Deep commitments to ensuring national durability after the Great War remained tied to these kinds of nativist fears to exclude unassimilable aliens who posed a threat to the American way of life in the delicate postwar years. Foreign influences, and particularly persons of color, threatened to destabilize the civil order, and perhaps even sought to foment geopolitical revolution with seditious challenges to traditionalist assumptions about racial hierarchy. Yet while "the first and most obvious weakness

[36] For a more exhaustive examination of Stoddard's text as it pertains to questions of racial purity and national origin, see Walter Benn Michaels' *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Duke University Press, 1995).

was Garvey's status as an alien," Emory Tolbert correctly notes that extraditing him back to his birthplace of Jamaica for inciting "seditious propaganda among Blacks" in America proved more difficult than Hoover expected (29-30). "Ironically," Tolbert explains, "the fiery rhetoric that now characterized Garvey's public speeches," and his weekly editorial column in the Negro World, "could no longer be considered seditious because of the signing of the Armistice in November 1918" (28). In other words, although a few early issues of the *Negro World* were published and circulated before the war ended, the fact that America was no longer at war meant that the Bureau was too late to act. Hoover could not build a legal case to deport a man on charges falling under the lapsed wartime emergency measures.

But the Justice Department caught a break in late 1919 when it was forwarded a confidential cable from the US Governor of the Panama Canal Zone. The Panama dispatch alerted authorities to information that "the negro agitator, Marcus Garvey" had been promoting a new steamship line in his region (MGP 2: 33) "I do not know what amount of stock is being sold on the Isthmus," wrote Governor Chester Harding, "but I am quite sure in my own mind that no subscriber will ever see his money again, and it is unfortunate that the means cannot be found to put a stop to such palpable fraud" (Ibid). Pursing these relatively mundane allegations about the illegitimate sale of corporate stock may not have held the same lucrative appeal, nor sense of political gravitas, for the young Hoover looking to make a name for himself in the government ranks as a patriot. Though as Garvey's influence over the black population increased, and pressure was put on the Bureau to find a legal solution, pursuing the scheme to defraud investors of the Black Star Line surfaced as a viable option. This adjustment in legal tactics speaks both to the willingness and flexibility of the Bureau's extensive governmental mandate to utilize any form of law to intervene in a political movement that had drawn hundreds of thousands of

followers and installed a new black imaginary built on collective hopes to supersede the nation's historic alienation of black bodies.

Needing to stage a public show trial, the Justice Department set out to prove that it had found Garvey's vulnerability in his frenzied business practices. Trial records demonstrate that precisely in the moment when the District Attorney indicated to the trial jury that he was not "interested in anybody's dreams," and further that "in all human probability" the value of the stocks could never reach their value of five dollars a share, the prosecution was determined to sever the black political imaginary from the all-black shipping venture. Stripped of its political meaning, the rapid emergence of the New Negro movement, which had attracted unprecedented numbers of black members on the basis of bringing justice to darker peoples around the globe, was transformed by the prosecution's legal rhetoric as nothing more than a mismanaged business venture, one enforceable by national law. "It was a business concern," Mattuck argued to the jury, "not a social uplift venture" (MGP 5: 307). In turn, "*The Negro World*" was reduced to nothing more than "a newspaper used for propaganda purposes," and the UNIA organization reframed as simply a shell company used for the wrongful collection of monies from black US citizens (MGP 5: 307). The rhetorical move sought to draw the black political horizon back under the law's jurisdiction.

This capacity for legal arguments to reframe unruly configurations of political time suggests that the law contains a regulative force that can be activated when necessary to assert the primacy of its own semantic authority over untimely political events. "The force of law," Derrida remarks, employs "the discourse of its own self-legitimation"—namely, "proper interpretive models"—to "give a sense, necessity and above all legitimacy" that confirms its own authority to control the record of events (*Acts of Religion* 270). Justice is what is promised by the

law. Its possibility is premised on the assertion that the law always privileges the responsibility of doing justice. This covert force is structured by the law's temporal dimension. For it posits an absolute and unsurpassable promise for the law to deliberate on future questions of justice without limits. "The law," Derrida adds, "is transcendent and theological and so always to come, always promised, because it is imminent, finite, and thus already past. Every 'subject' is caught up in this aporetic structure in advance" (270). Justice is based on a promise—the promise of doing justice—and this temporal configuration of the law therefore structures the very possibility of justice "to-come" [*avenir*] (270). Legal time is all reaching. There can be no justice that does not control time. The readability of the law's pursuit of justice as absolute and incalculable extends along every point on the temporal horizon. It connects past events to the transcendent promise of justice to come in the future.

To grasp the transcendent power of law's authority, it is not enough to treat legal processes as historical operations which extend back in time to recall or reveal hidden memories of the past. What the Marcus Garvey trial makes clear is that the law is not only, or not simply, endowed with an untimely power to revisit, invest, and possess past actions. To control the past is also to supplement the historical record to control the future. Justice serves as a core element of political revitalization. And juridical discretion on which cases to bring to trial is influenced by political forces. Thus, when Derrida indicates that the law's discourse is self-legislating he is pointing out that its readability depends on an interpretive structure that deploys the law's argumentative framework with enough force to cancel out, or otherwise supersede, alternative political interpretations of the sequence of events. Indeed, the regularity of the courtroom actions—marked by inscriptions and protocols of record keeping—draw attention to the need to revisit the past, and rewrite the past, while simultaneously drawing attention away from the

political impetus behind a rather remarkable discursive process of legal self-fashioning that utilizes seemingly benign and tedious functions of language to synchronize horizons by drawing divergent temporal points back under the prognostic structure of legal time.

The transcript to materialize, as a receptacle that combines signs and events, is the work of a double necessity. First, the activity of transcription marks the documentary impulse of the state; it records, in painstaking detail, the minutiae of the law's own history. Record keeping marks the symbolic importance of the ceremonial sequence of legal proceedings. The second distinctive trait of this symbolic practice persistently draws wayward historical events back under the horizon of national law, and somehow confirm a sense of the law's own authoritative power in the process. In accordance, District Attorney Mattuck was careful not to formulate an argument that conjured up public interest in diasporic dreams of black renewal. For it was precisely that kind of political transformation which challenged the future organizing power of national law to control the time of justice. The prosecution's argument therefore maintained the formal indiscernibility of an all-black shipping line as an impossible future outcome. It reached back into the past and declared that the stocks had been sold under the premise of a higher value than would never effectively materialize. The law challenged the very readability of their future value.

Of course, legal documents themselves might also be read as promissory notes. The practice of legal inscription promises to protect the future of justice to come. They right a wrong, force a corrective, and in this sense stand as notes of justice payable. Paradoxically, then, it was only by focusing on the speculative quality of black finance, effectively devaluing the Black Star Line as a legitimate business venture, while simultaneously silencing the promise of political justice for black Americans, by which the prognostic force of US law would be maintained into

the future. Hence the law is invested with a self-preserving power required to stop new political developments before they can be truly said to emerge. One might even argue that the law can only reaffirm itself through these kinds of untimely encounters. Imperial law lives on borrowed time. It calls up wayward historical events in order to renew its own status as the arbiter of time. For the law preserves itself through a process that claims direct authority over the past and, precisely by writing the script of the past, the law defends its national authority over the future of the historical record.

Given these twin forces responsible for producing the law's discursive work, it would not be entirely unwarranted if the reader's first impulse when encountering the seemingly bottomless stacks of government documents surrounding the Garvey case was to be equally daunted and persuaded by the intensive synchronic recording of events, as if every progressive moment, down to the finest minutiae of legality and clerical detail, were accounted for in the written life of the republic. A closer reading of the trial transcripts themselves, however, offers a more refractory view of the endless paper-shuffling of imperial management. Despite the obsessive chronicling compulsion of the US imperial state—which manifests in archival busywork and accumulates in case files—to read through these documents, at the level of the word, is to encounter, with alarming frequency, gaps, divergences, and contradictions in the textual records. Considered as a rhetorical structure, one can begin to detect an unevenness between legal authority and historical representation. The retroactive logic governing these twin legal processes, it must be further noted, remains strangely untimely. For what we have just identified as the *double necessity* of legal transcription—for the law to rule over the past and to write the definitive historical account that ensures the law's ability to continue to preside over justice to come—not only contains the possibilily for past events to converge and align into a linear,

national chronology. When the script is rigid and unwavering the consequences of mistakes are high. Moments of political crises emerge precisely when these two points diverge, as each competing faculty gives way to a divergent set of pressures, and the law's retroactive power is revealed to distort communication of what might come next. At such pivotal moments, the symbolic power of the law, the durability of its power to continue to extend justly into the future, itself runs the risk of being put on trial.

National authority is destabilized. That is why history does not fully contract, in the Garvey trial papers, in such a way that the time of justice comes to be rendered down to a single point, with the 1923 court trial culminating as a moment of archival completion. Nor does the past become swiftly relegated into antiquity or sealed off without a trace. Instead, as the hefty stacks of government documents encompassing the mass surveillance of the Black Star Line were drawn together from government agencies, assembled in the District Attorney's office in preparation for the trial date, a divide also began to open between the revolutionary rise of the Garvey movement and the figurative operations which make up the rule of law itself. Hence the world after the unfinished black revolution exists at two times at once. The double work of the law contains an internal principle for changing its own relation to what has passed and yet remains unalterable to the extent that its potential force to represent history is bound to preserve the logic of its own imperial authority. Between these two incommensurable operations we find the unstable border zone—the fragile point where the very legitimacy of American justice hangs in the balance between history and power. The puzzle left behind for us in these documents is how this public struggle fades from view as legal outcomes are assimilated as historical facts about past events rather than as contestable choices about law's power and its limits.

Folio 2.2 – Forms of Resistance

To assume authorship of the past is to run up against a problem of reference. The reliance on the word to mediate the US Government's own presence, to strategically crown itself as placeholder of the past, brought the imperial process of recording events into an encounter with language itself, drawing attention to the way each utterance is formed. The issue of representation, at the heart of the legal text, tests the very limits of a system of language adapted to the recounting of past events.

The capacity for law's documentary impulse to bear witness, to draw together all facets of the case, and thus to incorporate the past events back into national memory, was thrown into question when Benny Dancy took the stand. The prosecution's key witness had used his wages as a janitor at Penn Station to purchase fifty-three shares of Black Star Line stock and remained on the company's mailing list.[37] His importance to the case revolved around an empty envelope with postage paid by the Black Star Line, entered by the prosecution into evidence. The letter envelope, addressed to Dancy, had been originally mailed to his home in Harlem:

Benny Dancy

34 W. 131 St.

N.Y.C.[38]

What subsequently took place in the courtroom was an effort to determine whether or not the memory of one black citizen could confirm, through spoken testimony, the necessary details to complete the synchronic public record of events.

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[37] Exact membership figures for the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) were never kept. But historical "estimates place the peak of the UNIA at several million in the 1920s" (McAdam 108). Additionally, McAdam adds that Garvey often inflated the number of UNIA members in his speeches, a public relations strategy that functioned to self-validate the association's credibility, with the intent to convince more members to join the movement.

[38] A facsimile of both the recto and verso sides of this envelope, originally entered into the court docket as Government Exhibit 112, can be found in MGP 5: 318.

District Attorney Maxwell S. Mattuck called his witness to the stand, and immediately proceeded with an examination designed to connect Dancy to the Black Star Line mailings.

> Q: Did you buy any stock in the Black Star Line? A. Yes sir.
>
> Q: How much? A. 53 shares.
>
> Q: Was that all your savings or what?
>
> Mr. Johnson: Objected to, absolutely immaterial, if the Court please.
>
> The Court: Sustained.
>
> Q: Did you get any letters? A. Yes, I got a letter.
>
> Q: Did you get a letter from the Post Office Department about it? A. No, sir, I did not.
>
> Q: Let me show you—did you give any papers to anybody in the Government service, to a post office man, to an agent? A. Not that I know of.
>
> Q: Where did the Government get your papers, if you know?
>
> Mr. Johnson: Is this for the purpose of impeaching his own witness?
>
> Mr. Mattuck: Not impeaching him at all.
>
> Mr. Garvey: I object to these leading questions.
>
> The Court: That isn't leading.
>
> Q: How did the Government get your mail, do you know? A. They came around to my house, where I live in Brooklyn, and they received my mail over there and I give it to them. (MGP VI: 15-16)

The first inconsistency in the transcript appears to be a relatively minor detail that may not have warranted a formal explanation on the witness stand. Whereas the original postmarked envelope lists Dancy's address in Harlem, the witness indicated, instead, that he was visited by Government officials at his residence in Brooklyn and turned over the Black Star Line mailings

from this alternate location. The most obvious logical conclusion to be drawn from the discrepancy seems to be that by the time the trial investigation was initiated Dancy had moved residences. Even this formulation, however, is insufficiently precise. For it remains unstipulated how the prosecution could have traced the Black Star Line mailings back to either of Benny Dancy's residences in the first place.

When asked about the contents of the mail he had received from the Black Star Line, though, Dancy's memory drew blanks. "I can't remember all of them; I got so many letters I couldn't remember all the letters" (MGP 6: 18). The lack of specificity here demonstrates that absolute knowledge about the past history of events becomes extremely difficult to pin down without material evidence. Without artifacts from the past acting as pneumonic devices, used to shore up proof, some episodic events inevitably tend to slip away from historical view. However, Benny Dancy's failure to recall which letters from the Black Star Line had been delivered through the federal mails not only exposes the limitations of memory. More than this, too, the question of a missed experience demonstrates that events can occur which only later gain actual significance by virtue of a retroactive process of marking everyday events as historical experience. The lapsed registration of these kinds of lived events, which lacked significance at the time, take on a new importance due to pressures for the moment to again be accounted for.

The question of a missed experience exposes the very real possibility that when events take place right before our eyes that we are not the masters in our own house as we might like to imagine. The issue exposed here runs far deeper than any confusion about which domestic residence Benny Dancy resided at. Nor does it involve everyday lapses of memory. From the standpoint of the law, opening that mailed correspondence delivered to his home was a crucial event in Benny Dancy's life, because it was now deemed a crucial moment in the life of the

republic. He was called onto the witness stand and asked to set the national record straight. His failure to recognize the importance of the mailed advertisements of the Black Star Line at the time they were first received, nor to commit the exact contents of the letters to memory, in order to later recount their importance as material evidence, suggests that lived experience is incessantly haunted by the failure to grasp the significance of this kind of rare opportunity to respond to a historical moment when it knocks. The problem of a missed experience suggests that authentic verification of legal evidence becomes more intransigently difficult than can ever be imagined at the time of initial contact. Still, this is the evidentiary paradox that structures the law.

Folio 2.3 – Historical Detectives

Novelist Chester Himes dramatizes the process of collecting pretrial evidence for a criminal conviction. Insistence on the collection process emerges not only in the probing dialogue of his black Harlem detectives as they interrogate witnesses to heinous criminal acts, but also in the undelivered oration which surrounds the movements of objects crucial to solving these crimes. Criminal evidence often circulates unsuspectingly on the streets of Harlem, and between characters in the narrative, going undetected to law enforcement while influencing key events and actions. Himes blends the procedural quest to track down these material traces and expose criminal activity detrimental to the flourishing of the black community with the demands to operate within the imperial legal apparatus. In the most crucial moments, what we see in the Harlem detective series is a near inversion of the US Justice Department's attempt to displace the threat of black cultural authority through legal action. Rather than simply obey their white superiors, and report every instance of black criminality, the two black detectives, Grave Digger

Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson, hold their authority as cultural insiders in black Harlem in large part due an uncanny ability to cut through the inhibitory red tape of police protocols. They patrol the streets in an unmarked, battered, supercharged Plymouth sedan and regularly voice cynicism and distain for traditional and ineffective investigative methods endorsed by the white Police Commissioner. The Harlem novels work through the contradictions and paradoxes inherent to black individuals maintaining a commitment to the law as such, to the form of law, but also to the monstrous possibility that properly reporting evidence up the usual chain of command will do little to improve the quality of life for the black population. This faith in law may only confirm the farcical nature of a legal system that relies on material objects as evidentiary place markers merely for a broken system of jurisprudence to justify itself, rearticulate itself, each time it is applied.

Nowhere, perhaps, is an emphasis on evidence collection more central to the black literary tradition than in Himes' 1965 novel *Cotton Comes to Harlem.* The black detective novel helps us to reimagine how the law operates in civil society even in moments when stripped of its popular legitimacy. As Sean McCann has noted, traditionally "the detective story begins with an intrusion on a stable world of an isolated example of seemingly meaningless violence and then works backward to give that violence the history and meaning that allow it to be contained" (292). That possibility is denied, however, in historical accounts where the law comes to be distributed unequally among members of the general population. Thus, rather than his detective story holding on to generic convention as "an allegory of the law and of legal jurisprudence's central distinction between legitimate and illegitimate violence," Himes retains these elements if only to display their limits and paradoxes (McCann 292). The Harlem detective series gives public form to the limitations and contradictions which surround any commonsense notion that

the law unequivocally functions as a corrective force to remake criminal activity into a beneficial form of public knowledge.

Our first glimpse of the flawed innerworkings of law enforcement occurs in the introductory scene at the NYPD precinct. This is Coffin Ed's first night back on active duty since being shot on duty by a heroin dealer, and he is especially bothered by a condescending order from his commanding officer not to rough up criminals with any acts of revenge. "It's the white men on the force," Coffin Ed responds, who fail to get dangerous criminals off the streets; worse yet, these white officers routinely "commit pointless brutality" on innocent black citizens (14). "All I'm asking," Lieutenant Anderson says, "is to play it safe, from the police side. Don't take any chances, don't make any arrests until you have the evidence, don't use force unless in self-defense" (14). As far as the two black detectives are concerned, though, evidence about injustice happening in Harlem remains in plain sight for all to see. Grave Digger reminds the Lieutenant of what they're up against:

> "We got the highest crime rate on earth among the colored people in Harlem. And their ain't but three things to do about it: Make the criminals pay for it – you don't want to do that; pay the people enough to live decently – you ain't going to do that; so all that's left is let 'em eat one another up." (14)

Three forms of injustice are distinguished here. The first type remains an open secret. Social injustice has created the neglected urban space inhabited by "lost and hungry black people from Harlem" (4). These adverse living conditions are exacerbated day by day, because those in positions of power and influence fail to take action to resolve a social situation that stands as common public knowledge.

The strain becomes all the greater when government inaction gives rise to the second form of injustice. Law enforcement focuses on criminal injustice, which is an effect of social injustice, a symptom, not the principal root cause. From that perspective, there seems little point to enforcing the law in Harlem without also tackling economic disenfranchisement as the primary cause of illicit activities such as theft and violent crime. Harlem is filled with so much violence that it has become the crime capital of the world. The novel follows Grave Digger as he "leaf[s] through the reports, reading charges" made on a single morning in Harlem: "Man kills his wife with an axe for burning his breakfast porkchop . . . man shoots another man demonstrating a recent shooting he had witnessed, man stabs another man for spilling beer on his new suit . . . ." (15). What seem to be small mistakes are retaliated with using the most miserable and violent acts imaginable.

"'All colored citizens', Coffin Ed interrupts" (15). And here, finally, the black detectives announce that black on black violence waged between Harlemites is by far the most insular and miserable form of injustice. Rather than acting as a force which binds the members of the black community tighter together, systemic inequality drives a psychological wedge between individuals. Black on black violence—lateral violence—becomes the expression of human subjugation, making it difficult for those who share similar hardships to connect with one another as required to form bonds of solidary. These three forms of injustice offer an elaborate indictment of violence in mass society and its racial underpinnings, problems that strike at the heart of Himes' aesthetic theories and shadow his literary ambitions to represent the psychopolitical complexities of community attachments.

"When reading Chester Himes' detective novels," observes Frantz Fanon, "the dominant feature of Harlem is seen clearly to be aggression" (*Alienation and Freedom* 524). Fanon's

reading of Himes suggests that the problem of the racial encounter in Harlem is not limited to black and white encounters. The colonial psychopathology of everyday life extends to include social encounters between members within the same oppressed group. Fanon observes: "By a sort of introjection, the Black man[']s aggression turns back upon the Black man; the condemnation is adopted; the black individual assumes his own condemnation" (524).

That is why the Harlem represented in Himes' detective fiction is the very paradigm of colonized space in America. Segregated political space is virtually confused with the citizen. The two are conflated. Through a process which Fanon understands in pathological terms as *introjection* and *adoption,* "society intervenes in the development of personality" (526). Members of the marginalized community normalize and internalize the public condemnation of their own skin color as an identity confirmation, and this process of introjection involves unconsciously adopting the ideas or attitudes of white America.

Moreover, the social rejection that black Harlemites experience is turned back onto other black Harlemites, reverberated between colonized subjects in the form of aggressive behavior. "Rejection entails inferiority complexes," Fanon notes, because the harsh reality of processing one's own limited stature in the system of racial condemnation involves a "susceptibility, a raw sensitivity," and this social feeling of inadequacy undergoes an unconscious conversion (526). Personal feelings of guilt and inadequacy about one's own helpless vulnerability are redirected onto other marginalized subjects as a show of strength. This mechanism of defense manifests in demonstrations of power over other vulnerable subjects, temporarily warding off feelings of social vulnerability. The paradox Fanon points us to here is that psychopolitical oppression is regularly self-reinforcing. Social pressures pit members of the black community against one another, because to see another black individual in a moment of weakness also threatens to

reinforce your own limited self-worth. So you lash out, maybe even feeling some satisfying sense of getting the upper hand. Note the repositioning of values. Community solidarity is eroded and replaced by aggression. Self-interested agents engage in individualist acts, resulting in communal self-destruction, to the effect of collective ruin.

From a legal perspective, the most crucial feature of this early scene in the novel is that the conversation between the black detectives and their commanding officer at the Harlem NYPD precinct has no tangible benefit. A troubling separation emerges here between law and justice. Although Lieutenant Anderson views himself as a sympathetic man—even admits to himself at one point that he "understands all the evils of segregation," and so he "sympathize[s] with the colored people in his precinct, and with colored people in general"—the fact of the matter is that the time and effort required to hear out concerns about the situation in black Harlem is an impediment to fulfilling his own quotidian duties as man of rank and privilege (71).

Chester Himes once weighed in on ensuing discussions about the color line, remarking that: "I am trying to write about . . . an emotional state. What segregation does to people" (*Conversations* 15). This examination was not limited to black characters. The Lieutenant's complicity in maintaining social segregation is reenacted each day with the white flight he eagerly awaits to take back to suburbia once the work day is over. He expresses a deep desire to flee his workplace in the inner-city of black Harlem and return back to white suburban Queens: "All he wanted to do was to go home to his quiet house in Queens and kiss white wife and look in on his two sleeping white children and crawl into bed between the two white sheets and go the hell to sleep" (71). His negrophobia is clearly in command. So much for a conflict of loyalties. The sympathy that the Lieutenant feels may amount to a certain amount of moral responsibility. For social commiseration is acted out emotionally. But the elaborate dramaturgy he undergoes

during such moments of introspection in the narrative cannot quite conceal the fact that his expression of compassion for members of the "black underclass" who live in the inner-city is not one that signals a willingness for change. The inaction of Lieutenant Anderson, the failure of the man of the law to respond in any meaningful way to resolve the injustice he knows exists in Harlem, even after his feelings confirm beyond a shred of doubt that suffering disproportionately affects black citizens, demonstrates the gap in community police work between knowing that an injustice exists and the willingness or ability of law enforcement to ensure that justice is served. Put more simply, the law is not envisioned as capable of making a better world. The force of law simply maintains the current one. Consequently, the community report about the need to address the underlying issue of social injustice in black Harlem falls on deaf ears. The two detectives are simply assigned another criminal case to solve in the crime-ridden neighborhood.

A crime report is received at police headquarters. Coffin Ed and Grave Digger are dispatched to the crime scene to investigate. Witnesses are questioned. They soon learn that funds collected from residents for a new Back-to-Africa scheme were stolen in a remarkable heist by white gunmen brandishing submachine guns. The leader of the black movement, however, has also fled the scene. Funds totaling $87,000 were originally collected by a "smooth brown speaker" named Reverend Deke O'Malley with a flair for mobilizing the dreams of the black community (1). Deke's identifying features as a church deacon are less the product of a desire to provide spiritual guidance in the black community than an attempt to reinvigorate the past history of the New Negro movement which took place some four decades prior. His prodigious ability to draw crowds, which quickly converge around him, eager to see the lapsed movement for black political renewal to take shape again, provoking a remarkable response.

Whether or not this crowd response is the product of a past injury is a much more complicated historical matter.

The reader is soon filled in on the case file. First, Deke dressed himself up as a preacher in order to evade gangsters from a group known only as "the syndicate" that had it out for him. Then, while in hiding, he developed a new racket:

> [H]e'd gotten the idea of his Back-to-Africa movement from reading a biography of Marcus Garvey, the Negro who had organized the Back-to-Africa movement. It was said that Garvey had collected over a million dollars. He had been sent to prison, but most of his followers contended that he was innocent and had still believed in him. Whether he had been innocent or not was not the question; what appealed to him was the fact his followers still believed in him. That was the con-man's real genius, to keep the suckers always believing.
>
> So he had started his own Back-to-Africa movement, the only difference being that when he got his million, he was going to cut out – he might go back to Africa himself. He'd heard that people with money could live good in certain places there. (32)

The tone of description has moved significantly away from the original rhetoric of Garvey's speeches and explicitly into the realm of black criminality. No doubt the character of Deke O'Malley manifests in the novel bearing the psychological wounds and cultural legacies of Garvey's failed attempt at black renewal. Yet the Back-to-Africa movement has been hollowed out to nothing more than a corrupt scheme fueled by monetary greed. This twist in the narrative sequence suggests that the case the black detectives have been assigned to investigate is not simply about solving a recent crime. It also involves verifying the authenticity of the original Pan-African movement envisioned by Marcus Garvey.

Yet as they reluctantly take on roles of black historical detectives, definitive proof repeatedly slips out of their grasp. We learn that a mass meeting of Back-to-Africa members took place on the night of the heist. This "meeting was well organized," so well organized, in fact, that the crowd assembled to hear Reverend Deke O'Malley speak came together in 1960's Harlem almost like it had some forty years before (3). The assembly is composed of "A sea of dark faces," who appear anonymously in the text as a black multitude of "true-believers," bound together as one collective body politic. Their solidarity demonstrates the collective potentiality to rise above systemic patterns of black criminality. They share a common potential to take up the cause of black renewal: "White teeth flashed in black, laughing faces. Eyes spoke. Bodies promised. They were all charged with anticipation" (3). The common potential they share, however, is not discovered amongst themselves so much as the networks of affiliation they share are produced by the con man Deke O'Malley in an elaborate ploy to steal the hard-earned money from honest Harlemites. Deke's ploy is a pastiche—a cultural recycling—of the original dream.

The fraudulent political vision to result is a kind dystopian reversal of the political model of the revolutionary *multitude* described by Hardt and Negri. Drawing on Spinoza's notion of the composite body, Hardt and Negri argue:

> If the multitude is to form a body, in any case, it will remain always and necessarily an open, plural composition and never become a unitary whole divided by hierarchical organs. The traces of the multitude will present the same disposition and faculty toward the good that Kant finds in the revolutionary event. (*Multitude* 190)

This openness of the crowd to convene as a networked pluralism is precisely what allows Deke O'Malley to speak in ways that easily captures the imagination of the masses. Prophetic discovery is central to the crowd's ability to congeal. Thus in spite the fact that "[s]tink drifted

from the surrounding slums, now more overcrowded than ever due to the relocation of families from other buildings," still nothing could shake the desire of back Harlemites to come together in close proximity and at long last merge into one body politic as their forbearers had done under Garvey's vision of a return Back-to-Africa some four decades prior (2).

Bring together a group of Harlemites, the novel implies, and you get the foundations necessary for collective racial betterment. But this sense of mutual hope to escape the trappings of an urban space teeming with black criminality can quite easily be capitalized on with ruthless self-interest. The difference perhaps depends on the organizing force of the multitude. Here it is as if Himes not only anticipates the public allure of a political model based on "an immanent desire which organizes the multitude" (66), but, more remarkably, also lays bare the host of critiques of this political model. John Brenkman, for instance, critiques the model of the multitude envisioned by Hardt and Negri on the grounds that their "remarkable commitment to the self-assurance of the prophecy" of the people one day discovering their own constituent power, albeit attuned to the masses, maintains this confidence without the necessary political principles in place to ground their political model (101). Simply being responsive to spontaneous events is a paradoxical form of self-assurance that holds belief in the "vagueness of the multitude's immanent desire" and consequently rings hollow (101). "Even more," Brenkman adds, "the revolution that promises to be republican and universal has no vision of the multitude's self-government" (101). Why? Because "as they await the revelatory event," which culminates in a new social body beyond Empire, "they do not investigate the actual fate of the world's various upheavals and revolts" (102). The lack of historicism eventuates little more than wishful idealism as it fails to discuss the successes and failures of past revolutions.

In *Cotton Comes to Harlem* we catch a glimpse of what Hardt and Negri define as the "actual activity of the multitude—its creation, production, and power—a materialist teleology," yet because the organizing power lacks any authentic form of self-sufficiency, nor sufficient historical knowledge about the original Back-to-Africa movement, the utopian hopes of the black mass quickly degrades into the disappointment of a false prophecy (*Empire* 66). The crowd, it seems, stands together, easily receptive to Deke's vision, yet only because his assertions echo a vison that black Harlemites have heard before, rehashing a familiar story of renewal, yet one which persists to be told only as it remains immaterial and incomplete.

The preacher character may be a sloppy historian, one who does not account for his sources. Regardless, his plan to collect money from the black multitude for a Back-to-Africa scheme bears a distinct likeness to the corporate enterprise that Garvey envisioned some four decades prior as the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation. The business venture is resurrected, only to be reworked. The crowd remains "charged with anticipation" as the reverend clarifies his vision through the use of promotional materials so close to the original BSL advertisements that they might have been plagiarized from the Garvey biography that Deke claimed to have read. As Deke took the stage, "Huge hand drawings of the ships stood in prominent view behind the speaker's table, appearing to have the size and likeness of the *S.S. Queen Elizabeth*" (2). Deke's advertising materials and pamphlets rely on the printed word to control the vision of the future. In this sense, Deke is awakening a latent potentiality, but the dots are not fully connected between past and future, between the unfinished dream of the New Negro project which resides in ruin and historical potential for the eventual realization of that past future. What separates this rehashed iteration from the original is that every dollar given to the preacher will not end up back in the coffers of the UNIA.

Deke's private financial model marks a distinct break from the collective black venture originally outlined in an editorial letter which ran in the June 4, 1919 issue of the *Negro World.* Garvey clarified that the Black Star Line venture will only succeed if the black race succeeds. Moreover, the venture itself was managed by a political organization with the clear protocols in place necessary for self-government. Due to the organization required, the UNIA does not so much represent a spontaneous gathering of the black multitude as a carefully constituted social body with regulations and ordinances, checks and balances. At the same time though, the emphasis on a Negro awakening also suggests that that prophetic discovery is not entirely missing. "Fellowmen of the Negro Race," Garvey writes:

> The Universal Negro Improvement Association takes the place of a guardian for the people and is bound to administer all its holdings solely in the interest of the people.
>
> There will be no speculation in "The Black Star Line," except that which will be to the people as a whole. Like the property of a nation or of a state, the properties of the Universal Negro Association are the people's, hence no private dividends.
>
> The Universal Negro Improvement Association is determined to lift the American Negro, the African Negro, the West Indian, South and Central American and Canadian Negroes to a higher plane of economic independence, and to this effort every man and woman of color should lend support. (MGP 1: 413)

The collective venture marks a distinct turn away from liberal individualism in its strictest sense and towards a carefully administered social body. Articulated as such, the economic viability and financial success of the UNIA remained indivisible from the benefits for members of the organization. No wonder District Attorney Mattuck attempted to sever the black social imaginary from the Black Star Line in his opening statement at the Marcus Garvey trial. The move

delegitimated the collectivist project of black finance as a means for renewal. And Mattuck did so by mobilizing a victim narrative about an economically dispossessed group whose situation of hardship made them inherently weak, incapable of reason, and thus vulnerable to false promises.

Deke reenacts the US District Attorney's elaborate story of the Back-to-Africa movement by emphasizing private dividends over collective rewards. Moreover, his obvious corruption seems to mark a turn away from the organizational spirit of the original New Negro movement. The vision of community is itself an elaborate hoax built on the capitalist ethos of private wealth accumulation. Himes once confirmed in an interview that the collapse of the original communal spirit of the New Negro movement marked the end of an era. This collective venture no longer seemed possible because, by the 1960s, the capitalist ethos of independent entrepreneurship had completely installed itself in Harlem. "The black man," says Himes, "has to make it or lose it in America: he has no choice. That's why I wrote *Cotton Comes to Harlem*. In Garvey's time the 'Back to Africa' movement had an appeal and probably made some sense. But it doesn't make any sense now" (*Conversations* 41). Coffin Ed and Grave Digger are effectively witnessing a rupture in the historical continuum. They are investigating two times at once. They are also witnessing a divide between two very different conceptions of blackness as the basis for community. The renewed version of the Back-to-Africa movement may in fact conjure up the original vision, but it lacks the organizational scaffolding of the UNIA which brought with it the collective framework of black self-government necessary for historical self-determination.

The original 1918 *UNIA Constitution* and *Book of Laws* contains a detailed set of rules and regulations necessary for black self-government. "Justice" comes to be expressed in the *Constitution's* "Preamble" as the basis for an "expansive society," one "founded by persons desiring the utmost to work for the general uplift of the Negro peoples around the world" (MGP

1: 256). Members pledged themselves to a form of justice that effectively superseded the constraints of US imperial law. An updated constitution from August 1921 outlined the creation of its own Bureau of Justice.

ARTICLE XIV

BUREAU OF JUSTICE

1. That a Bureau of Justice shall be established by the parent body of the UNIA and ACL for the protection of all Negroes.
2. The Bureau of Justice shall be composed of three members. It shall have for its head an attorney-at-law who shall be known as the chief of the Bureau of Justice. One of the members of the Bureau shall be its secretary.
3. The Bureau shall have to cooperate with it a committee of three from each Local Division, composed of a President and two members selected from the general membership. This committee shall be under the supervision of the Bureau. (MGP 3: 752)

Like the Bureau of Investigation, the UNIA had created its own Bureau constituted by paper work. Moreover, the creation of this new juridical apparatus demonstrates a crucial tension between constituent and constituted power. The extensive project to fix the power of the black organization into historical time, and thus to establish its own authority as the voice of the people, demanded that a set of clear constitutional operations be grounded in legal principles put to record.

As Antonio Negri correctly notes: "Democracy then is not enough. It legitimizes the origin of power, but it must, in turn, be organized within power" (*Insurgencies* 159). In this rather remarkable statement from 1993, Negri seems to contradict or at least complicate his later

formulation of the multitude. The creation of a juridical body represents the power of the people. Though these two bodies are hardly the same. Martin Loughlin clarifies: “all political authority is located in an entity known as ‘the people’,” and the ability to enforce this political authority comes into its own with the document known as the constitution: “a juridical instrument which derives its authority from some principle of self-determination. The constitution is, in short, an expression of the constituent power of the people to make and remake the institutional arrangements through which they are governed” (151). With the creation of the Bureau of Justice, the UNIA had reached a tipping point where the residual ambiguities concerning the nature of justice, namely the adjudication of justice, had to be given formal clarity through constitutional organization.

One section, in particular, demonstrates that the UNIA had gone to extensive lengths to set up its own rules and disciplinary procedures for dealing with fraud:

Misappropriation of Money

> Sec. 40. No officer or member of the Universal Negro Improvement Association shall retain in his possession funds or moneys intended for the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities’ League, and any officer or member found guilty misappropriating the funds of the organization shall forthwith be dismissed from the service of the organization and legal proceedings taken against him to recover moneys thus misappropriated, and the President of each division shall see to carrying out this law. (MGP 1: 275)

This was followed by a subsequent section which clarified the limits on private investment:

Profits from Investments

> Sec. 44. All profits derived from investments by local divisions or societies of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League shall go to the general fund of the local division or society to be used as hereinbefore ordered. (MGP 1: 275)

UNIA members had voted in these regulative measures as part of the constitution. Going forward, it gave the new justice system something to refer back. Note the temporal division here. The constitution marks the claim of the people by setting down a juridical doctrine that can continually be referred back to in the effort to secure its own power into the future. Thus while "constituent power is tied to the notion of democracy of absolute power," Negri further clarifies that this "performative and imaginative dimension clashes with constitutionalism in a sharp, strong, and lasting matter" (11). The dream work of the collective enterprise clashes with the daily machinations and tedious practicalities necessary to extend the days of black camaraderie and political trust into the future. This productive tension at the core of the New Negro movement was concisely summed up in a Bureau Intelligence report: "That Negroes have learned the value of organization and the necessity of race unity and integrity is further evidenced in the splendid response now most strikingly manifested in the unparalleled achievements of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and its associate bodies" (MGP 3: 412).

For the black detectives in *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, then, the nature of their criminal investigation revolves around the question of whether they can prove that Deke has dispensed with the formal contradiction of constituent and constituted power which generated the public mandate of the original black political organization known as the UNIA, replacing that generative contradiction with a hollowed-out notion of the black multitude used simply to solicit

private gains from individual members. Complicating matters, a white man named Colonel Calhoun with ties to the Klan has also started his own movement, the Back-to-the-Southland movement: he has flipped the narrative of the Great Migration by arguing that black folk should return back to heartland, installing a false vision which associates the Jim Crow South with prosperity and freedom rather than forced segregation. It doesn't take long before the "Back-to-Africa movement vied with the Back-to-Southland movement for space and sympathy" in the hearts and minds of Harlemites (221).

The only way to gain some clear answers about the stolen money is to track down Deke. But he's been missing ever since the robbery. They question a Back-to-Africa recruiter named Bill Davis, whose initials, coincidentally, are the same as Benny Dancy's—the Harlem janitor who took the witness stand at the original Marcus Garvey trial. His witness statement offers few clear answers on the political efforts of the organization. Instead, they learn the limits of Deke's Back-to-Africa pitch:

> "Did you ever see the ships which were supposed to take you people back to Africa?" Grave Digger asked.
>
> "No, but all of us have seen the correspondence with the steamship company – The Afro-Asian Line – verifying the lease he negotiated." (29)

The company name confirms their suspicions that the original Black Star Line project has been imitated nearly to the letter. The recruiter soon fills them in the details about the heist:

> "How much money have you collected?"
>
> "Eighty-seven thousand dollars from the . . . er . . . subscribers, but we had taken in quite a bit from other things, church socials and this barbecue deal, for instance."
>
> "And these four white men in the delivery truck got all of it?"

"Well, just the eighty-seven thousand dollars we had taken in tonight. But there were five of them. One stayed inside the truck behind the barricade all the time. (29)

This raises further suspicions that Deke is behind the robbery. He may have hid his face to ensure that none of his followers would recognize him. But even after they locate Deke, and he confesses to running the Back-to-Africa scam, there are no simple answers about who stole the money or the where the money went.

Amidst all the despair and isolation of private individualism, however, we also see signs of hope. Evidently, the two detectives care enough for the collective well-being of the black community that they to vow to track down the stolen loot and return it to the Harlemites. Yet their desire to fulfill this public obligation frequently runs up against the limits of securing testimonial evidence from black citizens who hold a deep distrust of the law. A witness statement was taken from the man whose armored car was stolen to commit the crime, but the owner didn't divulge any further details than what they had already confirmed.

"Any other witnesses?" Grave Digger asked.

"Hell, you know these people, Jones. All stone blind.

"What you expect from people who're invisible themselves," Coffin Ed said roughly. (39)

The low quality of witness reports impedes the very process of returning the money to those who have lost it. Of course, the scant amount of evidence also harkens back to the original Marcus Garvey trial. The deep distrust of the law, for Harlemites, stems from decades of living under a racist system of jurisprudence that has repeatedly found ways to undermine their own wellbeing.

Moreover, the question of gathering evidence also opens onto the most compelling aporia of the law: the necessity of correcting a past event defined by its abnormality. At this point in the

novel, we find the separation between the gathering of pretrial evidence in the form of witness statements, as necessary to gain information to "solve" the crime, if a crime can ever be fully solved, and the re-presentation of that evidence as witness testimony given at the legal trial itself. In fact, Himes so closely follows these rogue detectives as they collect pre-trial evidence, and vow to do with it as they see fit, it becomes hard to remember that, as a legal matter, case files are ultimately turned over to the courts to decide. A successful prosecution depends as much on the quantity of evidence as it does on how that evidence is pieced together in court, stitched into a historical narrative, to offer a convincing view of what has transpired. For just as Himes notes the difficulties in drawing together a narrative of a black revolution that has passed, the Bureau of Investigation faced a remarkably similar challenge in its pursuit of assembling an archive to trap and contain the genesis of the New Negro movement. What is most striking about building an archive to contain variant forms of historical emergence are the particular concepts of system—of systemic organization, of relay and network—that the original records fix in place as the Bureau effectively creates its own system of constituted power in the effort to reduce the possibility of an alternative black political enterprise superseding its own national power of inscription.

Folio 2.4 – Inscription

Surveillance records from the Bureau of Investigation leave to us only a partial paper trail to account for the lapses in information presented at the Marcus Garvey trial. Moreover, the scant amount of incriminating evidence collected by the Bureau's monitoring program, and handed over to the District Attorney's Office, failed to unequivocally verify that vital government resources had strategically and effectively been put to efficient use gathering only the most critical pieces of intelligence in the fight against black political insurgency. For

although surveillance of Marcus Garvey had been ongoing since 1918, Hoover's eventual focus on the Black Star Line's advertisements appears to have come too late and only on the heels of secondhand intelligence. Moreover, the majority of the evidence it had gathered were the original documents that sung the praises of the Black Star Line as a redemptive enterprise to realize the spirit of the New Negro.

Mortimer Davis, one of J. Edgar Hoover's aides, routinely drafted written updates on the activities of the Black Star Line, and regularly attached important sections of the *Negro World* to his reports. On May 28, 1919, for instance, Agent Davis penned the following Bureau of Investigation report which quotes the black newspaper verbatim:

IN RE: NEGRO ACTIVITIES THE BLACK STAR LINE

> Our Attention has been called to a notice which appeared in the "Negro World" of April 26th, reading:
>
> "EVERY NEGRO MAN AND WOMAN IN THE STATES OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY IS HEREBY NOTIFIED
>
> That a monster convention of the race is called for Sunday night, April 27, 1919, at 8.30 o'clock at the Palace Casino, New York, Cor. Madison Avenue and 135th Street. *The Universal Negro Improvement Association and the African Communities League, Inc. of the World.*
>
> MARCUS GARVEY
> WORLD-FAMED ORATOR WILL SPEAK
>
> The move to inaugurate the First Line of Negro Steamships to run between America, Africa, and the West Indies, South and Central America, to compete in the new world trade, will be launched at this convention.
>
> EVERYBODY MUST BE THERE AT 8:30 SHARP TO GET SEATS

(MGP 1: 411-2)

After directly transcribing these promotional materials, Agent Davis details a remarkably coherent narrative of what occurred at the event:

> The meeting was held as advertised. There was besides Garvey, one other speaker, named A. H. Whale[y]. After the meeting Garvey said privately that the purpose was to inaugurate the Black Star Line of vessels and to sail between New York and the West Indies, and then to Liberia. This was the first meeting for the purpose of something between $7,000 and $8,000 was collected in the form of cash and pledges. When they have a certain amount of money they propose to get a charter under the American flag, and later transfer the ship or ships to the Liberian Flag. After the charter has been procured they propose to take up the matter with Japanese bankers and get financial backing from them. (MGP 3: 412)

The report not only demonstrates that the Bureau had begun to take the *Negro World* publication more seriously, but that it now had informants eavesdropping on the ground. Known as stool pigeons in police parlance, these informants provided Hoover with a first-hand account of Garvey's attempt to yoke the dreams of black economic prosperity with racial advancement.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed relied on similar informants. In *Cotton Comes to Harlem* we learn that the detectives came to rely on a network of tipsters in order to make up the gap in information not provided to them by direct eyewitnesses to crimes under investigation. "Grave Digger and Coffin Ed were realists," Himes reminds us. "They knew they didn't have second sight. So they had stool pigeons from all walks of life: criminals, straight men, and squares" (41). These pigeons were well organized, and the rules were clear. Times and places for contact were established, and "no pigeon knew another" so as not to expose their secrecy (41). To track down

the loot stolen from the Back-to-Africa scheme, they "started contacting their pigeons, but only those in the petty larceny circuit" (41). Of course, the black detectives had to remain realists in the effort to locate the stolen $87,000 because any information provided to them could be false, leading them off course, away from ever finding the money. Informants were easily compromised. The very definition of an informant, ironically, is a compromised individual who may often provide information in exchange for money or some other personal reward. Relying on questionable truth claims provided by these confidential sources to locate a large sum of stolen money was hardly perfect, "but without them," Himes writes, "most crimes would never be solved" (41).

What separated the Bureau's informants from those of the black Harlem detectives, however, was that confidential intel from black informants was provided to white agents. Information had to cross the color line to make it into the hands of the Justice Department. But it also had to cross divisions between rival factions within the black community. In order to traverse these gaps, and thus reduce the possibility of false or misleading information, the Bureau hired the first African American special agent and assigned him to work undercover in the federal campaign against black militancy. James Wormley Jones served in the US Army during the war with an all-black company known as the Buffalo Soldiers. According to Bureau records, the ranking "commanding officer was 'shell shocked' from the intense fighting," a situation worsened by the fact that "his company of soldiers [were] poorly trained and ill-equipped" ("Early African-American Agents"). Defying all the odds, Jones bravely took control of the US Army unit and pushed into German territory. Jones quickly put that expertise with hand-grenades and explosives to use at the General Intelligence Division and worked directly under Hoover on its foreign counterintelligence and anti-terrorist mission. But as the threat of the Red Summer

race riots declined, the black agent was reassigned to a direct intelligence role in gathering intel on the rival black leaders in Harlem. James Wormley Jones was given a top secret coded identity by the Bureau and he went deep undercover in Harlem; his reports were signed off only as Agent #800.

A "Memorandum For Mr. Hoover," dated November 5, 1921, details just how important the black undercover officer was to tracking the advertisements for business propositions made by the Black Star Line. According to this report, undercover Agent #800 had been in contact with Cyril Briggs, leader of the African Blood Brotherhood, and vocal critic of Garvey's brand of black nationalism for its capitalist ventures, which ran in contradiction to the communist cause.[39] It was hardly the first time that informant #800 had passed along intelligence reports about the rising tensions between black leaders within Harlem. The Bureau was well aware that Briggs and Garvey had become embroiled in a public feud for black loyalties. A previous report by #800, filed nearly two months prior, indicated that "Briggs is very hostile towards Garvey because Garvey has ignored his communication and because none of Briggs' propaganda against Garvey seems to have done Garvey any harm" to his public reputation (MGP 4, 22).[40] Elsewhere Agent #800 noted that he had managed to infiltrate both organizations. He updated the Bureau on the intensifying political rivalry:

> Now sir I have just come from a meeting of the African Blood Brotherhood and I learned from Briggs that he is starting a very vigorous campaign against Garvey. You will remember some weeks ago I reported that if Briggs was unable to join hands with

[39] Judith Stein remarks that any hope to set up a coalition between the ABB and the UNIA was dashed when Garvey "distanced himself from popular militarism" in an attempt to "resurrect UNIA businesses" (143). In return, Briggs "demanded a new politics and warned Garveyites of the dangers of overemphasizing black business enterprise" (143).

[40] For a good overview of Briggs' contribution to the black communist movement in the United States, see Minkah Makalani's *In the Cause of Freedom* (especially chapter two).

> Garvey, Briggs would start a campaign against him. In this month[']s issue of Briggs' magazine [*The Crusader*] he has several articles on Garvey calling Garvey everything but a gentleman. The magazine will be out on Tuesday. Will send you a copy. Briggs wants me to furnish him with the names of the presidents of the large divisions of Garvey['s] organizations so he can send them a copy of the magazine. (MGP 4: 74)

The memorandum from Agent #800 also enclosed the report by the ABB which had originally ran in the October 1921 issue of the organization's public organ, *The Crusader*.

The enclosed ABB report was a shrewd public relations tactic intended to broadcast the exact moment when the relationship between the two black organizations had first gone sour. Briggs claimed that he had first "accepted the invitation which Mr. Garvey [made] through the press issued to all 'Colored Churches, Lodges, Organizations, Clubs and Fraternities' for the Second International Negro Congress at Liberty Hall" (MGP 4: 75). Acting in good faith, Briggs put together a delegation to represent the ABB at the Congress precisely because "we were led to believe this was an all-Negro Congress" (MGP 4: 75). For the meeting had been billed as "an international Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World." The ABB sent its delegation to the convention with a set of demands:

> We carried to the Congress IDEAS and a cordial SPIRIT OF COOPERATION. We were FRIENDLY. But we demanded that the Congress function in the interests of the Negro Race who were hoping for so much from it, and not for the gratification of selfish personal ambitions. We suggested it get down to work to formulate a program for the Negro Race in the Fight for Liberation; that it devise means to organize our People to the end of stopping the mob-murder of our men, women and children and to protect them against sinister secret societies of cracke[r] whites and fight the ever-expanding Peonage

> system; that it devise means to raise and protect the standard of living of living of the Negro People; that it take steps to bring about a federation of all Negro organizations, thus molding all the Negro factions into one mighty and formidable factor, governed and directed by a Central Body and made up of representatives from all member organizations. (MGP 4: 75)

The ABB believed these fundamental parameters for militant cooperation would form the basis for a unified vision of black internationalist partnership. In fact, the organization was so convinced of the efficacy of these tenets that they were printed onto leaflets in preparation for the convention.

However, when the ABB delegation arrived and began circulating its own conditions for coalition to representative members from the other black organizations, these groundwork measures were not warmly received as Briggs had hoped. More problematic, it became clear that any hope for a united black internationalist front to ratify itself at the convention would transpire only under the terms outlined by the UNIA. Briggs reported to readers of the *Crusader* that "TWO HOURS AFTER THE APPERANCE OF THE BULLETIN CARRYING OUR PROGRAM THE AFRICAN BLOOD BROTHERHOOD WAS DENOUNCED BY MR. GARVEY AND ITS DELEGATION EXPELLED FROM THE CONGRESS!" (MGP 4: 75). The expulsion was met with sore disappointment. Briggs immediately began to escalate his rhetorical attacks. A "Garvey Must Go" campaign was centered around the assertion that this lack of cooperation was the originary primal scene that had damaged any sense of a unified Pan-African front. It first tore apart any immediate hopes of a black federation, and secondarily an irreparable rift grew between Garvey and the A.B.B. Under this rationale, the failure for the black international to unify under the terms that Briggs had drawn up would continue to haunt the global futurity of the African diaspora unless these tenets were revisited.

Agent #800 was careful to temper Briggs' self-preserving version of the events with measured reflection. The undercover agent working Bureau operations in black Harlem warned that the document printed in *The Crusader* could not be read as the definitive account of the events in question. There were immense public stakes involved for both black leaders to remain in power. Hence there seemed to be a great deal of uncertainty as to whether any version of the events communicated by black delegates in attendance at the Negro Convention could be believed whole cloth. Indeed, the Bureau always had to always consider and hold open the possibility that the leaders were now so staunchly devoted to seizing hold of the power to control the black masses that no rational concessions between them would ever conceivably be made. A subsequent report from #800 observed: "Briggs is very hostile towards Garvey because Garvey has ignored communication and also because none of Briggs' propaganda against Garvey seems to have done Garvey any harm" (MGP 3: 22). Above all, Agent #800 warned the Bureau that the political ideologies both men continued to pose a great threat to American sovereignty, and that "of the two evils Briggs and Garvey it is hard to say which is the worse" (MGP 4: 74).

Folio 2.5 - The Merge

A subsequent field report from Agent #800 in November of 1921, however, signaled a decisive shift in tone. It detailed a change in strategy would have likely raised the eyebrows of the American public on both sides of the color line if the classified reports were ever accidentally released or covertly leaked. For it included additional intelligence that Briggs had expressed clear interest in helping the Bureau prosecute Garvey. The motivations were obvious enough. The ABB's public statement had not produced the desired effect to persuade the black masses to

give up their hopes that Garvey would ever wish to foster a global network of diasporic unification. Facing further repercussions from the rapid decline of his own popularity in black Harlem, the embattled Briggs opened a backchannel of communication with the federal authority and began to supply information as required to bring charges against the Black Star Line. Agent Ruch sent the initial report up the Bureau's chain of command to his supervisor J. Edgar Hoover:

> According to this informant [#800] Briggs is making every possible effort to have the Post Office Inspectors take action against Garvey for the publication in the "Negro World" of an advertisement showing a picture of the "Phyllis Wheatley," which, according to the statements of Garvey, had been purchased by the Black Star Line. As a matter of fact, this was an ordinary steamboat with the name "Phyllis Wheatley" placed on the same and used for a "cut" for the advertisement and used for the purpose of securing further purchases for the Black Star Line stock. (MGP 4: 163)

However unlikely, or even counterintuitive, this political alliance might have seemed at the time—as the communist and militant activities of the ABB still remained under close Bureau surveillance—the proposition for these two political adversaries to work together on a joint effort to defeat Garvey's Black Star Line was based on the discovery of new intelligence.

A nationwide promotional campaign to sell stock made up a crucial part of Garvey's effort to fund a global shipping fleet linking black populations of the United States, Caribbean, and Africa. More specifically, the starting point of promoting this commercial venture was Garvey's contention that the essential feature of historical capitalism over its *longue durée*—that is, its eventual ascension to reorganize the economic world-system—had been the premised on the strategic prioritization and disenfranchisement of discrete racial identities rather than simply the result of unregulated economic flows of free markets. Thus understood, the campaign for

stock promoted the view that the asymmetry of the economic performance of the black diaspora in the capitalist world-system was a structural matter. Changing fortunes would thereby require fresh thinking about the rank and substance of black diasporic identity—an identity Garvey characterized in the Black Star Line advertisements as linked to the revolutionary capacity for the development of political thought and movements of global economic reform. Against the background of these potential territorial and economic realignments, it was Briggs, not the Bureau, who had initially suggested focusing on the advertisements for company stock containing pictures of a ship represented as belonging to the Black Star Line.

The possibility that the company's entrance into the world market economy had been unlawfully premised on a false representation signaled a distinctive way to challenge the legitimacy of the all-black shipping line. In this scheme of things, it was the power of the media advertisement that required focus as an aesthetic object capable of making appeals to the black social imagination. This form of representation also carried the capacity to open up a dreamworld for alternative visions of black economic prosperity. Racial renewal, in other words, needed to be understood by the Bureau as tied both to a cultural project and a system of cultural production. This dual power for cultural identity to build solidarity using the marker of cultural identity as well as to make history on a collective level is what links the economic promises of the Black Star Line to the cultural project of a racial awakening. Using the advertisements as an instrument for realizing the purchasing objectives of the steamship line therefore began to raise questions about whether the ideas and imagery used to imagine future lifeworlds for the black diaspora living within America's borders were being presented in accordance with US law.

Folio 2.6 – Twin Evils

Ten days later, the Bureau conducted a personal interview with Cyril Briggs at the African Blood Brotherhood headquarters located on Seventh Avenue, New York City. According to the report, Briggs "appeared very willing to give his assistance in this matter" (MGP 197).[41] Not only that, he had obtained critical information which came to light after his own investigations of Black Star Line advertisements featuring a picture of a steamliner "with the name 'Phyllis Wheatley' on the bow" (MGP4: 197). Briggs also indicated that "on October 29th he addressed a letter to the US Bureau of Navigation, asking whether or not such a ship as the "Phyllis Wheatley" actually existed." He showed the Bureau a copy of the reply he received:

> Department of Commerce
>
> Bureau of Navigation
>
> Washington
>
> Complying with your request of the 29th inst. this office advises you that that it has been unable to find in its maritime record or maritime reports the steamships "Antonio Maceo" and "Phyllis Wheatley."
>
> Respectfully,
>
> A. Figrer

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[41] The Bureau's practice of formally documenting conversations, referred to in FBI agent parlance as "memcom"—an acronym for "memorandum of conversation"—was most recently exposed by the media firestorm following US President Donald Trump's impromptu firing of FBI Director James Comey. Only after his relief from duty was it exposed that Comey had filed a memcom of an otherwise private conversation in which President had suggested that the FBI Director suspend his investigation of Trump Campaign ties to Russia during the 2016 election. Mainstream media outlets, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post,* speculated on the extent to which previous directors, including Robert Mueller, had also practiced this custom of internally documenting private conversations. No journalist covering the Comey affair, to my knowledge, however, went as far back as J. Edgar Hoover to note that this textual practice was in fact coextensive with the very formation of the Bureau. Indeed, the Garvey documents make clear that even in Hoover's first big case he expected agents under his close supervision to keep impeccable paper records of private conversations with individuals outside the Bureau, and to file these memcoms internally to him.

Acting Commissioner

(MGP 4: 197)

Although a key piece of intelligence useful for puzzling together the backstory of the Black Star Line, the confirmation of a nonexistent shipping vessel was hardly the smoking gun that Hoover required to proceed with a federal case. The trouble was that failing to meet marine reporting requirements for what Briggs believed to be imaginary ships that had yet to set sail on a single commercial voyage did not in itself constitute an illegitimate act. Official verification on federal letterhead confirming that the shipping company had yet to file a single maritime report with the Bureau of Navigation for the two ships in question was circumstantial at best. If the best chance to force litigation against Garvey and his associates was to proceed with a mail fraud charge, still missing was sufficient proof that the federal mails had in fact been used to deliver advertisements for stock to potential investors. Material evidence of such mailings was required to verify in federal court, and to persuade a trial jury beyond the condition reasonable doubt, that fraudulent photographs had in fact been used to falsely represent the Black Star Line's holdings as larger than they were. Further proof was also required to demonstrate fraudulent intent to inspire investor confidence and ultimately to solicit the purchase of stock. Pressed on such points of legality during the interview, Briggs reportedly assured Agent #800 that "he is positive that the circular mentioned above has been widely circulated through the mails"; and further, "he has promised the name and address of at least one person who received" the advertisement (MGP 4: 197).[42] It is remarkably ironic that an advocate of black radicalism like Briggs would help the US

[42] A subsequent report from Agent #800 to Ruch dated 20 December 1921 indicated, "Briggs also said that he had furnished the Post Office Department with affidavits from people in from people in Philadelphia, Norfolk and New York that had purchased tickets from the Black Star Line and had never been furnished the passage" back to Africa. "He said he had secured these affidavits through the branches of his organization in these cities, just how true this is I don't know, but I do know that Briggs has turned over to the post office all of [the] evidence that he could secure against Garvey for using the mails to defraud" (MGP 4: 302).

Government to narrow its focus on mail fraud to bring down another black leader working to "establish a Universal Confraternity among the race"—a Negro alliance funded by the life savings of hard working black men and women (MGP 3: 420). Briggs may have even dreamt up this idea of mail fraud based on the well-known fact that the United States Postal Service had refused to handle a July 1919 issue of the black publication the *Messenger*, because it contained black militant content.[43] Nevertheless, the urgent rush to hunt down and find potentially incriminating information on the UNIA's use of the mails would consequently change the course of the Hoover's investigation.

If Briggs were to be believed, the company's supposed unstoppable entry into the global market economy was hardly complete. What was utopian about the company's representation of itself as a venerable force in reshaping the terms and conditions of finance capital was that it had depicted its own moment in economic world history to have already arrived, when, in fact—at least according to Briggs—the steamship "Phyllis Wheatley" depicted in the advertisement did not yet exist in the Black Star Line fleet. Focusing on the company's dubious representations, mass media advertisements designed specifically to attract black investors, entailed expanding the investigative focus from the minutiae of financial mismanagement to track the company's perpetual media distortions. In turn, discrediting the movement's historical actualization became the criterion for the evaluation of the publicly disseminated images deployed to enhance the sale of company stock. So much for heeding Agent #800's earlier warning that "of the two evils Briggs and Garvey it is hard to say which is the worse" (MGP 4: 74).

[43] Note also that, at least for a brief period of time, the *Messenger* publisher Philip Randolph and Marcus Garvey had "also cooperated closely. In 1918, Randolph and Garvey joined to form the short-lived International League of Darker Peoples, which was to draw up a list of demands upon European powers concerning the treatment of colonized peoples. After the war, Garvey announced that the UNIA had chosen Randolph to head the delegation of blacks to the Versailles Peace conference. Garveyites held a mass meeting to raise passage money for Randolph, but Randolph declined. . . . 'Needless to say, I never went', commented Randolph sarcastically" (Vincent 33).

Folio 2.7 – Incorporation

It is not accidental that precisely when the Department of Justice began to rescue the past in fragments—collecting leaflets, political statements, and advertisements for the Black Star Line which had been circulated in the black press—that the documentary impulse began to overflow and contradict itself. For the imperial state collected within itself that which the power of empire purports to hold outside itself. The surveillance materials gathered from state agencies actively monitoring the Garvey movement came to occupy a textual zone at once constrained by America's own imperial gaze and yet these documents remained in excess of that same gaze to the extent that a myopic vision of national belonging was defined only in opposition to the insurgent threat of black renewal. In other words, this moment marks the crossover when Hoover's program for justice to be restored began to overlap itself with the contested signs of black emancipation.

Amongst the flurry of documents were internal memos instructing the Justice Department on how to strategically contain this threat. Take, for instance, this memo from the Bureau to Mr. Joyce outlining not only the five companies under Garvey's control but also the rapidly expanding vision of the New Negro movement as a mass utopian enterprise:

> Memorandum for the United States Attorney Concerning Marcus Garvey
>
> This is a case concerning Marcus Garvey, an alien West Indian negro who operates from 56 West 13[5]th Street, New York, N.Y. He is charged with having violated the postal fraud in the promotion of the following companies:
>
> (1) Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, Inc.
>
> (2) Black Star Line, Inc.

(3) The Negro Factories, Inc.

(4) The "Negro World"

(5) The Universal Steam Laundry

The advertised purpose of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League is stated as follows:

> An organization embracing the millions of men, women and children of Negro blood and African descent of all countries of the world, striving for *freedom*, *manhood* and *nationalism* of the Negro… (MGP 4: 356)

The dynamics of black revolution here meet with the practice of imperial recitation. In seeking to correct the course of America's future, and to set the nation back on track, the Bureau's plans had changed and so too had the patterns of governmental control come to rely more than ever on documenting the rise of black resistance.

But how could the integrity of America's cultural borders ever be secured through an archival method which involved the Department of Justice collecting and incorporating within its own semantic system the very materials deemed wholly other to itself, outside itself? Above all, what is the relation, or nonrelation, between the legal practice of gathering and holding proof and a black political vision supposedly antithetical to life in America? The inquiry into this oppositional force, as its origins could be traced back to internal racial conflicts within America, somehow came to be represented at the legal trial in such a way as to be simultaneously held outside the nation's borders.

More problematic still, the Bureau was not the only place where these documents would be strategically gathered and used for political purposes. Under Briggs' editorial advisement, the the *Crusader* printed the following front page:

The Crusader

November 1921

EXTRA!

"S.S. Phyllis Wheatley"

A Garvey Myth

See Article in This Number

15 Cents a Copy $1.50 a year

(MGP 4: 230)

To some extent, then, the efforts of the Bureau had come to align themselves with Briggs' own radical political objectives. Hence this coordinated effort raises the question as to whether the Bureau's shift away from its earlier attempts to foster enmity between Garvey and Briggs had given way to prioritizing one mass utopian vision over another. Giving credence to the ABB's communist objectives hardly matched the Bureau's objectives nor its actions. Instead, neutralizing Garvey came to be prioritized simply because his movement of black liberation posed a more immediate threat: a message of black resistance had begun to congeal in the growing mass public appeal of the Black Star Line advertisements. In turn, recruiting the help of a rival black leader in the effort to quell the influence of cultural and economic projects designed for black liberation offered more than one advantage. Not only did it provide the opportunity to gather crucial new information for the investigation from Briggs's connections in black Harlem. It had the separate advantage of reinforcing this diasporic vision as a failure through the anti-Garvey campaign that Briggs continued to step up in *The Crusader* newspaper.

It is, of course, more than a little ironic that the government's discourse had overlapped itself with an equal and opposite counter-assertion. Restoring faith in the American conception justice meant coordinating calls of black liberation which stood outside the conventional framework of rights and freedoms. The short-term effect at least was that disputing the terms of what the future, or what black futurity, should look like served to stall and ultimately to block a clear vision of an alternative future, and thus to make it unavailable, at least for the time being, until enough evidence could be accumulated in the government archives to proceed with a federal case. While it was important for the government to roll back the clocks, it was also necessary to begin to piece together a conception of justice which contains an opacity that must be returned.

In turn, a different kind of archive would need to be assembled by the Bureau to track the Black Star Line company's efforts to bolster its own status by appealing to prospective black investors using dubious claims based more on aspirational cultural politics than on economic facts about its current standing in the historical formation of finance capital. On account of this new information, Ruch's memorandum to Hoover contains the suggestion to immediately assign special agent Warren W. Grimes to coordinate the Garvey investigation with both Briggs as well as the Chief Postal Inspector: "It is suggested that Mr. Grimes give this matter particular attention" (MGP 4: 163). A subsequent document in the Bureau files written by W. W. Grimes himself, on December 9, 1921, indicates that "[w]ith regard to the case of Marcus Garvey, arrangements have been made with the Chief Post Office Inspector . . . to work with me in review of the evidence submitted on this case" (MGP 4: 257). Investigating the Black Star Line's use of the federal mails for advertisements intended to defraud its shareholders was thus raised to a top priority.

Folio 2.8 – The Wrong Confession

The District Attorney, likely by design, deflected questions that might invite scrutiny of the specifics and legalities of the government's surveillance program on Garvey. Instead of detailing how the government had drawn on information from a black communist organization been put in contact with their star witness, the prosecution proceeding straight into a witness examination focused on the identification of the envelope and its lost contents:

> Q: I am going to show you an envelope, Benny, and ask you whether you recognize it?
>
> A. Yes, Sir.
>
> Q: You do? A. Yes, sir.
>
> Q: Do you remember what came in that envelope? A. No, sir, I do not.
>
> Q: What was it about?
>
> Mr. Johnson: I object.
>
> Q: Let me finish my question, if you please, Mr. Johnson; do you know what the contents of that envelope was, what it was about? A. Some of the envelopes are about—
>
> The Court: This envelope.
>
> Q: I am going to show you the back of it, see if that helps you.
>
> Mr. Garvey: I beg to record my objection and exception to the matter of examination and his Honor's ruling in the matter.
>
> The court: Proceed.
>
> A. I cannot remember what was in the letter.
>
> Q: Did you get a number of letters, Dancy? A. Yes, sir.

Q: Do you remember whether or not any of them were from the Black Star Line? A. Yes, sir, some was from the Black Star Line and from the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and some were from the Negro Factories Corporation.

Q: Now, the letters which you got from the Black Star Line, were about what? A. I got so many letters from them I didn't see them all.

Mr. Johnson: I object. The objection is that you cannot go into the contents of the letters.

Mr. Mattuck: I offer the envelope in evidence, on the grounds that it bears on the back of it the stamp "Black Star Line" and it is a reasonable assumption that the envelope contained matter from the Black Star Line.

Mr. Johnson: Objected to as immaterial and irrelevant.

The Court: It may go in.

Mr. Garvey: Same objection for Mr. Garvey with an exception.

The Court: Yes. Received and marked as Government's Exhibit 112.

Q: Now, Benny, do you know what these letters which came to you from the Black Star Line were all about? A. I cannot remember all of them because I never read all of the letters I got and some of them were just about one thing and another and a lot of them that I got I just threw it back.

Q: Tell us what these letters were about, Mr. Dancy? A. I couldn't tell you about all of them because I never read them all.

Q: Those that you read? A. Well, some of the letters said invest more money in the Black Star Line for the case [cause?] of purchasing bigger ships and so forth.

> Q: What else can you think of? A. There is so much I just can't remember it all anyhow.
>
> Q: Give us as just as you can remember; one of the things you said was to buy more ships, bigger ships. Did they say anything about dividends[?]
>
> Mr. Johnson: I object.
>
> The Court: No—exhaust his memory first.
>
> Q: Tell us, Dancy, all that you can think of?
>
> The Court: I did rule on it; I sustain the objection.
>
> Q: Cannot you think what you were spending your money for, what they said? A. Yes, they said in some letters about investing this money to help me and the rest make bigger progress. I cannot remember the letters unless I see some of them. (MGP 6: 16-17)

Dancy was placed into the rather uncomfortable, indeed next to impossible, position to have to testify against the same Pan-African organization of which he was a participant and continued to pay UNIA membership dues. He was, in other words, being asked to testify against the all-black shipping company from which he had personally acquired 53 stocks, purchased at the standard price of five dollars each, bought in the hopes that they would one day pay dividends.

Such considerations convey the extraordinary act of faith required for the witness to place sufficient enough faith in the public good to prioritize collective concerns ahead of private interests. For what distinguishes a testamentary act of bearing witness from a simple transmission of information, as much as both re-cite facts of historical knowledge, involves the heightened responsibility for the witness to prioritize a belief in the collective oath and the authority of national law over any personal gain or loss. The ethical transformation of supposedly indifferent bystanders into compassionate witnesses is a promise inherent to the legal

obligation to bear witness. Precisely this promissory arrangement, as a contract or agreement to tell the truth in public, functions to structure the categorization of testamentary evidence as such. Yet it remains a fragile obligation to the extent that court testimony depends on the assumption that in making the testamentary promise to tell the truth, the witness must, in fact, tell the truth, will tell the truth, that it can ever be possible to speak the truth.

Folio 2.9 – Total Recall

One needs only to think of Freud's model of the "Screen Memory" to begin to grasp the fragility of assumptions about total recall. His 1899 essay draws attention to the "problems concerning the operation of memory and its distortions" and eventually connects "the amnesia" associated with historical repression to "the importance and *raison d'etre* of fantasies" (SE 3: 301).[44] Close investigation of patient testimony during the recollection of traumatic events revealed that "resistance prevents their direct reproduction" (301). The potential for variance was attributed to the ways in which historical recollection may do more to screen or otherwise defend against more disturbing memories which threaten to disrupt everyday settings simply by recalling them. Memories, in other words, are not mere verifications of truth about the past. They are events in themselves which retroactively recode the past. Moreover, the "*temporal* relation" at stake here "between the screen memory and the subject it has screened out" involves a kind of affective economy whereby the partial discharge provides a safety valve so that the pressure of the event in the past is diminished when it becomes partially disguised (*Psychopathology* 45).

[44] The first occurrence of the term occurred in a letter from Freud to Fliess dated 25 May 1899. He indicated that a paper of that title had just been published in the *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie* and that he liked it immensely. The 1899 journal article, moreover, appeared in print prior to *The Interpretation of Dreams.*

In disguising a memory, the emotional energy bound up in the event is partially released. Through this process of historical condensation, the witness's own imagined position to the past event becomes visible, historically intelligible, often with intense moral concentration. That very intelligibility is also, however, a form of distancing, and hence a psychological mechanism of defense. For these memories, Freud argues, find contact with another experience and begin to make associative connections. To provide an example, he draws on a personal experience at age seventeen. While vacationing with his family in the country, he met a fifteen-year-old girl who moved away only after a few days and left him brokenhearted. "It was my first calf-love and sufficiently intense" (312). Over time, however, this unrequited love had somehow transformed itself in his memory. The raw form of "separation" anxiety he once felt, first signified by the initial memory of his lover's "yellow dress," an image of immense intensity which had "brought my longings to a really high pitch," had been somehow repressed and then redirected into the pleasant images of dandelion fields and homemade bread (312). The primal scene of his heartbreak had been turned into bucolic reminiscences of his family's countryside vacation. As the past undergoes a series of transformations, he remarks, the "objectionable element" is not simply removed altogether but is "forced … into a shape capable of visual representation" only after it has been put in associative contact with another memory (318). Images of the pastoral countryside had come to take the place of those which denoted a severed emotional experience. He clarifies: "It seems to me then that I amalgamated the two sets of phantasies of how my life could have been more comfortable—the 'yellow' and the 'country-made bread'" (314). This is to say that the admixture involves not simply the play between past and present as much as it recombines various moments in the past. In making such distinctions, Freud is careful to make clear that the screen memory is not a complete fabrication. But, at the same time, in this form of

re-witnessing the past, there appears to be no straightforward concern for historical accuracy either.

Focusing on how memories may also be developed beyond the level of the individual, Avishai Margalit takes Freud's model one step further by making a distinction between common and shared memories. "A common memory," she argues,

> is an aggregate notion. It aggregates the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually. . . . A *shared* memory, on the other hand, is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode . . . into one version. . . . Shared memory is built on a division of mnemonic labor" (50-1).

When we talk about the testimony of the witness we are indeed talking about the distinction between these two forms of memories, between a *common* conception of the past as collectively experienced by national subjects and the ways in which *shared* memories rely on a process whereby individual agents consolidate the collective past through mediations which rely on communication practices.

This process of integrating individual memories into the historical archive attempts to do the impossible by aggregating the varied testimonial accounts of witnesses "each experiencing only a fragment what happened for their unique angle on events—into one version. Other people in the community who were not there at the time may then be plugged into the experience of those who were [there], through channels of description rather than by direct experience" (51). These channels of description serve to configure the way the collective "we" comes to learn about certain historical facts. Margalit is certainly correct to suggest that the calibration of

different perspectives comes to form a mutually constitutive arrangement. Though the distinction seems to overestimate the extent to which even *shared* memories eventually converge or "congeal" back into one collective memory. We might therefore add that the calibration of different perspectives not only forms a mutually constitutive arrangement but simultaneously runs the risk of producing a considerable imbalance of perspectives if the "division of mnemonic labor" comes to value one version over another.

But there is another pressing consideration to tease out here as well. At the same time as the testamentary promise of the witness elevates the obligation to speak the truth to the level of a public responsibility, it also identifies the witness as such, conferring a civic identification of the witness as witness, who has been invested with the public authority as spokesperson to provide a truthful re-presentation of an event that resides in the past. Moreover, since the belief in the law is contingent on the veracity of this historical representation, any discrepancy in witness testimony, be it linguistic slippage, historical amnesia, a screen memory, or otherwise, will therefore serve to compromise the documentary impulse of the law, and thus to foreshorten law's accuracy, if not its efficacy.

The agency assigned to the spokesperson may not fully aggregate the past into a collective memory. Forever haunting the act of giving evidence through speech is the possibility that the witness could risk exposing a fissure in modern law between perfect testimony and historical inaccuracy or even perjury. In a sense, then, justice is haunted by the limits of its own deliverance. Modern justice may therefore be understood as a system that codifies the boundaries of history's appearance.

Folio 2.10 – Fault Lines

Calling attention to the differences between bearing witness and establishing truth retroactively in court, and thus to draw attention to the representative limits of the trial witness as a reliable historical source code, serves to affirm the impossibility of ever knowing, with absolute certainty, whether Benny Dancy believed in the promise of the law with enough credence, whether he maintained enough faith in the US legal apparatus, to feel compelled to tell the truth, whether it was ever possible for him to tell the truth, in such a way as to re-present the past again without engaging in a project of historical revisionism. His testimony diverges between multiple pressures to speak the truth. For conceived thus, Dancy's financial investments in Black Star Line stock stood to benefit only if the speculative financial venture became a success, and a court ruling against the all-black shipping company's legitimacy would seem to only undermine his own financial prosperity. In a sense, then, Dancy was being asked to testify against a particular rendition of his own future, called to deliver testimony on the witness stand in direct contradiction to his own monetary flourishing, not least to publicly go on record against the economic futurity of his own race. Here we find the fault lines which appear in the very notion of witnessing, as the act of speaking the truth in the name of safeguarding or preserving national justice can be held by competing public obligations and conflicting interests, representative of different group wants, needs, and desires. Negotiations of identity and belonging ricochet across any one understanding of history or single version of truth. For at stake in the Garvey trial was not just the legitimacy of the venture capital which underwrote the Black Star Line as new phase of global financial expansion. Also tied up in the verdict was the economic fate of thousands of black Americans, whose lifesavings, whether they still fully

believed in Garvey's black diasporic vision or not, nonetheless depended on Black Star Line stock returning dividends from the rapidly globalized trends of the world market after the war.

Still, these considerations cannot completely foreclose the possibility that Benny Dancy testified under oath to the best of his recollection. If the witness can forget then what's to say the witness will remember correctly enough to ever set the record straight beyond the shadow of a doubt? We cannot rule out the prospect that he truthfully could not recall the contents of one mailing envelope received amongst so many others from the shipping company. His historical amnesia, whether an act of perjury calculated to safeguard his own economic fortunes, a forgetfulness manifested as a symptom of the way the past invades or contaminates the present, or simply a failure to remember, in all three scenarios calls into doubt the accuracy of legal adjudication.[45]

This nonequivalence between points, configuring the memory of the historical witness through a kind of nonlinearity, nonequivalence, as the product of multiple testamentary paradigms between past and present, black and white, calls attention to competing public attachments which disturb the metaphysical foundation of justice as a clear transaction, of clear equivalence between historical truth and retroactive justice. Given the historical boundaries which continue to repeat privileges, to transmit differences, to mark out injustice, and to reinstate

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[45] Julius Garvey provided an additional hypothesis during a recent interview aired 22 December 2016 on "Democracy Now!" The televised appearance was a last-minute appeal designed to put public pressure on President Obama to act on both his legal authority to exercise executive clemency as well as on his moral obligation as a member of the black community by granting a posthumous pardon exonerating Marcus Garvey before leaving the Oval Office. Included in this discussion of the 1922 fraud conviction was a statement by Garvey's son indicating first that "the person who presented the envelope couldn't remember what was inside the envelope. [But] also, he was a perjured witness in that he was told by the prosecuting attorney to lie about the contents and whether he worked with the UNIA, etc." The latter contention differs from the theory that Dancy may have perjured himself for reasons of economic self-interest. And it raises another possibility that he colluded not with the UNIA but with the US Government by lying to ensure that the man whom Hoover had labeled a race agitator and threat to national security was put behind bars. Though if he did knowingly perjure himself either way it remains a mystery why Dancy would not have more convincingly assured the trial outcome by providing clear testimony on the contents of the letter. See video and interview transcription:
https://www.democracynow.org/2016/12/22/marcus_garvey_inspired_millions_from_mlk

dissimilarities between races, there is the possibility that in the recollection of the historical event witnessing also concerns the more political problem of retroactive judgement: of transmission, transfer, transmissibility, and historical power as not singular but perpetually divided across worldviews and multiple competing subject positions.

Hence the predicament of the African American witness is to be held by competing demands and under contrasting obligations to re-present the past. One can detect in these contractions and gaps a rift in the structure of national belonging. For the very prospect of giving agency to the African American as national witness, to entrust the promise of the oath to the very political subject who bears the conflicted civil status as the citizen not quite, disturbs and troubles the imperial fantasy sustaining its own ideal of universal justice as singular and all-encompassing.[46] To this extent, Benny Dancy's 1923 testimony on the Black Star Line correspondence designates an unaddressed desire for legitimacy, for active participatory community engagement of the black citizen in all facets of public life, which the search for justice repeatedly failed to address head on. Crisscrossed and divided, resonating across multiple subject positions, nonsimilar public attachments, the juridical operations of historical reclamation which structure the paradoxical experience of the black witness demarcate the jagged fault lines between memory and identity, public obligation and private gain, national loyalty and race pride.

[46] The conception of the African American citizen not quite awarded full participatory rights has a long genealogy. In "Harlem is Nowhere," Ralph Ellison traces this genealogy: "The phrase 'I'm nowhere' expresses the feeling born in upon many Negroes that they have no stable, recognizable place in society. . . . One 'is' literally, but one is nowhere; one wanders dazed into a ghetto maze, a 'displaced person' of American society' (In Waligora xv). Waligora notes that the Negro exists outside the privileged temporality of the state. Tracking the metaphor of the "black American refugee," she argues they are therefore out of time: "To be a black refugee is to be excluded from modernity's narrative of the human" (xvi).

Folio 2.11 – Departures and Arrivals

The untimeliness of the letter's past existence, only visible through negation, attested to by an empty envelope which once contained the material presence of mailings from the first all-black shipping company, demarcates a slippage in the relation between national law and historical memory. And this slippage denotes a very peculiar kind of historical crisis that undergirds the very possibility of the law's authority to deliver justice. The letter's non-arrival, as the inaccessible, enigmatic, absent signifier, forever postponing its encounter with the contemporaneous moment, marks a lapse in the messianic time of racial justice. It symbolizes the incompletion of universal history. On a more profane level, too, the empty envelope might therefore be understood to stand in for the failed arrival of the Black Star Line as a formidable force on the world economic market. In both respects the missing piece of correspondence comes to take the position of the lost signifier—its very absence denotes a missed revolution in the history of racial justice. It is precisely this temporal lag that demonstrates the jarring disconnect between the possibility for racial justice to emerge and the possibility for justice as the completion of freedom and history to go awry.

The confluence of failed arrivals here would seem to verify that both letters and revolutions are capable of *not* reaching their future destinations. Yet this appears to contradict Jacques Lacan's well-known claim that "a letter always arrives at its destination" (*Ecrits* 30).[47] But how can any letter be guaranteed to reach its sender? What postal principle can account for such a delivery? Lacan supports his case with an insistence on the letter as integral to the symbolic process of intersubjective determination. Even if the letter goes missing, and its

[47] For the specific legal implications of Lacan's discussion, see Maria Aristodemou's article "Does the Letter of the Law Always Arrive at Its Destination? 'A Study in Feminine Psychology'" (*Law and Literature*, vol. 22, no. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 394-417).

location or contents remain unknown, this does not necessarily mean that it fully relinquishes the power to deliver symbolic meaning. On the contrary, for Lacan, we must resist any type of rudimentary postal logic which assumes that the value which gets ascribed to the piece of correspondence goes astray just because the physical object has been lost, misplaced, stolen, or otherwise displaced. Absent or not, the letter maintains a force of actualization which reaffirms the significance of its own symbolic value. His claim is that the letter points to a structural impediment which may nonetheless prove to be the most stubborn presupposition of symbolic determination. And grasping this insight requires attunement to a type of poetic reasoning which determines the boundaries of social relations through the linguistic ordering of regulatory intersubjective paradigms.

Using Poe's "Purloined Letter" as the literary example par excellence, he demonstrates how the story's axial motif, namely a compromising letter which was stolen from the Queen, becomes used against her. The blackmailer utilizes and maximizes the letter's absence for political purposes. Of course, he is not alone in wanting to gain control of the letter's symbolic power. Several other characters in the story, including the Minister and the Queen, also wish to retrieve the letter, not simply to reveal its contents, but rather to possess the actualizing power of the undetermined thing, holding the power to repress its hidden contents, which, in turn, determines all that is outside of it. The letter holds more possibilities to influence social relations when it remains unopened, unexposed, than if the hidden contents of the message were to actually be read and openly disclosed. He remarks that once this fact is known "[t]he only thing left for it to do is to answer this very question: what remains of a signifier when it has no signification?" (28). Lacan enters into a lengthy assessment of the structures of language which

underpin the purloined letter's ability to have detrimental consequences for many of the characters, even in the absence of its content, especially in its absence.

In tracing the purloined letter's persistent circulation between characters in Poe's story, Lacan insists that intersubjective power relations change alongside each character's imagined proximity to the letter. The letter frequently changes hands and, in each case, determines a different set of symbolic social relations. He traces these series of exchanges in order to put forth the rather remarkable claim that symbolic determination functions in a closed semantic system. What the letter's content signifies does not matter, at least not in the sense of delivering primary meanings through signification as one might at first intuitively think. As the letter in Poe's story circulates through multiple hands, marking a series of departures and arrivals, disappearances and reappearances, what becomes clear is that "the ascendency" of each character in the story, namely the strategic advantage gained over the others, or lost as others seize control, is "not drawn from the letter [itself] but, whether he knows it or not, from the personage it constitutes for him" (23). It would seem, then, that subjectivity comes to be set up as a search for a hidden symbolic object, a lack, in the Garvey case it is literally a missing letter, a missing piece of correspondence that preconditions the trial jury's need to take action against the Black Star Line.

Technically even a missing letter still holds its place in the symbolic composition of social relations. Its symbolic lack still delivers meanings as symbolic messages which cannot be reduced to basic patterns of signification which occur in plain sight. "For the signifier is a unique unit of being which, by its very nature, is the symbol of absence," Lacan remarks. "This is why we cannot say of the purloined letter that, like other objects, it must be *or* not be but rather that, unlike them, it will be *and* will not be wherever it goes" (17). Hence the power of the letter remains indivisible. Indeed, for Lacan, "[T]hat materiality is *odd* in many ways, the first of

which is to not allow of partition. Cut a letter in small pieces, and it remains the letter it is" (16). To recognize the indivisibility of the letter—and thus to recognize its placement within a system of psychic relations in which the repressed always returns to structure intersubjective relations—is to understand that even hiding the letter will not block or obstruct the symbolic power it holds and by which individuals come to configure their own identities. It is precisely this constitutive lack, this search for what remains missing, or otherwise remains repressed, which regulates the ambitions and inhibitions of subjects.

The sense of being, of psychic existence, which Lacan attempts to emphasize is therefore not so much based on the individualistic model of Freudian psychology as it is the product of an intersubjective determination that exists outside the subject, but which constructs self-identity. It is the result of an "intersubjective triad" between the individual, others in the social community, and the symbolic order by which the communicative system of social relations is held together. This place-holding capacity of the signifier, whereby identity is achieved by indirect relating, serves to configure subjects with respect to their proximity to one another. It forms a symbolic relationality which remains contingent on signs that circulate to deliver imaginary identifications and ultimately to offer a sense of social position. In a statement that appears to contradict the picture of the anxious 'psychological subject' unable to achieve self-mastery due to the mysterious content of unconscious signs which manifest from below the symbolic surface and must be decoded, unlocked, reordered, or otherwise fit within the realm of signs, Lacan goes so far as to assert that social "communication is not transmittable in symbolic form. It can only be sustained in relation to this object" (13). For this reason, the letter in Poe's story does not correspond to the specific content of signs and in fact lays bare the mechanism by which the symbolic order itself comes into existence the moment the letter is put into social circulation. It

produces subjects by imposing symbolic points of view which regulate one's own personal narrative in relation to a wider intersubjective search for the mechanisms which condense an entire symbolic chain. "This is why it can bring together an indefinite number of subjects in a common 'ideal'; the communication of one subject with another within the group thus constituted will nonetheless remain irreducibly mediated by an ineffable relation" (13). To the extent that even a lost letter still holds a power over its subjects, organizing the terms of collective life, the letter always "arrives."

Folio 2.12 – Justice Caught in the Act

How does the letter of the law universalize itself? In more ways than I am prepared to answer. But one of the ways it does so, one of the primary ways it inaugurates and upholds its claims on justice, one of the critical ways in which imperial law presides over the juridical imaginary, is through the practice of textual management. As time passes through the translative act of law, and wayward events are drawn back into the framework of symbolic memory, this revised understanding of what the past means arrives through a process of juridical encoding that renders the past utterly paradigmatic, utterly typical, utterly foundational to the prehistory of the national present. In other words, the revolutionary threat of the Black Star Line, its possibility to force a new beginning in the history of the world, reappears in the national archive in a form reduced to the restitution of names and dates. Its revolutionary power to rethink the collective ideal of justice collapses under the bureaucratic weight of paperwork—symbolic of a futile financial venture. It is in this sense that the imperial archive draws in that which lies outside it. Juridical activities of indexing and cataloguing thus become activated as essential responses to problems of historical reference. Such technologies of information become essential for a system

of governmental power to reassert its own system of authority. The documentary impulse of imperial law forces a restitution of its own legitimacy through the logic of appropriation: taxonomy, chronology, indexicality, and encyclopedic forms of remembrance, are all involved. For to control the system of meaning is to organize the structure of relations.

Nonetheless, the imperial maintenance of the archive also reached its outermost limits in the Garvey trial when it was revealed that the prosecution's key piece of evidence remained missing. The letter never arrived in court. Its absence invites the question as to whether or not the lost letter, attested to only by the envelope addressed to Benny Dancy, still held the capacity to structure meaning even as its lost contents demonstrated an apparent unavailability of semantic content. Are we to assume, as Lacan assures us, that the lost letter "will nonetheless remain irreducible" precisely because it can be ascribed meaning even in its absence? If the language of the law inherits, records, repeats, and intensifies the past, then in the Lacanian sense it does so precisely by harnessing the power of what remains missing. It gathers fragments and fills in the historical gaps. The persistence of this way of knowing at once enables the historicizing operations of documentation and is called on to write itself into the gaps in the historical record. Legal authority thus seems contingent on mastering what remains missing in such a way as to account for the absence of what exists beyond its own the boundaries. Filling the empty signifier of the envelope with meaning functions to protect the field of representations.

Yet, for Derrida, insofar as the letter belongs to the structure of always being capable of arriving, its dissemination also carries with it the concurrent possibility of not arriving at its destination. Derrida criticized Lacan for not leaving open the possibility that the letter will not return back to the same place. Lacan's notion of the real fails to account the possibility of textual drifting. "*The Purloined Letter*," Derrida argues,

> operates as a text which evades every assignable destination, and produces, or rather induces by deducing itself, this unassignableness at the precise moment when it narrates the arrival of the letter. It feigns meaning to say something, and letting one think that "a letter always arrives at its destination," authentic, intact, and undivided, at the moment when and in the place where the feint, written before the letter, by itself separates from itself. In order to take another jump to the side. (493)

The very possibility for the sign to appear as meaning—in this case, for the letter addressed to Benny Dancy to confirm the false representations of the Black Star Line—exists because language employs systems of reference rather than strictly of meaning. "Not that the letter never arrives at its destination" on every occasion, "but it belongs to the structure of the letter to be capable, always, of not arriving. And without this threat" of non-arrival, Jacques Derrida further remarks in *The Post Card,* "breach of contract, division or multiplication . . . the circuit of the letter would not ever have begun. […] Here dissemination threatens the law of the signifier" (444). This possibility for movement, and thus for a deferral of meaning, for an incalculable event that does not bridge back to its original position, brings with it the chance for historical change.

What if the same prospect holds true for justice itself? What if legal processes fail to leave open the possibility that the decisionary process necessary for justice to arrive must remain incalculable? For Derrida, Lacan's insistence on the real closes down the possibility of justice, which is a relation to a possible future. The very possibility for the future to be different than it is today expresses itself in relation "to the very possibility of history, of all the concepts, too, of history, of transmission, of the transmission or interruptions, goings astray, etc." (66). Note the radical undecidability of the list undertaken here. It ends with "etcetera"—a sign which can

never end, for it does not close off meaning so much as it denotes an openness to the possibility of containing more than it can ever stand for. But at the same time this sign stands in place of that incalculability as an excessive shortcut. So the sign simultaneously operates as a kind of closure that stands in for openness to the principle of indetermination. The intellectual bankruptcy, the injury, the fundamental injustice would simply be to take this sign as its word rather than view the incalculable meaning it opens onto and thus makes possible. Likewise, when the meaning of the letter is forced to arrive, it ceases to be just because the future no longer remains undecidable.

Folio 2.13 – The Circulation of Cotton

The bale of cotton which circulates throughout the narrative in *Cotton Comes to Harlem* functions as a signifier which tests the limits of justice for black America. We are told that at the corner of Lexington Avenue, "an old junk man of the kind who haunt the streets at collecting old paper and discarded junk was struggling with a bale of cotton, trying to get it into his cart" (24). He sees a woman approaching on the street and asks her for help getting it into her cart. She refuses and instead accuses the old junk man of a false ploy to try to scam her:

> "Cotton!" she shouted indignantly, looking at the bale of cotton with outright suspicion. "Old and evil as you ought to be ashamed of yourself tryna trick me out of my money with what you call a bale of cotton. Does I look like that kinda fool?" (24)

The historical connotations of a bale of cotton are not lost on her. Although it may simply be a raw product, the uncanny reappearance of cotton signifies the entire history of black exploitation. And she is not about to let history repeat itself. She closes this future possibility down. But as the bale of cotton passes from one character to another, all of whom think it strange to find a bale of

cotton in Harlem, we learn that the bale is supposedly filled with the money stolen from the Back-to-Africa movement. Thus, while the bale of cotton is a raw material product, which at least on the surface appears worthless, and even worse its connotations conjure up the terrors of slavery on the plantation, its status in Harlem as worthless currency of various sorts allows it to circulate between characters as foil that hides the possibility of its true value. Given these social aversions, in fact, there would be no better place to hide the money.

Yet the profession of the detective involves decoding signs to expose their true meaning. This job requirement distinguishes the work of the detective from uniformed beat cops who lack the erudition and capacity for insight required to uncover the meaning of signs. In fact, two white cops stop their cruiser, notice the bale of cotton, and ask: “What you got there, uncle, a corpse bundled up?” (25). The inability of these white police officers to even recognize the loaded significance of a bale of cotton for black folks suggests that the privilege enabled by their light skin color has resulted in a historical blind spot. Cotton in this case designates the very possibility of the history of black subjugation going astray. But this forgetting is not universal. Instead, the kind of discernment required to recognize a bale of cotton is left for those with dark skin. Here it signifies the tragic reality of a community that remains trapped in a mysterious form of historical closure.

A trace of this cotton resurfaces later on in the narrative. The black detectives examine the meat truck used in the heist and notice a filament caught on the side panel. Grave Digger immediately recognizes it. “Cotton,” he says. Rather than let this observation pass, they instead know it is remarkable but can’t quite pin down why. They look at one another sharing observations:

"Unprocessed," Grave Digger said. "It's been a long time since I've seen any cotton like that."

"Hush, man, you ain't never seen cotton like that. You were born in New York.

"Grave Digger chuckled. "It was when I was in high school. We were studying the agricultural products of America.

"Now what can a meat provision company use cotton for?" (41)

The lessons in agriculture conjure up Booker T. Washington's racial uplift project pioneered at the Tuskegee Institute. Evidently, even the schools in New York taught these lessons to black students. Yet while they too attempt to deny its historical significance, declaring "I ain't going to spend all night looking for a mother-raping sack of cotton – or a cotton picker either," its importance to the case cannot be denied or the case will never be solved. Indeed, the entire case will hinge upon this shred of evidence (41).

But what distinguishes the bale of cotton from Poe's purloined letter is that even when the bale of cotton is found, and cut open, the money it was supposed to contain is not found inside. The treasure of the real is not hidden inside. There is no hidden message to expose within it. Consequently, there is little sense of justice to result at this crucial moment in the exposition. The big reveal which characterized Poe's detective story has gone missing. Dupin does not control the narrative perspective in such a way as to uncover some hidden meaning whilst simultaneously confirming his own bravado for solving the case. Nor is the bale turned over to the District Attorney as circumstantial evidence as required to convict a black leader in Harlem of fraud. Instead, the black detectives have reached an extralegal arrangement with Colonel Calhoun, white leader of the Back-to-Southland movement. They force Calhoun to pay out his own $87,000 in exchange for letting him off the hook for a murder they know he committed in

Alabama. This extralegal resolution allows Harlem residents to recover their life savings, albeit with someone else's money. It is an imperfect arrangement, one that deviates from the law in order to find justice for the residents of Harlem. All this epistemological chaos infuriates their white boss, Lieutenant Anderson, who angerly declares, "Now, men, I just want the facts" (217). But even when Calhoun and his nephew are eventually arrested, and indicted for murder, the racist system of justice lets them off the hook anyway. "The State of Alabama," we learn, "refused to extradite them on the grounds that killing a Negro did not constitute murder under State law" (221).

Although the Harlemites had their money returned, their bid for equality was ceaselessly deferred. It never quite arrived. Multiple sendings, forever deferred, render the prospect for black renewal out of narrative sequence linked to the contemporaneous present. The call for the deliverance of racial justice never ended up in the same place as it was supposed to. The original money disappears, and another sum of money has been found. These effects of indirection, Derrida remarks, include the possibility that "the circuit can always not finish" (104-5). A letter might not ever reach its destination just as the law can continually foreclose the possibility of justice arriving.

There is something more than a little unnerving about the way in which law is implicated in this system of reference. Law's machinations haunt the deliverance of justice. A fundamental dependence on a discursive system—records, dockets, archives, oaths, testimony—means that justice may never arrive, at least not as directly as one might expect. Law becomes wrested with the practices of mediation. In fact, the very conception of justice itself becomes inextricable from claims about its derivation. Justice, in the purest sense—that is, pure justice—cannot be fixed. For the very notion of justice as unconditional, as we have seen in Derrida's formulation, means

that it cannot be contained, reduced, or otherwise prescribed by any one symbolic order. Justice as pure means is not bound to any ends. It remains incalculable. Here we find the aporia which both gives meaning to the concept of justice as pure means, not bound to any ends, and how it comes to be actualized in the hands of the law.

It is the disjunction between what the law does and what it says it does which demonstrates the fragile, transitory status of justice to come. But the remarkable twist that Himes offers at the end of his novel is that one person did in fact make it to Africa. Through a series of telegrams, they learn that old junk man has flown from Paris to Dakar, Senegal on a fake passport issued to Cotton Bud of New York City. He must have cut open the bale of cotton and found the money. However errant, and unintentional, is arrival in Africa completes the dream of black renewal, if only on a micro-scale. "Well, at least Uncle Bud got to Africa," Coffin Ed says (233). They have no way to track his final whereabouts. His future remains as open as the promise of renewal itself, holding open the prospect of justice-to-come. But it is an extralegal form of justice as undecidability that remains unable to be contained within the juridical frame. Even their white commanding officer seems to get it. "That is why [the Colonel] hid the money in a bale of Cotton," Lieutenant Anderson affirmed. "It was a symbol" (222).

Crucially, too, its historical meaning also remains partially outside the narrative frame of the detective novel. We only catch a glimpse of the sign of undecidability before it disappears. For Paul de Man, it is precisely this pledge for justice to enact itself at some point in the future that involves the promise of law's arrival. "[L]aws are promissory notes in which the present of the promise is always a past with regard to its realization" (273). While the law gives a sense of order to the terms in which justice can be realized, de Man is more interested in demonstrating how laws themselves must be written before they can become actualized. Law's futurity, as it

involves a pledge not yet realized, lives on borrowed time. And it is this gap between creation and realization which always carries with it the possibility that law may not fulfill its duty to realize justice. Without the errant system of reference there can be no generation of meaning that gives the law its ruling authority. In this sense, "dissemination threatens the law of the signifier"—it threatens to expose the limits of a legal system to control the terms of hermeneutic closure. This same assessment is also what haunts the prospect of symbolic mastery. The danger is that the letter sent may not return, no matter how clearly it is addressed to a recipient. As the message both demands and resists signification, it also reveals a discursive logic that cannot be simply be reduced to lack in the Lacanian sense. De Man does not directly refute Lacan on this point. He is more interested in how meaning can depart from itself, how it can shift over time, and the example he provides demonstrates how the law itself remains divided from the moment of its own actualization.

Not only that, de Man is interested in how the law refers to itself, tests itself, in order to legitimate its own power. "It cannot be left hanging in the air, in the abstraction of its generality. Only by thus referring back to particular praxis can the *justice* of the law be tested, exactly as the *justesse* of any statement can only be tested by referential verifiability, or by deviation from this verification. For how is justice to be determined if not by particular reference?" (269). It is this self-referential structure that places limits on the work that justice can do in the name of the law. For the law, as Derrida argues, enacts limits on the process of any decision. The process of reaching a finite decision functions as an "interruption of the principle of indetermination, the ending imposed on the opening of the incalculable change whereby a living being has a relation to what comes, to the to-come, and thus to some other as event, as guest, as *arrivant*" (256). This interruption forecloses the possible future to come. In the Garvey trial, the law sutures the letter

to its destination, and limits the project for a possible future. Yet when the letter is forced to arrive, justice ceases to be just, because the future ceases to be possible.

Docket 3 – Conscripts of Migrancy

Refugee road! Refugee road!

Where do I go from here?

Walking down refugee road.

Must I beg? Must I steal?

Must I lie? Must I kneel?

Or driven like dumb war-weary sheep,

Must we wander the high road and weep?

Or will the world listen to my appeal?

—*Langston Hughes, "Song of the Refugee Road"*

Folio 3.1 – Legal Fictions

A government document dated 3 September 1921 calls into question the legal fiction of national authority as proficient and duty bound to hold a firm grip on rapid advancements in global corporate finance. These tensions materialize in a Bureau of Investigation report filed in New York City by Special Agent J. G. Tucker. The federal document details the purchase of a new steamliner by the all-black shipping company:

SPECIAL REPORT

NEGRO ACTIVITIES

BLACK STAR LINE INC.

The Black Star Line is reported to have bought from the U.S. Shipping Board the S.S. "Orion", the price being Two Hundred and Twenty-five Thousand Dollars

> ($225,000), ten per cent of which is said to have been paid in cash and the balance to be paid in monthly payments of ten percent.
>
> The vessel, which was formerly, the "Prin[z] Oscar", is a twin screw steel ship of 6,026 tons and has accommodations for about one hundred and fifty first class passengers and fifteen hundred second class. She is understood to have a Lloyds' rating of 100-AI (MGP 4: 21)

Renaming ships is a common enough practice in maritime operations, often triggered by changes in corporate ownership. At minimum, the vessel in question appears to have previously undergone one such change. *S.S. Orion* was to be listed on the bill of sale, though Special Agent Tucker was diligent enough a government historian to also note that the ocean liner had been originally christened by the Hamburg America Line as *S.S. Prinz Oscar*. Tucker then provides detailed financial information related to finances, offers specifics on marine propulsion system and passenger capacity, along with the Lloyd's rating used for insurance purposes.

It is tempting to read the document as a moment of self-assertion, and the exactness of the phrasing here may encourage us to feel that the Bureau embraced a strategy of scrupulous attention to detail as the most effective means to ensure that the government could soon proceed to bring the black steamship corporation to trial. The point is methodological: this sort of lexical dance of documenting every step of the company's transactions was carried out to bolster the Bureau's semantic power, to render it fully prepared to bring forth litigation against the company, in whatever form that suit might eventually take: be it insurance fraud, stock market offences, public safety charges related to over-capacity, misuse of the vessel, mechanical deficiencies, or so on.

One glaring elision does stand out though. Since Special Agent Tucker went to the additional effort to signal that the vessel had previously changed names, why didn't he also record the one piece of information most pertinent to the Bureau's ongoing surveillance program of the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation? Although the report of sale was apparently urgent enough to warrant a "Special Report," there exists no mention of the likely prospect that the ship would never sail another voyage as *S.S. Orion*. Legal preparations were already well underway by the vessel's buyer to rename the ship before its inaugural departure. The oceanliner would sail for the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation with *S.S. Phyllis Wheatley* painted on the stern.[48]

Did Tucker omit this detail because both he and his confidential informant had completely missed its significance in their monitoring of the Black Star Line activities, despite the fact that the information had been frequently printed in the UNIA newspaper, and regularly restated in Marcus Garvey's public speeches? Or was there something about the name of the black slave Phyllis Wheatley which itself seemed dubious and unworthy of inclusion into the national record? What does this omission tell us about the preservation of a legal fiction?

Corporate expansions into new territories, beyond established trade partnerships, press the concept of legal jurisdiction to its outermost limits, forcing crucial questions about the durability of national law. Extending forms of exchange with the creation of new global trade routes beyond the nation's judiciary reach haunts any established sovereign conception of justice to come. This is not to say, of course, that America's imperialist vision of world building had yet to begin to take shape. Numerous commercial routes were already established and in place.[49] The

[48] The eighteenth-century poet's name remained unstandardized in print in the years during the UNIA's rise. The Black Star Line appears to have settled on Phyllis Wheatley, though alternate spellings include Phillis and Wheatly.
[49] One noteworthy variant of the Monroe Doctrine sees the United States extend its trade reach into regions abroad to serve its own political interests. Imperial exceptionalism masquerades as economic expansionism, and securing such one-sided trade partnerships with smaller nation-states often requires a good dose of political opportunism: seizing the right moment in world affairs for US investment power to fill a political vacuum. Take, for instance, the Farnham Plan, envisioned by the US government to intervene in the internal civic turmoil caused by Haiti's 1914

point, rather, is to explore how the prospect of a black shipping corporation threatened to radically reconceptualize, destabilize, reimagine, and remap those linkages, rerouting commercial trade routes throughout the capitalist world-system in ways that would fundamentally alter existing networks of imperial power to redistribute financial advantages. To read the history of global modernity as it occurs in the cut, in the break, in the space between these two competing political traditions is to demonstrate the rift between the enduring power of US imperial nationalism and the disruptive, disorderly emergence of the provisional threat of black internationalism. Once again, we can observe the lag time, the significant delay, between the rapid advancements made by the Pan-African movement and its bureaucratic tracking by the government's legal agencies in response. Indeed, by the time the Bureau had written its Special Report, plans were well underway by the shipping company to extend the reach of black commerce.

Renaming the ship was a significant step in the historical trajectory of the black internationalist movement. The change of legal identification reflects how networks of affiliation were in the process of being reshaped by the UNIA to establish new modes of social collectivity. Confirmations of this impending name change were frequent, and repeatedly made in public by the Pan-African organization. Advertisements for the sale of stock to prospective black investors clearly reflected this detail. Public announcements dated back as far as two years. An early editorial by Marcus Garvey, for instance, ran in the 5 November 1919 edition of the *Negro World* with a subtitle printed in large, bold font declaring that a new "**Ship Will Soon Be Named**

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revolution. In this moment of crisis, US Marines occupied Haiti and extended American property interests by engaging a brutal suppression of peasant (mostly black) insurgents in the countryside. These geopolitical actions were suffused with economic aims: the US government undermined Haiti's sovereignty, began to manipulate the national currency, and increase Caribbean reliance on the US banking system. For a recent appraisal of the latter, see Peter Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (University of Chicago Press, 2017).

the Phyllis Wheatley" (MGP 2: 151). The common set of political identifications or networks of affiliation enacted through this name change held a primary significance to Black Star Line activities. The production of these kinds of identifications were essential to traverse a range of differences between members of the black diaspora, to cross indiscriminately between and beyond imperial territories, and ultimately to create lines of connection and affiliation across those range of differences.

On the edge of this new world-historical event, renaming the ocean liner after America's first black poet emphasized the link between politics and aesthetics in the UNIA's vision. This symbolic attempt to honor black personalities with the naming of shipping vessels was an integral part of the larger public campaign to foster heightened recognition throughout the world about the steps being taken by the UNIA to modernize global trade routes and to create a modern, globalized form of black political agency. Moreover, the lexical move was as much about rewriting the past history of the world to include black names on the record of human achievements as the campaign was also designed to inform and recruit new members of the African diaspora to join the UNIA to support its effort to build the world's first black shipping network. By ambitiously linking prior black achievements to the future envisioned by the Pan-African movement, such token gestures were crucial for the production of a new black diasporic imagination.

This cultural project opened outward, beyond national borders, beyond the fixed terms of material history, beyond traditional legal precincts, and geopolitically this denationalized, black cosmopolitan, globalized rearrangement of racial consciousness was envisioned as coextensive with the formation of new modes of financial exchange, perhaps even new forms of self-governance. New trade routes would no longer rely on white companies to connect members of

the African diaspora scattered around the globe, and the creation of this new black corporate body would finally make possible the opportunity for a new global system of finance to emerge. For denationalizing the power of black investment offered the possibility to create a new worldwide marketplace, perhaps even to rewrite the impending advance of global modernity, above all to produce a new web of black relations.

Folio 3.2 – Phyllis Wheatley's Juridical Imagination

On closer reflection, though, it does seem somewhat curious for the Pan-African movement to bestow such an honor onto a slave poet such as Phyllis Wheatley, whose works so regularly skirted around the urgent matter of black enslavement. Her poems demonstrate a consistent tendency to raise cosmopolitan ideals of freedom in broad strokes rather than to directly confront the legal conundrum of humans held as property. Moreover, despite the fact that chattel slavery was not legally abolished in America during her lifetime, Wheatley chose not to return back to Africa when given the opportunity. In a move that would appear to run counter to the "Race First" principles of Garvey's Back-to-Africa movement, she chose to remain in America and continue the life that she had made for herself as a poet. But not even this tells the full story, since the reason why Wheatley did not return to Africa was perhaps less about turning her back on her own race than it had to do with a combination of anxieties related to her own traumatic removal from West Africa as a young child. Her apprehensions about reliving the trauma of being sold into trans-Atlantic slavery were coupled with the fact that the most realistic possibility of her ever returning to the continent of her birth arose as an opportunity that had presented itself through an arranged marriage proposal from an African Christian man whom she

had never met.[50] Several of her poems indicate that her love of human freedom stemmed from having been forced into bondage as a child, it would therefore seem that the prospect of an arranged marriage raised warning signs about her travelling home to Africa only to paradoxically return back to enter into a new form of domestic bondage.

Before reaching nine years of age, Wheatley was kidnapped and transported aboard a slave ship to serve as a house servant in America. It was only her prodigious gift for writing poetry, and the unlikely encouragement of her slave master to develop her craft, that allowed her to gain international prominence. Her rise to fame during the late eighteenth century as poet celebrity eventually won her freedom. Yet while Wheatley may have taken her future into her own hands, the same experience was not true for the overwhelming majority black slaves in America during her lifetime. Whatever we do about this ideological impasse, reading her work fairly does require that we at least be open to seeing the few moments when the question of freedom does manifest in her poetry. Indeed, while her poetry rarely took a firm stance on the distinct topic of black liberation, her early poems were not entirely devoid of engagements with the modern problem of how to fit humanist terms of justice onto a larger world where so many subjects of colonial power were not considered full persons.

When the matter of slavery does come up in her landmark 1773 collection *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, published well before she gained her own freedom, the slave poet tends to skirt the question of blackness as a fixed identity category, condemned as a subject to bondage, in favor of demonstrating the universal value of freedom across all races, bound as she was to the Enlightenment discourse of her day. In "To the Right Honorable

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[50] For a recent account of this arranged marriage proposal and Wheatley's subsequent refusal, see G. J. Barker-Benfield's *Phyllis Wheatley Chooses Freedom: History, Poetry, and the Ideals of the American Revolution* (New York University Press, 2018).

William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Secretary of State for North America," Wheatley points out that as a victim of slavery, she can certainly appreciate the sentiments shared by those living in the English colonies who wish to finally break free of the stranglehold of imperial rule. Her poem describes the increasing encroachment of colonial power on even the most basic freedoms in the colonies. This description of human subjugation relies on a first-person witness account, which she provides in her address to Dartmouth:

> Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,
> Wonder from whence my love of *Freedom* sprung,
> Whence flow these wishes for the common good,
> By feeling's heart best understood
> I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
> Was snatched from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:
> What pangs excruciating must molest,
> What sorrows labor in my parent's breast!
> Steel'd was thy soul and by no misery mov'd
> That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd.
> Such, such is my case. And can I then but pray
> Others may never feel tyrannic sway? (40)

The terrible spectacle that introduced the poem's speaker into slavery was being torn away from her father's arms. As Wheatley describes the scene of her own subjection, we learn of the anguish she experienced at age seven or eight when stolen ("snatched") away from her West African homeland in 1761 and sold off in the slave trade.

As she fills in her backstory, however, it soon becomes readily apparent that her task in writing this stanza is not of a personalized nature. Her poetic appeal to the British magistrate does not directly voice the need to rectify her own individual situation of bondage. Nor does she explicitly advocate for the release of her fellow black slaves who remained in captivity throughout the Thirteen Colonies. Her juridical imagination, instead, widens any appeal for justice to include all persons living in the British colonies. The anguish she experienced when transported as human cargo on a slave ship from West Africa to Boston thus provides clear and justifiable cause for Wheatley to speak with authority on behalf of all subjugated persons under British rule. These life events function as justification for her appeal. Her autobiographical lines provide the necessary segue into the final verse, where she again addresses the Earl of Dartmouth to say that her appreciation of the "sacred sanction" of freedom springs from having lived in deprivation of that same privilege (40). Despite Wheatley's disconcerting silence on the specific matter of black slavery, her poetic intervention does stand as an attempt to influence the Secretary of State for North America to loosen the autocratic grip of imperial rule over the colonies, and at last restore Britannia's "love of freedom" across the New World.

The poem also underscores a historical problematic. The appeal is configured in such a way as to advocate for the rescue of freedom as a core value that the crown has lost sight of in the contest for global expansion. The final stanza clarifies the need to turn back the clock:

> For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,
>
> And thee we ask thy favours to renew
>
> Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,
>
> To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore. (40)

The poem conjures up this myth of origins with a clear strategic purpose. Evoking nostalgia for "favours past" functions as a reminder of how far the Empire has strayed from its original mission to spread, preserve, and protect freedom as a fundamental value. Freedom is envisioned here as a force that collapses differences. Subjects living under British rule might be characterized by all kinds of differences, and the tendency for the Empire to tighten its autocratic grip over the colonies has not worked to overcome these differences. Instead, the lapse of freedom as a core value to uphold has only aggravated the sense of disparity between the British crown and those people it governs in the American colonies.

The call for a return to origins represents an attempt to repair the state of crisis that had thrown the Thirteen Colonies into political turmoil. Freedom is thus constituted *not* by a call for the elimination of British rule over the colonies, but instead it emerges immanently from Empire itself. This framing forespeaks the emancipation of the New World as an alignment with British sovereignty. Yet while the original importance of freedom may have lapsed, altering the scenography of the American colonies for the worse, the poem does not join the growing chorus of American patriots who call for the British crown to withdraw its rule over the American territories. Nor is the appeal configured in such a way as to limit the cause for freedom to advocating for the emancipation of black slaves. Instead, and quite problematically as we will soon see, the poem draws together these separate causes under one common project. The suggestion is that the desire for freedom constitutes a shared universal value. Commonality forms the basis of a shared human attribute on which to base a new order of common law.

Folio 3.3 – The Somerset Case

The political urgency of Wheatley's plea is further attributable to the fact that her formative volume of poetry was published only a year after the verdict of the Summerset case (1771-1772), a landmark decision which ruled that slavery on British soil was unsupported by legal doctrine. The Somerset decision also threatened to have direct repercussions on the Thirteen Colonies. But how likely or possible would it have been for Wheatley to closely follow the trial as it unfolded in the English courts located across the Atlantic Ocean? One media historian has addressed the important question of newspaper coverage accessible to individuals living in the Anglo-American colonies during the lengthy trial process. Patricia Bradley conducted a survey of the twenty-three major newspapers that regularly published in the colonies. Her findings indicate that "[i]t was traditional procedure for [American] editors to transcribe British press accounts verbatim," and "[i]f an editor ran out of space, the remaining portion of the story might be set in a smaller type to make it fit" (8). Consequently, readers in colonies could be as well informed as readers of the British papers. In fact, before the ruling was made, the *Boston Gazette*—the same newspaper which, incidentally, had published a few of Wheatley's poems—also ran several articles speculating on the range of potential implications for the colonies depending on the verdict.

The case centered on James Somerset, a slave, transported by his master from America to England by ship. His master Charles Stewart, a Scottish merchant, had served as customs paymaster for the Port of Boston, and purchased the slave boy before moving back to Britain. Once in England, Somerset escaped. The slave master ordered his fugitive slave back into custody to again serve at his side. According to historian Norman S. Poser, the black slave "was seized by slave-capturers hired by Stewart" (293). After being recaptured on November 26,

1771, however, “Somerset refused to return to Stewart’s service, [and] he was forcibly taken to the *Ann and Mary*, a ship anchored in the Thames, and held there in chains until he could be taken to Jamaica to be sold in the slave market” (Poser 293). In a remarkable twist of events, Somerset’s godparents learned of his return back into forced captivity and began to speak publicly in favor of the abolitionist cause.

It is next to impossible to say anything that is not contradictory about why a black slave child held as property in America had ever been granted affluent white godparents in England to begin with. But in outline James Somerset’s life story might be said to veer uncontrollably back and forth between the divergent points of his perpetually conflicted public standing in the world: he was born a freeman in West Africa only to be captured and shipped to the port of Virginia in chains in 1749 and legally sold to Charles Stewart. Once transported to Boston to join his master, the young boy was raised and trained to work as a house slave, a drudge of domestic labor. For reasons unknown, his rather eccentric slaveholder designated a set of affluent English godparents tasked to look out for the slave boy’s well-being should his master-guardian be deemed incapable. Was this simply another moment of exchange in the transactional life of a bonded slave? Do we read the act of naming godparents to fall within the standard practices of civility: an act meant to serve as a guarantor of well-being that functions to protect a derelict young child should his master face an untimely death? Or, on closer inspection, was this action taken to bestow an increase in social capital onto his master? In other words, were the future property rights to the slave boy structured as a transactional exchange: transferred as a future asset in exchange for an immediate increase in his master’s esteem and social standing, or otherwise used to curry favor and bestow a social advantage? Such questions fall into the foggy realm of

intentionality about Stewart's original motivations and thus remain difficult to answer with any amount of certainty. Quite possibly the decision was reached by a combination of factors.

What does move into clear focus is the fact that only once James Somerset was again shipped across the Atlantic, this time to England, did his divided legal status as a *slave-citizen*, it might be termed, serve to bring these two conflicting classifications crashing against one another. On British soil, his legal standing existed simultaneously, if also impossibly, as both person and property, as rightless slave and rightful resident of England. In so doing, the wedge of difference once driven between these two positions no longer seemed as clearly definitive as they once were in America, nor firmly held in place by the colonial imagination.

The prospect of Somerset being shipped back to the Americas, and sold back into captivity an enslaved laborer, only further hastened the legal obligation of his English godparents, who remained sworn and duty-bound to protect him. And what they remained legally obligated to protect their godson from was in this case his own master-guardian, Charles Stewart, who had made them godparents but failed to act in ways becoming of a primary guardian, choosing instead to act in the capacity of a slaveholder with a deeply colonial conception of black identity as inferior, servile, of lesser intellect, not worthy of equal standing by law as a person. To be relegated, cast into this grey area of legal difference, as *slave-citizen*, and thus to inhabit two subject positions at once, hailing from and inhabiting two different worlds, amounted to no clear protection at all. His godparents feared what might happen to their godson—how he would be treated, and what forced labor he must undertake—if he were to return to the West Indies, inevitably sold off to a slave buyer. They petitioned the courts for a legal intervention, and a writ of *habeus corpus* was secured. The last-minute reprieve prevented Somerset's departure from England. The slave-citizen was removed from the ship before it could

set sail across the Atlantic. The writ had been secured on the grounds that his legal standing on English soil meant that he could not be forced to leave the country against his will, at least not without first holding a fair trial. He was legally detained to await the verdict.

The Somerset case markedly differed from previous legal proceedings involving slaves presented before the courts. In earlier litigations, such as the Stapleton case, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield had managed to duck clear of having to rule on the legality of slavery. But the unique aggravating circumstances paired with an overwhelming weight of evidence in the Somerset case forced the matter to be ruled on. As Norman Poser explains, “there was no break in the chain of ownership. Since Somerset was unquestionably Stewart’s slave at the time he escaped, Mansfield could not easily avoid deciding whether slavery was legal in England” (293). But the chief justice remained reluctant. “Less concerned about liberty than about social and economic damage control, Mansfield hoped to avoid having to reach a decision,” and so he “went to great lengths to prevent the case coming to trial” (290-93). On more than one occasion the judge offered to negotiate an out-of-court settlement that would free the slave. But Somerset’s abolitionist protectors refused to reach any compromise or agreement which did not see the court rule with clear precedent on the matter of slavery.

As the trial began, the burden of proof fell on the defense. Somerset’s lawyer outlined his opening argument and showed to the court a realist portrait of humans in iron chains. He displayed the horrific image of chattel slavery and warned the court and his countrymen seated in the public gallery that if the King’s Bench ruled in favor of slaves to be bought and sold, exchanged and inherited on British soil, this legal doctrine would soon bring with it an onslaught of moral decay found elsewhere in the world. Through this argumentative framework Somerset’s lawyer strategically played up widespread nativist fears. British exceptionalism became the lens

through which he explained the illegitimacy of slavery to those who considered themselves to be morally literate Britons. The special connection between foreignness and immorality facilitated a protectionist argument about defending revered British customs and daily affairs. At one point when addressing the court, Somerset's lawyer talked of one hypothetical outcome of the court case. If bondage on English soil, he argued,

> . . . is here recognized, domestic slavery with its horrid train of evils may be lawfully imported into this country. . . . It will come not only from our colonies and those of other European nations, but from Poland, Russia, Spain and Turkey, from the coast of Barbary, from the western and eastern coasts of Africa, from every part of the world, where it still continues to torment and dishonour the human species. (quoted in Drescher 86)

This hardly offered an idealistic view of master and servant as an essential part of civilized life in the colonial Empire. Instead, forced bondage was relegated to the unfortunate locale of the colonies, and also depicted in xenophobic terms as a foreign, dehumanizing force, which threatened to corrupt and morally taint even the most sacred mores and beloved traditions of the British way of life. In short, if the argument were to succeed, it would need to do so by exposing the dangers inherent to allowing the further imposition of an inhuman system of slavery onto British native soil.

The legal tactic, however blindly nationalist and xenophobic, was successful. After detaining James Somerset in custody for over a year throughout the trial proceedings, the King's Bench eventually ruled that the slave could not be forcibly removed from England and sold off to toil at a plantation in the colonies. The Somerset decision set a new precedent. A bonded slave was discharged on the grounds that his natural rights as a person living in England superseded

and effectively rendered null and void any property rights held by his master Charles Stewart, who had purchased the slave as a young boy.

A thorough case brief provided by legal historian William Wiecek explains that the juridical decision marked "a significant judicial expansion of the scope of *habeas corpus* and a benchmark in the development of the law of personal liberty" (my italics 88). The ruling laid down a landmark opinion in Anglo-American jurisprudence. Legal personhood was remade by extending and expanding the law of personal liberty to include all juridical subjects as equals under British common law. But how does this accepted truth function in law? How might this legal fiction benefit colonial law or hold it in place, reaffirm its own authority over the nation-state system, and thus remedy the weakness of law in a moment when its supremacy to hold power, control and clear jurisdiction was questioned and remained exposed? What does reimagining the kinds of assumptions required for the law of personal liberty to be extended, to redress itself, tell us about the way in which colonial law itself took on a new set of functions in the nation, dramatically extending its reach?

In terms of its implications, the decision illustrates how a legal fiction can change over time to remake and wholly redefine the fundamental basis of common law. The organizing fiction of the legal subject was remade. In turn, the assertion which became accepted for legal purposes, even though it remained untrue in a natural or biological sense, involved transforming the human person as a discrete body made of flesh and blood into a rightful person viewed as equal before the law.

In this context, too, another distinction emerges. The legal fiction of the juridical subject, the rights-and-duty-bearing-person, was no longer understood as made possible because the law attends to the distinct set of differences that make individual identities unique from one another.

Modern personhood is envisioned, or rather it is invented, in the Somerset decision as *sameness* before the law. By this legal definition, the juridical person is refashioned by gaining legitimacy before the law as equal to all other persons before the law. The tautology is necessary, for it allows the law to read both itself and the array of human persons it defines. This is the figurative activity through which the human person as a rights-and-duty-bearing-unit is both imagined and produced by the law. It is also how the law as a discursive power comes to make sense of its own jurisdiction over human subjects.

Personhood is the legal fiction which collapses differences in the name of uniformity. Produced as such, "the image of the person—the moral creature capable of bearing rights and duties"—Joseph Slaughter further explains, is not imagined in "the name of individual, irreducible difference but of sameness, the collection of common modalities of the human being's extension into the civil and social order" (17). Emphasis on sameness over difference comes to determine the legal fiction of the human personality as equal before the law.

Technically considered, the judgement which awarded James Somerset his freedom could have only taken shape because it reflected a fundamental change in the conception of legal selfhood—that is, the standing of the subject to the rule of law, and whose legal identities emerge in relation to this juridical framework. The decision revitalized conceptions of natural law in such a way that the distinct status of being a slave could not be placed ahead of the common category of the social human being. It was Somerset's common status as a juridical subject, a legal person—a fictional character produced by the law and measured by the quality of sameness—which now mattered to legal modernity, and this process of subjectivization, as it transformed a slave into a person of common social worth, served as the enabling fiction upheld in the courts. James Somerset's public standing—his ability to think, act, and determine his own

future—was remade in relation to this new juridical imaginary. Once the juridical decision was reached by the King's Bench, however, another pressing historical issue came to the fore.

The case significantly altered conceptions of freedom in relation to legal personhood; at the same time, though, despite the court's expansion of this new legal designation of a right-and-duty-bearing-person, it became increasingly apparent that this form of liberty assigned to persons before the law failed to be distributed equally to all individuals strewn across the territories and controlled by the British Empire. Although the ruling itself set the terms of sameness necessary for the formation of the modern legal person, the questionable applicability of the Somerset ruling became "a cloud over the legitimacy of slavery in the colonies" (Wiecek 91). For there remained a significant legal question regarding the vast majority of slaves already in bondage before the ruling, particularly for members of the African diaspora, who, including Wheatley herself, had been transported by British ship to the American colonies as young children, and where they continued to live without rights as slaves. When initial word about the ruling and its potential repercussions began to spread amongst black slaves in the colonies, many held out hopes that the decision would ensure their own freedom. In actual fact, though, the ruling was ambiguous enough that it remained a far cry from legislating the terms of abolition throughout the colonies.[51]

After the ruling was reluctantly handed down, it became slowly and painfully apparent that court decision would not apply to those who had been shipped as human cargo from the African continent to the colonies and forced into enslaved labor. For those slaves sequestered in

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[51] On the belief that the Somerset decision could possibly liberate black subjects outside of England, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 19-21); Kathy Chater, "Black People in England" (*Parliament History*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 66-83); Folarin Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1974, pp. 209-67). For a historical account of the long underappreciated role that black resistance played in determining the abolition movement, see Manisha Sinha's *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (Yale University Press, 2016).

America, the case served as a frustrating milestone in Anglo-American legal history for precisely what the legal mantra of common law did not manage to accomplish to transform. Their juridical status was not included in the English definition of sameness before the law. Thus, for all its talk of fairness, the act of *justice as sameness*, thus laid down, did not grant basic rights to American slaves. It would be difficult to underestimate the painful and devastating effects the lamentable legal ruling may have had on regulating the historical and ontological limits of what could ever be thought possible by this generation of slaves ever again. With its fragile fictionality thus deployed, the Somerset case failed to render uniform the legal fiction of personhood in the American political imagination, for slave-citizens were still closer to property than legal persons.

Folio 3.4 – The Voiceless Voice

Wheatly meets this double bind, in which slavery is not so much unregulated by the system of colonial rule as produced by its remarkably pervasive system of legal differentiation which encroaches on the very possibility to become a full person. The case underlined, with pointed irony, a two-tiered conception of legal personhood. For it exposed two systems of law. It posed a basic constitutive dilemma for the British imperial system, because the statutes governing black and white colonists in different regions rested on an unstable jurisprudential foundation. Indeed, one might even say that the regime of imperial rule comes to colonize the very territory of human personality itself, unevenly distributing power as it pertains to the human being's extension into the civil and social order. But as Wheatley exposes one of the fundamental rifts inherent to colonial power—a system responsible for production of very different legal subjects—she does not explicitly advocate for the freedom of slaves still owned by plantation owners. Nor do her appeals for freedom remain confined to people of African descent. Instead,

Wheatley extends the plea for decency, universalizes the call for justice in accordance with the changing face of legal modernity. Her initiative arose precisely because the given or dominant supposition was that the law needed to be further adjusted with enough breadth and scope to include all colonial persons living in America, including both slaves and slave owners alike, whose common right to freedom, she argued, has been similarly managed, forsaken, and restricted by the "tyrannic sway" of British power. The rift her poem exposes is not the gulf of freedom which separates slaves and masters; instead, she exposes another hypocrisy of colonial power, that of a great territorial divide which separated two systems of British law.

There appears to be some debate over whether or not Wheatley's writings take the side of the patriot cause in making this appeal for equal justice. Africana historian Tony Martin has suggested that Wheatley's position as a slave allowed her to "well appreciate why the North American colonies would desire freedom from England" (49). Certainly, living as a slave in the English port of Boston, the epicenter of patriot unrest, would have granted the black poetess some kind of intimate familiarity with the political upheaval happening in the American colonies. Her poetry collection was of course published only three years before the 1776 American Revolution, and the emphasis on freedom as a common good in her writing does suggest that she thought carefully about the motivations of discontent behind separatist calls for a clean break from the British Empire. Nonetheless, Wheatley's published writings were solicited on her behalf by her master, John Wheatley, who had purchased the young girl as a slave, and who sided with the Loyalist cause. Notably, as patriot calls for revolution intensified, her master was forced to flee Boston. Biographer Vincent Carretta notes that after the war, Wheatley frequently "castigates the hypocrisy of self-styled patriots who are fighting for freedom to enslave others" (174). Such statements against the patriot cause, however, only

transpire after the fact, and by then bloodshed caused by the revolution may have looked like an atrocity with the retrospective power of hindsight.

In her earlier 1773 poem addressed to the Earl of Dartmouth, a pre-revolutionary text, lines such as “we ask thy favor’s to renew” clearly demonstrate hope that a mutual compromise might be reached throughout the British Commonwealth. Hence the poem stops short of endorsing a full-blown revolution as it catalogues the wrongs committed by the imperial regime. The hypocrisy of colonial rule, as it has advanced, she points out, has meant that all subjects of empire fall under the legal jurisdiction of Her Majesty’s Courts; yet those in the colonies whose labor and enterprise produced substantial wealth for the Empire remain unable to enjoy the same basic rights and freedoms as their counterparts across the Atlantic. Politeness upholds the virtue of common decency, and the modest tone which characterizes her rhetorical appeal to the Crown remains less of a steadfast revolutionary demand than an amiable plea for England to see the error of its ways, to stop immorality and bloodlust, and reverse course. In other words, the poem is invested in emancipation insofar as it communicates the need for the British conception of human decency to be commonly extended throughout its territories.

Whatever we make of these lofty intentions for the force of modern justice to come to be deployed to decolonize the Americas, or at the very least for all subjects of empire to be granted the same basic status necessary to seek equal justice before colonial law, there remains at least one fundamental problem with this kind of universalizing argument. Embracing an idealistic pursuit of equality may have its merits; yet Wheatley’s dedicated pursuit of freedom as a legal principle lumps slaves and slave handlers into the same category in the name of a common good. Indeed, her juridical imagination heralds the legal fiction of sameness before the law as the core principle to rise above all differences. At one point in the poem she even laments that any

wrongs perpetrated in the colonies must be attributed to the logical result of living in a "lawless land":

> No more, America, in mournful strain
>
> Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain.
>
> No longer shalt thou dread the iron chain,
>
> Which wanton Tyranny with lawless hand
>
> Has made, and with it meant t' enslave the land. (40)

Note the slide in semantic registration here. The "iron chain" no longer symbolizes the enslavement of black subjects in America but instead comes to express how the "wanton Tyranny" of "lawless" anarchy has come to "enslave the land." To suggest that the land has been enslaved, rather than a specific group of persons held in bondage on that land by those who were identified by the crown as white masters, significantly alters and moves away from addressing the actual conditions of enslavement. Yet refiguring this metaphor of bondage is precisely what allows the poem to undertake a critique of the "wrongs" that have been committed and gone "unredress'd" due to the absence of law and order. This fundamentally idealistic conception of law as a moral force—as a formidable system that acts in good faith to remedy human atrocities, such that freedom could be legally distributed as a shared common good—significantly downplays the deeply disturbing role that the colonial legal system played in both setting up and continuing to support slavery as a legally sanctioned form of human subjugation. Black slavery persisted even after the Somerset case, and worse it remained conditioned by colonial law through a rather rudimentary but effective system of statutes outlining "clear and specific 'thou-shalts' and 'thou-shalt-nots' regulating the minutia of behavior of whites and blacks alike" (Wiecek 87). To suggest otherwise—that is, to suggest that slaves and slave handlers remain

equally subjugated in a “lawless” land—significantly downplays substantial differences between the kind of freedoms that slaves and slave owners could ever expect to enjoy, differences which included rights to possess the monetary gains for their own labor, as well as working conditions, cultural durability, life expectancy, political agency, freedom of movement, and of course the right to own property.

No legal term conveyed more fear in the colonies than the word *property*. That term inspired images of human captivity, forced transport, and Sisyphean labor; the destruction of cherished forms of social ritual and their replacement by iron chains binding Africans aboard ships; the end of family trees for mean-spirited separations of domestic partnerships; and the overturning of black self-determination for enforced norms to dictate how people may live only to work towards death. Those terrors took root in both the colonial imagination and in law itself. Outlining the terms of bondage, the basic right to property in the English royal colonies was construed such that one population group, black slaves, were considered merely *as* property under colonial law, while those landowners who possessed slaves were deemed rightful owners of human property. Property law thus holds a unique and distinct place in the story of the transatlantic slave trade. The legal term functioned as a world-making force. The juridical formation that constitutes modern property law not only allowed for the propertizing of human life but in fact consolidated a racial regime of ownership by regarding black slaves as material possessions no different than any other property or natural resource on that land, despite the fact that cheap labor was required monetize raw goods on the land into saleable commodities.[52] Yet

[52] See, for instance, Brenna Bhandar’s *Colonial Lives of Property: Land, Law & Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Duke University Press, 2018). Bhandar’s study advances and provides contemporary examples to support Peter Fitzpatrick’s argument in *The Mythology of Modern Law* that the legal enforcement of property rights must be understood as integral to the modernization of the world, because the rights theory of ownership has become “integrally associated with the mythic settling of the world—with its adequate occupation and its bestowal on rightful holders, the Occidental ‘possessors and owners of the world” (83).

in Wheatley's poem these two fundamentally different legal designations outlined by property law—master and slave—which delineate opposing ontological formations of social being, become lumped together, as both groups are shown instead to be subjugated as equals, as one unified population living under "tyrranic" empire. The commonality of their suffrage comes to be expressed in her poetic diction with the repetition of collective pronouns such as "our" and "we." The call for universal justice, for justice-as-universal, however paradoxical it might seem, limits observations related to the specific injustice of slavery. The scene of subjection has been reduced to the level of common similarities, thus restricting avenues of reproach. My point is not that Wheatley's emphasis on *justice as sameness*—exemplified in the Somerset ruling, and repeated in her extravagant expression of "these wishes for the common good"—is a moral falsehood but, rather, that the moral register through which that universal truth of justice is told neglects to tell the story of what happened to produce historically given identities. Slaves do not toil in the plantations as citizens of the world.

In accordance, we must recall that such poems were written under the terms of an extremely compromised historical arrangement. Any labor performed by a black slave, including works of poetry, would fall under the rightful property of her owner. Conceivably this right to property would include poems which voiced calls for freedom, or especially those ones. That contradictory predicament which defines the *voiceless voice* of the slave poet is made readily apparent on the original 1773 cover engraving for *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. On the book's cover, words have been etched above the poet's engraved portrait which announce "Phyllis Wheatley" as a new literary voice—only to undermine the autonomy of her newfound voice by adding "The Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley of Boston."

What is remarkable about the poems themselves is how they provide written accounts of

Wheatley's own identity position as a slave poet while simultaneously avoiding a direct confrontation with the uncomfortable question of her continued bondage. Her persistent calls for universal justice take the form of what Robert Meister has described as *social melodrama.* In this literary configuration, through which the truth about pain is revealed, emphasis lies not with the witness account itself but rather on how social harms come to be felt by an audience that remains complicit but unwilling to fully acknowledge their ongoing role in the production of suffering. For Robert Meister,

> Social melodrama is not in the voice of a victim crying out against the oppressor and is not generally addressed to the victims of the suffering portrayed. Instead, it is meant to be read by people who may *want* to feel bad about the conditions described but who would be made highly uncomfortable if the victim were portrayed as blaming them. In social melodrama the victim is always constructed as innocent (morally undamaged by suffering) so that the melodrama's audience, which is likely to include beneficiaries of such suffering, can understand themselves as bystanders who are capable of feeling compassion without fear. (64)

It could be argued that Wheatley's poems fall outside of this tidy definition of social melodrama, since they were destined for more than one audience. Her poems, published in England, were widely read by a British audience, but they also found an American readership. For both demographics, it was precisely the slave poet's ambiguity, her ability to tell her gripping personal story which led to her enslavement, without divulging her own political viewpoint on slavery, which allowed her readers to feel morally superior and take their own stand on the matter. In turn, the indeterminacy of her work made Wheatley the subject of heated debates

amongst slaveholders and anti-slavery proponents alike.[53] So in a certain sense the slave poet's ability to cross the Atlantic, as well as to straddle two opposing colonial viewpoints, master and slave, demonstrates the remarkable skill to not alienate any audience.

What such an appraisal leaves out, however, is the question of her own race. The slave poet's calculated demands for legal egalitarianism never trace the causal link between the pervasive ideology of white entitlement and the enactment of an oppressive historical process whereby black slaves came to be stolen from their families, irreparably dislocated from their African roots, and dehumanized as property by law. Detailed specifics regarding these kinds of ongoing repercussions fall away from view, as does the tortured body of the enslaved still in chains. The African slave girl's story becomes dehistoricized, exoticized, and abstracted from the present situation whereby human bondage, a system left unabolished, continued to endure in the urgency of the "now." The sidelong glance which affords an audience to live vicariously through the literary translation of pain is remarkably well suited for readers who *want* to feel bad but who will likely do very little about the pain described. Of course, the literary evocation of sympathy—to feel *for* victims, or even feel *with* or *as* victims—is no replacement for taking responsibility. For there is a melancholic loss of the original object. The effect of displacing harm with sympathy is to distance the psychic wound of slavery away from the material effects of power on black bodies, and effectively to shield a complicit white audience, making that harm more readable, feel-able, as a source of entertainment, but above all more comfortable when viewed as a sympathetic object. Put simply, blame is redirected away from those who remain

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[53] As Manisha Sinha has argued, "That Wheatley could evoke the ire of Jefferson and the praise of the French philosopher Voltaire and Clarkson probably secures her place in history" (29). Yet what remains problematic, and my focus here, is how her literary reception appears to have obscured her own historical predicament as the one slave poet chosen by white publishers to speak for the vast majority of black slaves held captive who could not read or write.

complicit. Any moral rebukes are aimed outwards rather than inwards, yet simultaneously away from addressing the material reality of black disenfranchisement, falling into an imaginative grey zone devoid of clear repercussions.

No wonder the 1773 cover note explaining her poetry to readers of *The London Chronicle* struggles to introduce this new literary voice. Rather than let her poems speak for themselves, the attempt to situate her work also deepens the divisions in such a way as to blatantly undermine the credibility of "the extraordinary negro girl, who has […] cultivated her natural talents for poetry in such a manner as to write several pieces which (all circumstances considered) have great merit" (*Complete Writings* xvii). That parenthetical supplement—"(all circumstances considered)"—a thinly veiled racism, or demeaning judgement, shrouded between words of appreciation, thus becomes representative of the paradoxical predicament of the slave poet, the *voiceless voice*, whose historical position as the pet slave grants her special access to the written word but whose message comes to be read by others as delivered through the unrefined position of an exotic black poetess. The act of literary incorporation—integrating her experience into the Western canon of cultural achievements—if only to simultaneously exoticize and thus reaffirm her status as an outsider—amounts to the creation of an imagined subject position, whose purity, as Meister suggests, appears both "morally undamaged by suffering" yet wholly unrefined.

Notable, too, the anti-imperial viewpoint expressed in sympathetic calls for universal justice may have served the agenda of slave owners all too conveniently. For it operates through a logic of displacement: the call for human goodness pushes any promise of liberty onto the future horizon of justice-to-come; in accordance, the responsibility to right any injustice in the colonies falls into the hands of British aristocrats rather than back onto slave owners themselves. The voiceless voice lacks agency precisely because it remains differentiated and unable to speak

with the same authority as the master who owns the slave as property. Hence the emphasis on similarity over disparity between peoples living in the American colonies obscures the roles of slave owners as the ongoing beneficiaries of colonial property law. This configuration collapses rather than exposes meaningful historical differences. The victim narrative which marks both masters and slaves as similarly injured by colonial rule appears to only further enable the terms of an unjust arrangement. For it delivers the effacement of harm.

Folio 3.5 – Memory of Difference

Another example assists in clarifying the slave poet's predicament as the *voiceless voice*. Wheatley's most famous poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," widely anthologized, chides those self-righteous individuals who describe themselves devoutly religious to remember that Africans must be included as Christians too. Again, her poetic appeal for racial amalgamation does not fall outside the structural problem of colonial recognition. Instead, the form of recognition required for inclusion—to be treated as equal under one God—tends to reinforce a cultural hierarchy that relies on the affirmative status to be granted, thus reinforcing a colonial pathology of oppression. In drawing attention to this gap in the structure of recognition between the looker and the subject of that gaze demanding recognition, then, the compromised agency of a slave poet is again made resoundingly clear. As Tony Martin explains, Wheatley's poetic practice serves to consolidate the language of authority. He identifies that even the most "seemingly reactionary lines can be interpreted" to depict the colonial order "in a less negative (if not positive) light" (49). Wheatley writes:

> 'TWAS mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand

That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable race with scornful eye;

"Their color is a diabolic dye."

Remember, *Christians*, *Negroes*, black as *Cain*,

May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train. (13)

The short octet poem remains invested in the spiritual topic of redemption insofar as it communicates the need to finally recognize all skin colors as equal under God. And its rhyming couplets articulate a Christian conception of cultural plurality, one that is meant to re-establish the dialogue between two identity groups, black and white. This directed attention, or recognition, of the "sable race" as capable to "join th' angelic train" appears to give even "Negroes, black as *Cain*" a sense of agency and power in the world. But at what cost? Would white "angelic" subjects be likewise willing to join the black train? Certainly not, for clearly the move toward civilization only goes in one direction. The ethos of human advancement involves a position of moral authority gained through the experience of moving from slavery toward a form of white accommodation.

The pattern of historical redress which occurs in the poem is flush with contradictions. She comments on the forced exodus from her African homeland as if being exchanged as a unit of currency— as a human commodity to be bought and sold in the slave trade—however initially brutal and dehumanizing, may eventually be understood to carry forth a kind of "mercy" that opens onto the Western promise of human refinement. Her literary imagination transforms the space of captivity into one inhabited by subjects who desire to be recognized as civilized members of equal worth. And it also transforms the African continent into a "Pagan land" which

represents a backward place. Whatever the merits of calling forth the mantra of human universality, we must not forget that memory itself becomes a site of domination. Of concern here are the ways in which the slave poet's negative depiction of her own West African homeland reveals a set of tragic continuities which emerge between the bond of enslavement and the retroactive production of historical memory.

In *Scenes of Subjection* Saidiya Hartman explains the difficult responsibility to grasp the ways in which the historical reconstruction of black identity in the wake of slavery "relates to the reliability or fallibility of memory" (73). Hartman points to a pattern in which the violence and psychological terror constitutive of enslavement comes to redouble itself at the level of the historical imagination. Therefore, not only, or not mainly, must we comprehend the lived slave experience as characterized by "the violence and disaffiliation constitutive of enslavement," but that radical breach transforms the capacity of memory itself (72). Hartman is particularly interested in how the image of the past takes shape in new cultural practices, produced after entry into the lived relations of domination and subordination, and this belatedness which gives rise to cultural practices in the wake of catastrophe unavoidably translates and transforms lines of origin. Hartman clarifies:

> Yet rather than attempting to locate the origins of these practices or to classify Africanisms, I want to explore the way in which these practices witness and record the violent discontinuities of history introduced by the Middle Passage, the contradiction of captivity and enslavement, and the experience of loss and affiliation. In this case, these traces of memory function in a matter akin to a phantom limb, in that what is felt is no longer there. It is a sentient recollection of connectedness experienced at the site of rupture, where the very consciousness of disconnectedness acts as a mode of testimony

> and memory. The recognition of loss is a crucial element in redressing the breach introduced by slavery. (74-5)

The location of memory in black cultural practice, Hartman argues, remains inseparable from the act of *redress*. This knowledge is crucial, for it provides the possibility for a counter-memory to emerge, one that does not require taking on the impossible burden of returning back to retrieve what has been lost, but rather begins with a recognition that black cultural practice works at the site of rupture, at the cut. For lived experience is haunted by loss, and even the historical imagination itself remains "inhabited by the revenants of a dismembered past" (72). At issue here, in other words, are the ways that memory acts in the service of revision and redress rather than as an accurate chronicle of past events.

No wonder Wheatley's poetic practice tends to overwrite the conditions of her early life in Africa as uncivilized and backwards. The scene of her prior freedom, viewed through colonialism's retroactive mirror, cannot be viewed outside the encroachments of power. That past remains unrecoverable in clear and direct terms for it demarcates a rupture which constitutes both the partial erasure and production of the slave poet's agency. Domination of the master functioned to replace the minimum standards of existence which determine personhood as self-autonomy. Thus considered, when Marcus Garvey decided to rename a steamship the Phyllis Wheatley, the goal was never simply to create an index of the past—that is, to turn back the clock to some prior point of origin and draw attention to historical perfection. For that original history already exists as unbridgeable. Rather than deny this division, the imaginative leap of the Back-to-Africa relies on the fallibility of memory, undermines the absoluteness of total recall, and thereby gains the momentum necessary to catapult beyond that stage to create a new revolutionary dynamic. No wonder black Harlemites were so drawn toward this cultural project.

Moreover, Marcus Garvey may have equally been drawn to the rather remarkable biographical detail that Wheatley's growing reputation as a literary celebrity eventually led to a change in her own public standing in the world. The black slave poet traveled to England to promote her book in 1774. However, in light of the Somerset decision, Wheatley could not legally be forced back to the colonies by her master. Although there remains some speculation about what kind of agreement or concessions were reached that eventually encouraged a legally free woman to return back to Boston, and again take care of Nathaniel Wheatley's dying mother, what does appear certain is that the slave poet's literary achievements granted her access to the privilege of mobility, which in turn led to some kind of concession and subsequent change in public standing.[54] Once again historical veracity reaches a kind of limit. Nevertheless, what an exploration of her change in agency does reveal is that an increasingly malleable and tenuous living arrangement can only be understood as a contravention of the normative terms of bondage.

This focus on the contingent and transient public personality of Phyllis Wheatley remains fraught with utopian and transformative impulses. Audacious possibilities for black transformation came to be envisioned by championing a black poetess who first drew worldwide attention to the story of black enslavement. So where Wheatley's poetry volume once activated the latent possibility of a new scale of subjective value for black persons, the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation functioned to repurpose the public familiarity of her widespread literary name recognition for a new cultural project. Naming the ship after the black slave poet was the kind of cultural endorsement which functioned as an act of redress.

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[54] Biographer William Caretta speculates that "rather than being a gift passively received by her master," the phrase "at the desire of my friends in England" may well demonstrate that Wheatley had negotiated a concession from Nathaniel Wheatley in exchange for her promise to return to Boston to care for "his mother, her mistress: one promise for another" (xxvii). Five years later she would marry John Peter, a free black.

This naming power envelopes the oceanliner with a new status, a new image in the world, functioning as a historical corrective by granting entitlement to black humanity as much as allowing for the all-black shipping company serve as a vehicle of dissent and transformation. The black cultural project therefore appears less interested in fully recovering memory traces than in strategically redeploying these traces to construct a new memory, a counter-memory, an alternate genealogy that allows for the possibility of difference. For as Hartman suggests, such "practices are sedimented with traces of the past, which perhaps are neither remembered or forgotten but exist as a 'memory of difference'" (73). Here Hartman demonstrates the difference between modes of experiencing the past, and it is precisely in spotting divergences and gaps which inevitably occur during the activities of memory work which allows for the possibility of change to emerge in the structure of reiteration.[55] For Marcus Garvey, too, the act of acknowledging memory as a site of difference brings with it the concomitant possibility to act against historical processes that enfeeble and weaken the concept of black identity. The sense of African heritage he returns to memory is not one that simply repeats a description of the voiceless voice of the black slave; rather, it is an exercise of agency that draws on the process of resignification to release a different kind of subject-formation no longer restricted by a punitive construction of blackness. Such an undertaking of geopolitical renewal radically extends the

[55] As Hartman examines possibilities for resistance, redress, and transformation of the past, she notes that these operations of historical difference take shape in the space between voluntary and involuntary memory. The critical source to have triggered this line of thinking in her work appears to be Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." In a footnote, she writes: "According to Benjamin, the difference between voluntary and involuntary memory turns upon the status of historical information. Voluntary memory is the repository of the past that retains no trace of it. In contrast, *memoire involontaire* conveys no information about the past but is a repository of traces" (222n.90). The gap between these two forms of recollection clears a space for an alternative set of cultural practices to disrupt any voluntary operation which tends to homogenize Africanity as part of "the narrative of progress from ethnohistory or prehistory to history," because it allows for the involuntary "practice of countermemory distinguished by rupture and dispersion" (74-5)

principle of memory drift.

Folio 3.6 – Piercing Through the Canvas

In *Aesthetic Theory,* Theodor Adorno notes that memory traces are left behind in the process of making cultural objects: “Each and every important work of art leaves traces behind in its material and technique, and following them defines the modern as what needs to be done” (35). These traces are signs of the production of the original work. The importance of these parameters becomes evident in Adorno’s subsequent assertion that while artworks may be declared finished by their creator, and in this sense may appear to be frozen in time, no important work of modern art is ever fully complete. Reaching that point of completion remains a historical impossibility because the material production of the work of art remains inextricable from a modern historical situation that never exists in stasis. The empirical reality of the modern world is not defined by historical coherence and rather by unending industrial progress. In other words, capitalist modernity is a world-making force that engages processes of material production to propel itself forward, yet this ongoing rhythm of production never reaches a point of completion.

The requirement for the modern artwork to engage with the given relations of material production and organization inevitably causes it to fall short of ever fully containing itself within the hermetically sealed realm of aesthetic tradition. When expression fails to contain itself, and spills over into the historical conditions of everyday life, the illusion of organic wholeness is lost. Adorno explains:

> Modern art is questionable not when it goes too far—as the cliché runs—but when it does not go far enough, which is the point at which works falter out of a lack of internal

consistency. Only works that expose themselves to every risk have the chance of living on, not those that out of fear of the ephemeral cast their lot with the past. (34)

The lack of internal consistency discussed here is coextensive with the function of the modern artwork to puncture through the illusion of its own achievement. Failing to contain itself within some fictitious illusion of aesthetic tradition as distinct and insulated from empirical reality allows for a crucial interplay between aesthetic production and material production. Moreover, the apparent historicity of Adorno's pronouncements situate the art object as that which originates in modern life while simultaneously, and paradoxically, existing to challenge the same historical conditions of modernity out of which it was born. Modern art evades the traditional requirement for mastery, for organic wholeness, not because it reaches for inner completion of its own truth content, but rather to remake its own materials and techniques anew. It enters into the world, engages with it, critiques the same modern forms of material production that make up a crucial component of its own subject matter. That is why there is no completion, and why Adorno "defines the modern as what needs to be done" (35). The modern work evades historical coherence with aesthetic tradition and in turn only traces of incompletion are left behind.

"The traces to be found in the material and technical procedures," Adorno adds, "from which every qualitatively new work takes its lead, are scars" (35). The failure to unify inner and outer worlds, to suture up the puncture through the canvas, causes a jarring disjuncture between aesthetic production and material production. As a result, the historically determined processes of modern art seem remarkably aligned with Freud's famous assessment of the emotionally scars experienced by patient *working through* a disruptive traumatic event in the past that continues to

haunt the present.[56] Adorno argues that every modern artwork is a reengagement with a prior work of art that failed to fully reach what it set out to accomplish. “Through correspondences with the past,” he explains, “what resurfaces becomes something qualitatively other” (36). This otherness is achieved because prior techniques and processes, forms and materials, are mediated in relation to modern forms of production. The need to take risks, for the work to remake itself anew, therefore involves moving beyond “carpet motifs” which simply repeat what has come before without difference (37). We might say, then, that although Wheatley may have tended to replicate the stock narrative of human progress, and thus her attempt to express universal justice misfired, in the process of laboring to create the poetic object she also provided traces which critiqued the limits of her own time, and can thus later be picked up, her juridical imagination reengaged with, as these traces form the appearance of a cultural *afterimage*.

The artwork, for Adorno, is an “afterimage of enchantment” (58). To return back in time and begin to understand how it “degrades itself into an act of illusion in opposition to its own claim for truth” is precisely the dialectical process by which art simultaneously “undermines itself” and any illusion of coherence in the modern world “with a vengeance” (58). The negation of its own unified image, the renunciation of its own truth content, allows for art to “outmaneuver” the reified experience of the “world and cancel the spell that this world casts by the overwhelming appearance of its appearance [as] the fetish character of the commodity” (58-9). For Adorno, then, modern art par excellence is not motivated by the sale it might fetch at an art dealer. Rather, modern art is motivated by a conflict between inner and outer content. It seeks to communicate the truth of its own sheer existence of an object of beauty, yet its aesthetic value

[56] For an excellent appraisal of Freud’s theory, as well as an innovative mobilization of this process of reckoning with the dissatisfying history of the given world, see Rei Terada’s *Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction: From Kant to Adorno* (Harvard UP, 2009).

is radically transformed by capitalist modernity into a saleable commodity with an exchange value. Modern art actively exposes the transference of its own value and in doing so seeks to undermine the reified consciousness that makes its own conversion into an activity of presenting an “afterimage of the world” which communicates the “primordial shudder in the age of reification” (184).

This ability for truth content to flash up, then explode in a moment of dialectical illumination, if only to quickly vanish and disappear into smoke, is likened to tracing the arc of a firework across the night sky:

> The phenomenon of fireworks is prototypical for artworks, though because of its fleetingness and status of empty entertainment it has scarcely been acknowledged by theoretical consideration, only Valéry pursued ideas that are at least related. Fireworks are apparition κατ' 'εξοχήν [par excellence]: They appear empirically yet are liberated from the burden of the empirical, which is the obligation of duration; they are a sign from heaven yet artifactual, an ominous warning, a script that flashes up, vanishes, and indeed cannot be read for its meaning. The segregation of the aesthetic sphere by means of the complete afunctionality of what is thoroughly ephemeral is no formal definition of aesthetics. It is not through a higher perfection that artworks separate from the fallibility existent but rather by becoming actual, like fireworks, incandescently in an expressive appearance. (81)

Here Adorno’s pyrotechnics appear to be imitating Benjamin’s earlier historical claim that the past momentarily flashes up to provide a vital moment of historical insight, one that awakens the historical subject by smashing any sense of coherence or permanency into montage.[57] The

[57] Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History” makes the claim as follows: “Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it ‘the way it really was’. It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.

semblance of the firework, its ephemeral radiance in the night sky, holds open the possibility of unending duration as it tracks across the dark horizon, only to undermine any possibility for longevity. This expectation for continuation is replaced by the overwhelming synesthesia of a *pop* and *flash*. Once it explodes, the enchantment of its illumination fast dissipates.

Like living in the historical aftermath of a failed revolution, we have no choice but to work backwards and piece together the artwork's confusing temporality. It arrives only to vanish. The momentary convergence between the material world and the aesthetic world has been occasioned only by swift destruction. "By its mere existence, every artwork, as alien, artwork to what is alienated, conjures up the circus and yet is lost as soon as it emulates it. Art becomes image not directly by becoming an *apparition* but only through the countertendency to it" (81). All this is to say that the artwork's momentary appearance in the material world is the product of a historical antagonism. In breaking the spell of our everyday experiences of the world as we find it, encounters with aesthetic phenomena are unique to the extent that they encourage us to reflect on the reified character of our given existence and begin to comprehend what drives progressive modernity relentlessly ahead. For what the disappearance of the visual spectacle reveals to us is that we must engage in memory work, reflect retroactively, using hindsight, and begin to reconstruct the apparitional moment, the momentary flash—the afterimage—which has transformed the illusionary expectation for coherence into a memory trace.

Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger" (SW4: 391). Of course, the historicity of this untimely flash of insight is not fully accounted for in Adorno's account. Rather than choosing to mention Benjamin's pyrotechnical vocabulary, which is partly messianic and partly a refraction of the emergence of photography, Adorno fails to give proper accreditation to his old friend. This lapse is not without historical irony as Adorno articulates the historical shutter in relation to phenomenon of fireworks as prototypical for modern artworks.

Folio 3.7 – Outcasts and Castaways

But how does a memory trace function in action? Of all the Harlem writers contemporaneous with the New Negro movement, Claude McKay most adequately recognized the paradoxical condition of historical possibility as that which can only take shape by engaging with the afterimage of the world. His 1922 poem "Outcast" further specifies that renegotiating memory traces reveals the past as distinguished by rupture and dispersion. It opens with a description of Africa as the site of loss and rupture:

> From the dim regions whence my fathers came
>
> My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.
>
> Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
>
> My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
>
> I would go back to darkness and to peace,
>
> But the great western world holds me in fee,
>
> And I may never hope for full release
>
> While to its alien gods I bend my knee. (173)

The lines voiced by a slave in bondage recall the ancestral journey across the Atlantic. But rather than replicate the favorable image of western civilization found in Wheatley's poetry, he instead longs for a return to Africa that no longer seems tenable because "the great western world holds me in fee." Such lines clearly accord with Adorno's claim that material traces "are scars: they are the loci at which the preceding works misfired. By laboring on them, the new work turns against those that left these traces behind" (35). A meager or impure idea in the Western literary tradition comes to be revisited and in turn forms the poem's new moment of intervention.

Yet the reference to "forgotten jungle songs" also tests the limits of what art can conjure up as a memory trace and rework. The absence of his cultural recollection in this moment—the black poet's failure to call up the lines of a lost jungle song—occurs because there appears to be no memory of an African tradition to draw upon. We begin to see here that what Adorno describes as "the traditional" falters out of a lack of historical consistency. Even if the black poet wanted to return to a set of traditional practices, and create what Adorno categorizes as bad art "that out of fear of the ephemeral cast their lot with the past," there exists no such historical position to return to (*Aesthetic Theory* 34). What emerges in the poem instead is a recognition that what defines black poetry as modern is precisely that it lacks the same privilege to engage with its own long tradition. The western literary tradition is thus just another "alien god" to which the speaker must bow and "bend my knee" (173).

The second section of the poem communicates the impossibility of return, even of retrieval:

> Something in me lost, forever lost,
> Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
> And I must walk the way of life a ghost
> Among the sons of earth, a thing apart
> For I was born, far from my native clime
> Under the white man's menace, out of time." (173)

Clearly the condition of being "outcast" and "born, far from my native clime" exposes the black poet's position as not only alienated from social conditions but also from the fullness of Western cultural life itself. But in writing these lines McKay begins to forge the makings of his own kind of black countertradition. The recognition of "Something in me lost, forever lost" comes to

determine a distinct form of black cultural experience which remains fundamentally outside, outcast, involuntarily forced into exile from Africa yet not fully integrated within Western cultural tradition either. He is speaking of a certain dispersal of blackness from the terms of Western cultural production to the extent that the question of value in relation to personhood is structured such that the enslaved laborer is equivalent to no value outside the material realm of market exchange. Fred Moten explains that "The individual, enslaved laborer is characterized as use-value that, in the field of cultural production, is equivalent to no value, which is to say operative outside of exchange" (17). Moten is quick to point out here that any theoretical conception which defines the placement of the black laborer "as outside the field of exchange" and positioned "outside the field of exchange" as "noncommodity […] does so not by way of some rigorous accounting but rather as a function of not hearing, of overlooking" (17). All this must be true. Still, there is something haunting about the way in which McKay communicates the position of the black outcast—"Among the sons on earth, a thing apart." What is it about this existence beyond category which demands a new analytic?

Hartman indicates that the "experience of loss and affiliation" involves the creation of cultural practices "akin to a phantom limb, in what is felt is no longer there. It is a sentient recollection of connectedness experienced as a site of rupture, where the very consciousness of disconnectedness acts as a mode of testimony and memory" (74). In the case of Claude McKay's poetic trajectory, the history of the captive as impossibly both in bondage and held outside as outcast comes to reform itself into a new concept of blackness. His poem 1920 "The Castaways" was first published in 1918 under the title "The Park in Spring" and includes the condemning phrase "human derelicts" to describe those poor black individuals who live in the park in place of the later "castaways of life," only to again be rewritten a final time as "castaways of earth" (328).

What happened between these punctuated moments in the author's life? What caused him to revise his own memory trace, to rework the earlier art object he no longer remained satisfied with?

The final version of the sonnet reads as follows:

The Castaways

The vivid grass with visible delight

Springing triumphant from the pregnant earth;

The butterflies, and sparrows in brief flight

Chirping and dancing for the season's birth,

And dandelions and rare daffodils

That hold the deep-stirred heart with hands of gold

And thrushes sending forth their joyous thrills;

Not these, not these did I at first behold:

But seated on the benches daubed with green,

The castaways of earth, some fast asleep,

With many a withered woman wedged between,

And over all life's shadows dark and deep:

Moaning I turned away, for misery

I have the strength to bear but not to see. (329)

To some extent McKay is working within Hartman's suggestion that "the reiterative invocation of the past articulated in practice returns to this point of rupture" (74). For in such instances, "memory is not in the service of continuity but incessantly reiterates and enacts the contradictions and antagonisms of enslavement, the ruptures of history, and the disassociated and

dispersed networks of affiliation" (74). In this case, McKay's speaker is willing to acknowledge the misery of loss and rupture but turns away from the sight of this ghastly image as witnessing such poverty with his own eyes becomes too difficult to look at.

At the same time, his advancing interest in dispersed networks of human affiliation comes to reshape his own poetic practice. When he writes "One Year After" in 1922 he includes the lines: "Adventure-seasoned and storm-buffeted, / I shun all sings of anchorage, because / the zest of life exceeds the bounds of laws" (191). No longer is McKay interested in lamenting the alienated status of the outcast. Instead, his expatriate speaker exclaims the possibilities for freedom that black migrancy offers. This utopian vision of migrancy as existing beyond national lines, and therefore exceeding the constricted bounds of the Jim Crow Laws in America, thrusts the speaker into the freedom of an extralegal zone. His celebration of statelessness has become a blueprint of an alternative community that is not bound by national affiliations. "No rigid road for me," he exclaims. In McKay's biography, he perhaps gave the main reason for these kinds of sentiments of expatriation:

> What, then, was my main psychological problem? It was the problem of color. Color-consciousness was the fundamental of my restlessness. And it was something with which my white fellow-expatriates could sympathize but they could not altogether understand. For they were not black like me. Not being black and unable to see deep into the profundity of blackness, some even thought I might have preferred to be white like them. They couldn't imagine that I had no desire merely to exchange my black problem for their white problem. For all their knowledge and sophistication, they couldn't understand the instinctive and animal and purely physical pride of a black person resolute in being himself and yet living a simple civilized life like themselves. Because their education in

> their white world had trained them to see a person of color either as an inferior or as an exotic. (189)

The place of black subjects in the modern world was one problem that obsessed McKay ever since Marcus Garvey indicated that the Negro masses could not forever contain their frustrated aspirations within the boundaries of America's borders.

An inquiry into the lost possibilities for community markedly differs from efforts made by Garvey's contemporaries in the interwar era to conceptualize black experience as a condition of exile. Two approaches to black sovereignty therefore need to be differentiated here. One approach, common to the advance of integrationist projects, serves to represent blackness as exile.[58] It comes to signify the outlier relation of the black mass to an utterly improper management of collective life in the American republic. The rhetorical figure, relying on a slippage of deictic expression to signify the displacement of black personhood, denotes a gap in American experience. Black exile is here imbued with a confusion of signs. The sign that signifies no clear place at all becomes principally employed to take a moral position on the contested ground that the metaphor itself calls into existence. The lexical terrain that black exile animates comes to evenly denote as much as to act out the precarious, otherwise unpresentable,

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[58] Where to begin? The discourse in question is enormous, if not ubiquitous with twentieth-century efforts to reconstruct the histories of civilizations on the African continent displaced by narratives of imperial domination. The figuration of blackness as exile gained traction as a viable form of social contest in W. E. B. Du Bois's writings on the outsider status of the American Negro. See, for instance, Chapter XIV of *The Souls of Black Folks*, where "the voice of exile" first comes to be heard through the musical innovation of the "Negro folk-song" (539). The equation of blackness with mobility was also occasioned by the Great Migration, particularly after 1910, a time when black newspapers encouraged northward mobility to "The Land of Hope" (Mullane 455-6). More recent histories have continued to formalize this trend as it now extends into twenty-first century understandings of black experience. See: Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003); Stephen Best, *Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (2004); Wendy Walters, *At Home in Diaspora: Black International Writing* (2005); Anthony Kwame Appiah, "Ethics in a World of Strangers: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism" (2005); Magdalena Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (2009); Nicole Waligora-Davis, *Sanctuary: African Americans and Empire* (2011); Alysson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (2014). For a critique of romantic notions of travel as it pertains to US race relations, see Mark Simpson's *Trafficking Subjects: The Politics of Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005).

discursive spaces that exist between the positions of inside and outside. This tear in the fabric of national agency signified by the exilic condition thereby comes to register itself by denoting a conceptual gap in the political imagination. It stands in for the national predicament of racial injustice, as it simultaneously denotes a slippage in the moral imperative for national entry.

Confronted by a confusing set of moral and political failures that disavow the accuracy of American liberalism, the black modern subject—who lives in a condition of stateless dislocation yet remains geographically enclosed and confined by the constitutional discourse that binds together US territorial sovereignty—comes to be recognized as simultaneously a part of, yet paradoxically outside, the national body. As such, racial justice in America comes to adhere to a political narrative that frames an integrationist struggle to become legitimate members of the polis. The black crusade for national legitimation thus becomes communicated as a story of the degraded status of the US structures of statehood which have long excluded opportunities for racial equality. To be born a black subject in America is to embody the impossible condition as a stateless inhabitant. Black exile, then, as the sign of dislocation, operative even on native soil, marks the formidable, often tragic, frequently impossible, desire for national integration. This is the memory trace of the Atlantic slave trade as the sense of dispersion it carries forth also flashes up and opens the possibility of a new beginning.

As Nicole Waligora-Davis has observed, the figurative convergence of African Americans and stateless persons "places in relief a discourse on safety and the sacredness of human life essential to any interrogation of rightlessness, while respecting, as a powerful constant, both the desire and the necessity for refuge repeated repeatedly throughout the history of African American writings and expressive traditions" (56). This desire for refuge, for sanctuary, moreover, gives rise to sympathetic appeals for a leveling of the barriers of

association. A reliance on restoring the core tenets of American liberalism favorable to individual freedoms implies that the state is moving ahead in some progressivist if it begins to shift its own rights discourse as required for black entry into the liberal realm of signs.

The same cannot be said, however, for Garvey's attempts to reconfigure blackness as a diasporic condition inextricably linked to questions of migrancy. While exile and migrancy may appear, on cursory glance, to denote rather equivocal or overlapping references to human movement, Garvey's collective representations prioritize the latter concept in an attempt to force a decisive break from a distortive national fantasy of racial progressivism. The trouble with the ethical right to asylum, for Garvey, is that exile's representations of black estrangement do not go far enough to mobilize an effective form of social contest. The political risk in play, as Garvey deems it prone to inevitable failure, is that the all-too-familiar deployment of the discourse of the outsider may more accurately be shown to function to reinstate through reiteration the same rift of racial separation it attempts to eradicate. The tensional forces installed may do more to stall or otherwise defer or prolong the push for the right to black historical self-determination by installing notions of a racial hierarchy rather than removing them. A need to retool the black critical vocabulary stems from the contradiction that exile is premised on identifying cultural difference as a means to re-entry. To plead for entrance is to partake in an act of white liberal patronage. Refusing to continue this kind of deferral to white power, Garvey views a new kind of opportunity to emerge from the vagabond status afforded to the black diaspora. Only by giving up the false promise of national entry might old juridical linkages be dissolved in a way conducive to make room for the creation of new extranational ones. The release he advocates to break the chains of imperial rule calls for an awakening of the migratory unconscious, inciting members of the black diaspora across the globe to rouse forth to activate

the creation of its own collective potential. Whatever its contradictions and utopianism, such calls serve to exemplify a race-first desire.

In a statement titled “Arguments for the Continuation, Perpetuation and Support of the UNIA,” Garvey reflects on the association’s undertakings as they were deliberately tied to giving credence to the desire to no longer interiorize or further repress the shared African identity held within. The UNIA’s collective objectives function to mobilize the seductive lure of this identification. To awaken a black global polis, and to transcend the erasure of this polis by traditional conceptions of national borders, rank as first and second on Garvey’s list of the movement’s principled successes:

> 1. The UNIA has stirred the entire world of Negroes to a consciousness of race pride which never existed before.
>
> 2. The UNIA broke down the barriers of racial nationality among Negroes and caused American, African, West Indian, Canadian, Australian, and South and Central American Negroes to realize that they have a common interest. (*Message to the People* 199)

A twofold mandate takes shape in this synopsis. The UNIA anticipates and activates what surfaces in the black mass as an already present desire for race-first belonging, as much as it produces, aggravates, and mobilizes this new political force of global negritude—a black sovereignty. Yet the process of doubling down on racial commitments that serve a “common interest” also installs a tension between particularity and universality. The collective power to emerge from the black vision of self-affirmation gives purchase to the belief in a diasporic belonging that operates by the ideological parameters of racial essentialism to preserve rather than erase key cultural differences. Such an approach is not without its own set of political wagers. There is political promise, even utility as a force of insurrection, but also clearly decisive

risk in privileging an African bloodline over human universality. Moreover, there is a fine balance for the black revolutionary leader to strike between inciting and curtailing the unpleasant feelings of abandonment and isolation to arise alongside the commitment to identarian forms of cultural belonging. The coming global revolution in black thought can either be accelerated or stifled by the cultural forms to which these politically-charged feelings of civic discord give rise.

To come into being as a member of the black diaspora is to awaken to find oneself in the rather compromised and dispirited predicament of having slipped "Under the white man's menace, out of time" (McKay 173). This particular reference to time being out of joint, as expressed in Claude McKay's 1922 poem "Outcast," summons forth the disjunctive terms of anxious despondency that constitute the disruptive experience of black untimeliness. Literary references such as this one have tended to be amassed together and read by literary critics of the Harlem Renaissance as evidence of social contest against colonial systems of knowledge. So conceived, Waligora-Davis observes in a footnote that "'Time' within the framework of the poem is code for a specific tradition in western continental philosophy that located the African body outside (cast-out from)" the structure of meaning making that has come to stand as a viable account of human enlightenment (159n.57). Certainly, McKay's allusions to black anachronism function to mark a series of historical erasures, social exclusions, and economic disenfranchisements which have accompanied a myopic colonial narrative of human progress. More than this, though, the outcast figure of the migrant pushes at once against and beyond itself, to arrive at a point in present day 1922 when the failed promise of a national belonging becomes an unbearable source of panic and intolerable grief. Forcing the moment to its crisis, the ugly feelings that manifest no longer point inward to map a desire for national inclusion. The American Negro, no longer confined to "the colored world within" forces into conscious

experience a set of national identifications flow over to mark the exterior set of alienating forces (Du Bois 681). The urgency of the poem's address serves to cut short this very investment in political progressivism.

McKay's subjugated speaker taps a memory well of repressed cultural emotion, as he searches "For the dim regions whence my father came," and follows up with a proposition to return to Africa: "My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs / I would go back to darkness and peace" (173). An extrinsic projection of raw emotion moves outwards, beyond colonial boundaries, back to Africa. The decolonized Africa the poem invents in its return to precolonial historical time works to anachronistically destabilize any normalized conception of a chronological limit—collapsing the very notion of a continental divide while also extending and pushing beyond the colonial narrative of civilizational progress. Here the poem's non-linear structure compares pre-colonized African existence to the present forms of colonial identity that shape the forms of oppression. Blackness, if confined to its colonized, nation-state identification, comes to represent itself as a dead metaphor, signifying nothing more than a deanimation of the possibilities of personhood. Attempting to break free from the same figurative tradition that has persistently come to mark and reify the identifications of the black stranger thus involves a poetic vision capable of transcending the political systems that seek to control, regulate, and restrain the laws of citizenship and human movement. To recognize a new figuration of the renegade outcast that turns against itself, demystifying and exceeding the psychic effects of an integrationist identity that confers its own subjection, serves to underline the reanimation of the black spirit, and forces the poem's conception of a transcendent racial awakening.[59]

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[59] In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler draws together Foucault's notion of history as a normalizing ideal in which the subject is "trained, shaped, cultivated and invested; it is a historically specific imaginary ideal (*idéal speculatif*) under which the body is materialized. This 'subjection' or *assujetissement* is not only a subordination but a securing and maintaining, a putting into place of a subject, a subjectivation" (90). It is precisely this "putting into place" that

What the black migrant seeks, in return for these risky investments in the excesses of global belonging, is to no longer be restricted by Western notions of finding a natural form of sanctuary or refuge within the present world order organized by the reigning global powers. More comprehensively, too, the diasporic vision to emerge out of a refashioned migrant history promises to rewrite the future of black relations, as this involves creating a new world historical frame of what constitutes an alternate past, present, and future time. A new interpretation of political time—formed by recognizing the present limits of the colonial politics of time—brokers the effort to think beyond the logic that replicates the myth of refuge in American life as the solution to the problem of racial injustice. And it pushes against an interpretive tradition that has overwhelmingly tended to read the history of African American communities exclusively as an extension of the struggle for civil rights. Conjuring up the intransigencies of the difficult predicament of black anachronism may therefore force the emergence of a new counter-history. This "refused investment," particularly in the idea of American sovereignty, as it has come to restrain and regulate the available futures of black mobility, signals a decisive break with the normative order (Butler 160). Acting outside the productive matrix of expectations serves the effort to produce new political possibilities that mark the life-affirming possibilities for black agency, ones that may exist well beyond "the great western world [that] holds me in fee" (McKay 173). Exploring the unthought possibilities of what McKay obliquely designates as "Words felt, but never heard" thereby pushes the geographical and temporal disruption of calls for black citizenship beyond the fatalistic frame of conventional figurations that constitute the African body as outside history and civilized life. Gesturing toward an affirmative role in global

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serves to form and frame the geopolitical time and place wherein the black subject dwells. Just as a refusal to identify with these psychic investments in colonial power offer the revolutionary potential to upset the discursive reiteration that holds the black body in time and place. It is this precisely this kind of aggressive "acting out" that breaks out of that circuit, through displacement, and instead comes to liberate with a "refused investment" (160).

relations, the hidden potential denoted by reanimating the dead metaphor of the black body—filling in the gaps of its unknown potential if mobilized—proves essential, if not also racially essentialist, in scope. The turnaround signifies an effort to force a crisis of public legitimacy with enough force in numbers to shatter the sealed fate of the national fantasy.

A new formation of black agency, as it involves the conception of a utopian site beyond the imperial nation-state, thus provides the equitable means by which "My spirit" can reactivate itself (McKay 173). In the creative effort to forge history, Hegel proposes, "spirit" and "potential" always coincide:

> Spirit knows itself: it is the judging of its own nature, and at the same time it is the activity of coming into itself, of producing itself, making itself actually what it is in itself potentially.
>
> According to this abstract definition, we can say of world history that it is the exhibition of Spirit, the working out of the explicit knowledge of what it is potentially. Just as the germ of the plant carries within itself the entire nature of the tree, even the taste and shape of its fruit, so the first traces of Spirit virtually contain all history. (20-1)

This application of the principle of potential to produce the realization of the world—so that spirit permeates the world situation—is the long process that makes up history itself. McKay's understanding of the New Negro spirit corresponds to the dissemination of this principle. But the poem also troubles Hegel's conception insofar as the speaker of "Outcast"—a black subject held outside colonial time—struggles to seek the will of his own spirit as necessary to produce the capacity for world history to radically change its present course. With few signs registering the long process of black struggles for freedom, "explicit knowledge" of his own cultural past appears to have been largely withheld from the world picture.

It is one thing to bring a certain historical configuration closer to reaching its own set potential, and quite another to advocate for history as a differential social resource capable of inaugurating a series of new events. To restart history anew somehow requires introducing the world to a new spirit—a New Negro—a new seed that contains the trace potential of an alternative chronology of events to grow into appearance. The first move toward emancipating this new political life-force is to relocate a lost "hope for full release" (McKay 173). But the sort of historical understanding the speaker is proposing repeatedly fails to clearly locate a new space of origin outside colonialism's long shadow. The speaker begins to question the makeup and historical particularity of the human passions, notably the spirited exuberance that must be restored, and the optimism which drives the process of making any sense of a shared Pan-African collective history appear at all. Spirit and hope cannot be differentiated by the speaker. The two concepts appear one and the same. Hope produces spirit. And spirit emerges in full only after a long search to find the hope that holds the germinating capacity for spirit to burst forth with a clear sign of its life-affirming potential. As McKay's speaker troubles the distinction between spirit and hope by collapsing the two concepts into one another, universal history stops short of its own eventuation. And yet, although the speaker never fully extricates the hope that remains non-synchronous with colonial time, he does gesture towards its reparative force, if only in the act of emphasizing its failed animation. "Something in me is lost, lost forever," the speaker repeats. "Some vital thing has gone out of my heart" (173). The disconcerting tone of this announcement hardly lays the speaker's anguish to rest. Nor can the tonal variations that give rise to the poem's complex lyric address be reduced to simply a lament. As opposed to merely relinquishing faith or voicing complacency, the speaker, even within the same line, puts forward a potential understanding of cultural memory. To passively state "I may never hope for full

release" is much different than to say with conviction that I will never seek release at all, or I will never find release of any significant degree. But is passivity equal to fatalism? Such revelations, even if arrived at through a process of negation, still somehow carry a latent potential to return him back to a previous juncture in time at any given moment—to turn back the clock of history. Further exploring the premise of historical memory, the poem ends with an inquiry into the dialectical understanding to which the memory of spirit gives rise: "For I was born, far from my native clime / Under the white man's menace, out of time" (174). Precisely at the moment of time's arrest, when the new spirit is compromised, and hope for any renewal seems lost, does African American identity flash up on the poem's rear horizon, in need of rescue, even if it remains out of reach. The colonial gaze of petrifies and arrests the possibility of culimation. As a result of this displacement, the speaker's compromised identity as a black outcast has come to rest on the past history of an African soil upon which he was never born. Yet this revelation could not have been achieved without reflecting on a cultural memory that brought its new awareness into historical view.

Oddly, the same reluctant hope in McKay's poem, as it remains mainly sealed off, trapped outside US borders, beyond reach of African Americans, gives rise to the sort of crisis in historical experience that comes to serve as a vast cultural repository for the UNIA. Hence the boldness with which the Back-to-Africa movement finds significant mobilizing potential to push a new race consciousness into a mode of social contest. The promise of Africa turns into a point of departure by which Garvey's diasporic vision comes to rouse broad public appeal and mass popularity among members confined to the legal strictures in Jim Crow America. It is in this context that the call for black exodus dramatically transformed racial anxieties into the largest mass movement in African American history. By the early 1920s, the UNIA boasted several

million black members. Its vision of expatriation—to reactivate Pan-Africa's lost potential—however provisional, flashes up as a spark of hope for the completion of the black world-historical project. Whatever the predictive virtue of the model of Back-to-Africa, or inevitable failures down the road, its discourse of anticipation is clearly grounded in a theory of redemption. To reclaim a hopeful sense of oneself as part of an emergent collective, a black sovereignty with the life-affirming power to change history, provides the political method and organizational force charged with the potential to seek hope for "release" from the ongoing conditions of historical erasure. Here the optimistic call for black exodus breaks with the rhetorical entrapment that characterizes the story of involuntary exile. It signifies an attempt to push the intransigent condition of migrancy toward a new storyline about the voluntary and self-transformative process of desubjectification to change world history. By deriving symbolic insights from what counts as historical particularity, the black mass, assembled together by a collective belonging to the diasporic multitude, arrives and commences to look for alternate ways to define its own surplus life beyond the anguish of a shared feeling of global strangeness.

Cultivating such a mass cultural appeal for global renewal, as it rouses the future possibilities of the migratory unconscious and installs the hope for a new self-government—or, taken to its most utopian extreme, poses the possibility of a non-governmental public sphere—comes to distinguish its own historical particularity as far apart from the imperial myths and rituals of American sovereignty. To examine such a countertradition beset by anticipation rather than a clearly defined sense of accomplishment or achievement requires charting a different kind of utopian project, one that deliberately turns away from integrationist accounts of US history, with all the new impasses and contradictions, sacrifices and conundrums, the black international

incites in its wake as this revolutionary project overturns the past to rewrite a new saga of race relations.

Folio 3.8 – The Black Corporate Body

A newspaper editorial penned by the President General of the Black Star Line, dated January 8, 1920, clarifies the need to reinvent the collective terms of black recognition. Marcus Garvey's statement, written from Montreal, while on honeymoon with Amy Ashwood Garvey, ran in *The Negro World* with the subtitle "All Negroes Should Pull Together For A Strong and United Race" (MGP 2: 186).[60] He begins with a reminder to his readers that "[t]he unsettled state of the world" requires the "millions of us to prepare ourselves" (MGP 2: 187). Emphasis on preparation remained a touchstone throughout the Black Star Line's promotional materials. Pamphlets and brochures, newspaper ads and announcements generated by the shipping company frequently linked together a dialectic of structural transformation and subject formation.

The first point of emphasis was historical in focus. The "unsettled state of the world" in the wake of the Great War resulted in a crisis of representation: geopolitical uncertainty caused by shifting power and territory realignments in the wake of the war opened onto a new understanding of black community for those of African descent strewn across the globe. A

[60] Garvey married Amy Ashwood in Liberty Hall on the evening of Christmas day, 1919. The legal case files for *Garvey v. United States* include the original letter which the couple carried with them to present to border agents. For reasons unknown, the official letter typed on Black Star Line letterhead fails to indicate that the couple were vacationing on honeymoon; instead, it verifies that Garvey was entering Canada conduct business with local UNIA chapters. It reads: "This is to certify that the holder of this letter whose signature appears below is Marcus Garvey President General of the Black Star Line incorporated […] and that he is sent by the Directors of this Corporation to represent their business interests in the Cities of Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. He will remain in Canada for two weeks returning to New York. We ask that privileges be extended to Mr. Garvey" (MGP 2: 171).

growing number of members of the aggrieved population shared a sense of political immediacy, one that, after the Great War, markedly differed from any prior conception of affiliation. He connects the emptying out of time's meaning with the devaluing of any prior sense of black ontology, and ultimately with the devaluing of prior forms of geopolitical community. "The time has really come," he writes, "for the Negro to take himself seriously. The hour is here for us to unite universally" (MGP 2: 186). In this period of temporal flux, between the passing of one historical epoch and the dawn of another, a growing perception amongst black activist factions involved taking immediate steps to concentrate the energies of resistance against structural mechanisms of imperial power. Urgently rethinking the unification of the black diaspora offered a historic opportunity to take advantage of the surplus energy generated by growing realizations that the world-making ambition was not limited to the realm of imperial policymakers.

As a linked concern, preparations also entailed a new way of thinking about black subjectivity as one collective social body. This slide in the rhetoric of black freedom from local or national to globalized categories of belonging was necessary overcome the old divisions and colonial borders held in place by empire. Imperial territories, which tended to be defended along a clearly defined set of border lines, had the devastating cultural effect of isolating, distancing, severing and detaching smaller groups of black populations from one another. Rethinking black subjectivity as international in reach, globally united by a common set of concerns, crossed far beyond any repressive lines of empire, and carried forth the potential to form new lines of flight and social action. For the prospect of reorganizing economic and social relations after the partial collapse of empire, in the wake of the war, frequently generated situations in which acting or not acting as it was before did not feel like the only, or the right, actions. How to feel, think, act

together—to function in the collective spirit of amalgamation—now carried the possibility to change the shape of action itself.

After introducing this dialectic of structural transformation and subject formation, the President General then addresses the specific matter of the black shipping corporation. During times of unrest, he clarifies, financing the black corporate enterprise offers a clear and unified purpose. Black ownership of the transnational shipping venture formed a significant part in the larger effort to "make every effort to unite our scattered forces" (MGP 2: 186). This vision of a black shipping company linked black finance to diasporic unification, reconciliation, and salvation. Indeed, the black corporation was conceived of as capable of stitching together atomic units, individual migratory subjects strewn across the globe, into one social body. Put another way, black finance carried the promise for a disjointed diasporic community, separated by the transatlantic slave trade, to reunite and coalesce into one unified corporate body, thus reforming the social ontology of blackness as way of being and identifying with the world.

When communicating this financial vision of black transnational connection, though, Garvey is careful to make an essential historical distinction separating it from past initiatives. The image of the black corporate body envisioned by the Pan-African movement had to be carefully distanced from the failed promises of collective enterprise that once encouraged black soldiers to join the Great War. President Wilson's universalist message, justifying the US entry into the European war as a collective effort to make the world safe for democracy, could only be viewed in glaring contradiction with the terrible treatment of the 380,000 black servicemen who arrived for basic training to find nearly every aspect of military life to be segregated.[61]

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[61] I make this assertion by way of Chad L. Williams' rich archival findings in *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era*. He explains: "When confronted with the question of African American Soldiers in the army, the War Department found answers hard to come by. The army was an institution steeped in white supremacy, a reality war planners remained well aware of as they grappled with how to best employ black

Circumstances were additionally grim for those black soldiers who survived the war in Europe and made the transatlantic voyage back home. Ingratitude and racial intolerance greeted their return. The irony of fighting a war in the name of global freedom was that the status of black citizenship in America had not changed. Black citizens remained stripped their basic right to vote through both legal and extralegal means—even after many had made the ultimate sacrifice. Subsequently, Garvey expresses such irony of not attaining equal citizenship in the terms of an unfixable moral failure. "As a race," he writes, with bitter disappointment, "we have fought the last battle of the white man's; we have died the last time for him, because after fighting his battle for hundreds of years we find ourselves rejected and despised by him" (MGP 2: 189). Fighting another war for the white race remained a futile endeavor.

Just as crucial to recognize, too, mass disillusionment did not offer a viable way forward, nor was continuing to deny any possibility of black self-determination. For what the disruption of the Great War made resoundingly, painfully, clear was that large numbers of the black population had for too long understood themselves as disenfranchised. And perceiving themselves as powerless to fundamentally change the systems of power had done little else but stiffen unremitting political deadlock. Fatalism galvanized hopelessness. To turn back the clock to any prior state of passive agency, injustice, and exploitation would only redouble the experience of oppression. For new ways to perceive the structure of global affairs had given shape to the belief that oppressed conditions were subject to change through amalgamation into one black race, united as one global body politic.

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troops. Instituting policies that promoted full equality for African American servicemen would create a furor among white soldiers and officers, many of whom came from the South" (65). White officers insisted on black inferiority; verbal harassment and physical abuse of segregated black soldiers formed part of a systemic ideology of racial intolerance, one that had been so ingrained in American life that not even the common experience of fighting a war on the same side could bridge the space between cultural identities. See also the first full length study on the topic, published relatively recently. See, Arthur Barbeau et al., *The Unknown Soldiers* (Da Capo Press, 1996).

Garvey reminds his fellow black compatriots that the prospect of perpetual war seemed to be the only constant on the imperial horizon. Precisely because the future outlook remained so prone to conflict, he focused immediate attention on the urgent matter of ensuring that the relatively powerless group he represents could turn attention to rapidly build the sound financial footing required to no longer be dependent on the US imperial economy when the next war of empire breaks out. He writes of the impermanence of any ceasefire and connects this to the urgent need to forge a collective mandate of their own before chaos and fighting erupts again:

> During these times of peace let us lay the foundation for commercial and industrial prosperity. There are golden opportunities ahead of us and all that is necessary is for us to make up or minds and grab them. . . . Let us all pull together and see and hear nothing else but a free and great and powerful Negro Race." (MGP 2: 187)

This was Garvey's bold attempt to move agitation to organization. Any epochal transition would require clear structuring, coordination, and logistics to shape and carry forth the Pan-African movement as its own world-making force. Here we should be reminded of Leon Trotsky's famous evaluation of the dialectic between mass association and mass organization inherent to the revolutionary ambition. Any viable possibility of revolutionary change involves a process doubly determined by material forces and non-material agency, both of which must remain present and carefully organized together in the effort to create a new structure of human relations. For "[w]ithout a guiding organisation," Trotsky warns, "the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston-box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box, but the steam" (*The History of the Russian Revolution* xi). In the case of the Black Star Line, Trotsky's mechanical metaphor was literalized to such extent that the

engine rooms which powered the steamships along new global trade routes were to be energized the financial backing of the black masses.

Folio 3.9 – MIGRANT$

In an excerpt from his autobiography, *A Star to Steer: Memoirs of a Captain of the Black Star Line*, Hugh Mulzac described the reception of UNIA ships in ports across the diaspora:

> "The *Yarmouth*'s arrival [in Cuba] had been heralded. . . . And sympathizers flocked from all parts of the island toward the docks to greet the first ship they had ever seen entirely owned and operated by coloured men. . . . Finally, left for Jamaica. Again hundreds greeted us at the docks. . . . Then we left for Colon, the Panama Canal zone, and the biggest reception of them all. Literally thousands of Panamanians swarmed all over the docks with baskets of fruits, vegetables, and other gifts. I was amazed that the Yarmouth had become such a symbol for the coloured citizens of every land." (84)

Garvey's symbolic ships had begun to captivate the diaspora and in turn reconfigure the black global imaginary. Though, as Michelle Stephens clarifies, "Mulzac's praise was given grudgingly; his overall comments were critical of Garvey precisely because, in his view, "The use to which the worthless Black Star Ships were put represented the triumph of propaganda over business" (109). The black maritime captain did not hesitate to point out that Garvey was more inclined to make impassioned speeches about the Black Star Line than to focus all his energies on ensuring the financial viability of the large-scale business operation.[62] The conflict

[62] Judith Stein further clarifies: "For Mulzac, the UNIA proved to be only a brief phase in a long search for appropriate work" (99). The racial restrictions placed on black seamen had restricted access to sea-faring experience. Before joining the Black Star Line he had gained his British second-mate's license. However, he could not obtain a deck position in the United States, where most blacks were limited to the steward's department on major lines" (98). So his seven years on the seas and in foreign ports in Europe, North Africa, and South and North America" were mostly limited to the cook's galley "on board a United Fruit Banana Boat" (98). However, with the outbreak of World War I, the "demand for experienced seamen removed the old barriers, and Mulzak obtained the temporary

between Garvey and his black officer demonstrates that the daily operations of running the corporate enterprise often remained at odds with the aesthetics of black radical thought developed by Garvey to justify his symbolic ships to the black masses. Thus while, as Stein suggests, "the BSL depended upon the skilled men to obtain and operate ships, which won the UNIA the initial tangible achievements that were so critical in attracting its mass constituency," the job creation program was very limited in number (100). In this early stage of reforming the world-system of commerce, the black business venture employed only a small fraction of black workers in comparison to the large numbers of the black population which worked regular jobs for poor wages, and who yet limited earnings financed the BSL.

It was not out of the ordinary for investors in the company to demonstrate different motivations from those who sought to work for the company. Stein explains the financial motivations guiding these kinds of investors:

> The common denominator of each stock purchase was the profit motive. Novices often plagued Garvey with questions and demanded refunds where their anxieties outweighed hopes. Many thought that the purchase of stock was like a deposit of funds in savings banks and could be withdrawn on demand. (101)

For many black investors it was money—that is, legal tender—which came to represent the common denominator. Marx explains in his theory of value that money as an abstract representation of value comes to be exchanged *in place* of the commodity as the universal equivalent. Through this substitution, he argues, the products of labor are transformed: "The

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officer's licence awarded to aliens" (98). Despite sailing as a deck officer on four vessels from 1914 to 1918, and becoming "the first black officer in Baltimore's history to pass the master seaman's exam," after the war the "labor surplus permitted a return to the old prejudices of hiring personnel" (99). After his brief stint at the Black Star Line, Mulzak's faith in the operation soured. "[H]e started his own company and sold six thousand dollars worth of stocks but eventually concluded that he could not raise sufficient capital" and briefly opened a black nautical academy (99).

commodities will only become universal equivalents as a result of their alienation. The establishment of their price is merely their nominal conversion into the universal equivalent" (*Political Economy*). But Marx is also careful to point out that the abstract value of money is not the same as that of finance capital.

Speculative forms of lending such as finance and credit, Ian Baucom explains, have "enshrined the imagination as a new force at the heart of economic, political, and social life" (66). The point is not only, or not merely, that property has become more mobile and speculative. But rather that the owner of capital who invests in systems of finance has in effect transformed oneself into a social character who lives in terms of imagining what might happen—and so remains vulnerable to a new gambit of crises. John Pocock makes a similar assertion in his formative article on the eighteenth-century rise of speculative finance:

> The ability of the merchant and landowner to raise the loans and mortgages they need is similarly dependent upon the investor's imagination. Property – the material foundation of both personality and government – has ceased to be real and has become not merely mobile but imaginary. Specialized, acquisitive and post-civic man has ceased to be virtuous, not only in the formal sense that he [or she] has become the creature of his own hopes; he [or she] does not even live in the present, except as constituted by his [or her] fantasies concerning a future. (112)

No wonder there remained so much confusion among black investors of the BSL shipping corporation. Many had misunderstood that corporate finance did not function along the same lines as a banking system which allowed them to deposit and withdraw their earnings as necessary. Stocks could not be cashed in the same way. The formulation of time characteristic of a stock note dramatically differed from a monetary note of legal tender. Stocks were promissory

notes to be repaid at a later, unspecified date. A mere piece of paper now came to stake out one's personal investment in a speculative fantasy of return in the future. The entrance of black investors into the system of global finance linked their imagination to a system of profit which did not exist in reality and, crucially, remained dependent upon the fantasy of a future return.

Of course, black investors were not the first to feel uncomfortable about the leap of faith necessary to make a radical departure away from older systems of material value. The enormous number of shareholders required to finance a global shipping line capable of reaching ports around the world accords with Walter Benjamin's observation that new kind of property relations had emerged alongside the rise of mass scale transportation projects. The sheer size of these kinds of industrial projects had outgrown older money forms. They had become so large that constructing them would remain untenable under an old system of property relations. Transcontinental transportation projects could not be financially backed by one owner or even a small group of owners. *The Arcades Project* includes a description of how railroads, in particular, came to emerge as a modern industrial project:

> Railroads . . . demanded, besides other impossibilities, a transformation in the mode of property . . . Up until then, in fact, a bourgeois could run an industrial or a business concern with his own money, or at most with that of one or two friends or acquaintances. He managed the money himself, and was the actual proprietor of the factory or business establishment. But railroads had need of such massive amounts of capital that it could no longer be concentrated in the hands of only a few individuals. And so a great many bourgeois were forced to entrust their precious funds, which had never before been allowed out of their sight, to the people whose names they hardly knew. . . . Once the money was given over, they would lose all control over its investment and could not

> expect to claim any proprietary rights over terminals, cars, locomotives and the like. . . . They were entitled only to a share of the profits; in place of an object, . . . they were given . . . a mere piece of paper that represented the fiction of an infinitely small and ungraspable piece of the real property, whose name was printed at the bottom in large letters. [U3a,2] (576-7)

The passage offers some cogent insights into what it means for a modern person to invest in a promise. Realizing this new system of modern transportation was coextensive with the creation of a new financial system—one that generates vast quantities of wealth by speculating and trading on the circulation of money forms. For such projects to receive enough support to be constructed, in other words, two kinds of modern promises had to converge. The promise of geographic mobility, of which a new role in history is assigned to the possibility to shrink vast distances by carrying human beings swiftly across the planet, had to intersect with the promise of massive financial returns on this same system in order to alleviate the risks associated with private capital investment.

Folio 3.10 – Wish Image

In Garvey's advertisements, like those which featured the image of the *S.S. Phyllis Wheatley*, another variable enters into the equation. Unlike bourgeois investors, who owned stocks as promises on future financial investments, what one owns when investing in the Black Star Line is the promise of black finance. The suggestion is that this special connection between black investors and the all-black shipping corporation facilitated the makings of a new world order. Finding the most perspicuous social life of action for the black diaspora involved more than working within the confines of a Western financial system. Even if the odds were stacked

against them, or precisely because the odds were against them, investment in black finance, as a new classification, served the promise of an emergent form of global justice. The Pan-African leader explains that swift and decisive organizing action must be taken to support the all-black shipping corporation for the social movement to achieve maximum organizational effectiveness as a political instrument:

> In the matter of the Black Star Line[,] I am now asking each and every one of you to start out now, and right now, to buy shares. If you have bought already, by some more and help get this great Corporation to float the "S.S. Phyllis Wheatley" on the 15th day of February or the 15th day of March. Buy your shares and thereby write your names on the pages of history for all titles, 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, or 200 shares bought by each and every progressive negro will mean a Black Star Line fleet of Two [sic] hundred ships in twelve months. I say to you men do it now. Write or call the office of "The Black Star Line, Inc.," 56 West 135th street, New York City, United States of America, and thus become a shareholder in the biggest Negro enterprise of the ages" (MGP 2: 187)

Garvey regarded sailing of the Black Star Line's ships as an opportunity to remake the world, reconcile peoples, and at last actuate the spirit of common enterprise. This was the process necessary to overcome the inequalities in the material conditions of production. Refusing to let the economic and political future rest in the hands of other races, the self-management of the shipping company with the sale of stock to black members of the UNIA signaled a desire to realize financial autonomy on the world stage.

This *wish image*, to draw on Walter Benjamin's formulation, constituted the shape of life to come out of the depleted and insufficient image of the past. The requisite objective to change

the geopolitical status of blackness, to remake this symbolic image into a force of renewal, involved mobilizing the figure of the black migrant as the kind of global project that would radically rethink the political designation of a dispersed African people. It formed the basis of a collective symbolic need. In such "wish images," Benjamin writes, "the new and the old interpenetrate in fantastic fashion" (*Arcades* 893). The memory trace of blackness once determined by transatlantic slave trade comes to be spectacularly reworked into a utopian vision of blackness as migrancy. Benjamin continues:

> This interpretation derives its fantastic character, above all, from the fact that what is old in the current of social development never clearly stands out from what is new, while the latter, in an effort to disengage from the antiquated, reengages archaic, primordial elements. The utopian elements which accompany the emergence of the new always, at the same time, reach back to the primal past. (893)

Such observations connect with Fred Moten's recent assertion that blackness is something "fugitive," as he puts it—an ongoing refusal of standards imposed from outside. In *Stolen Life*, he writes, "Fugitivity, then, is a desire for and a spirit of escape and transgression of the proper and the proposed. It's a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside, an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument" (143). This desire for the outside forms the basis of a new formation of black transnational affiliation, one that does not so much completely discard previous notions of blackness which reside in the past, but rather picks them up and reworks them. Black migrancy, as a collective vision, reworks the image of James Somerset on the run from his master to expose a range of unfinished possibilities for life to unfold had the fugitive slave have not been recaptured, and ultimately folded back into a system of national law. It is in this sense that Somerset both won his freedom and simultaneously had

this freedom bestowed on him as the law brought him back into the imperial nation-state. The desire for the outside which the figure of the black migrant denotes involves a crucial recognition of the limits of nationhood in the conventional sense of empire. The UNIA's mass reach indicated its potential as an organization to disperse itself beyond the old parameters of imperial borders.

Collective wish images envisioned by the mass public have the power to distort unsatisfactory material conditions. Benjamin speaks clearly of the reactionary function involved in the process of making a wish to change the experience of history. "These images are wishful fantasies, and in them the collective seeks both to preserve and to transfigure the inchoateness of the social product and the deficiencies in the social system of production" (*Reflections* 148). Yet although the anticipatory dream of renewal is an effort to overcome the material limits of history, Benjamin is quick to point out that there is also an effort to overturn all that has passed:

> Corresponding to the form of new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the form of the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old. These images are wish images in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor. (WB 3: 33-4)

An obsession with the failed history of the past forms the creation of a wish image. Yet the wish is not limited to fixing the past alone. There is also an effort to remake the very conditions of the new and thus to reconstitute the terms of modern experience.

These relations are discernable in the revolutionary wish image of the black migrant envisioned in the ad campaigns by the shipping company. One of these advertisements collected on file at the Bureau of Investigation contains an image of an oceanliner along with the following text:

> **Best Opportunity Ever Offered the Race**
>
> BECAUSE: The trade route of the Black Star Line is specially laid out to cover parts of the world where the Negro population is over fifty (50) per cent; BECAUSE we shall employ Chief Engineers, Wireless Operators, Able-bodied Seamen and Firemen of the Negro Race; BECAUSE passenger traffic without Color Discrimination must be established; BECAUSE the BLACK STAR LINE is the business stimulator, colossal investment opportunity and commercial awakening which is necessary to develop RACE CONSCIOUSNESS in NEGROES everywhere.[63]

Garvey's symbolic ships joined together race consciousness and black corporate finance. In making these assertions it becomes evident that one cannot transpire without the other. The wish image of the ship aspires to nothing less than the creation of a new form of subjectivity. For subject formation is inevitable with the change in the social organization of material production. Black finance, thus envisioned, invented a new social personality, a new social person no longer

[63] Page 15 of FBI files https://vault.fbi.gov/marcus-garvey/marcus-garvey-part-01-of-12-1/view.

fully anchored to the material conditions of the land and attached instead to a series of promises, aspirations, and speculations.

The excesses of blackness—its unevenness, its lack of self-organization, its spatial and temporal variability, and, above all, its limited availability to political reconfiguration—all which emerge as failed products of imperial processes, serve to be repurposed to call forth something truly new. Black citizens unable to obtain full citizenship therefore designate a kind of migratory community beyond any restrictive conception available under the current name of being-together. Marking a new symbolic domain, the radical potentiality that exists outside the space of conventional affiliation cannot simply be reduced to mark the position of the political outside so often described by W. E. B. Du Bois in his figurations of blackness as exile: "I found myself outside the American world looking in" (40-1). On the contrary, to be black, for Garvey, is precisely to look out past American borderlines. It conjures up a wish to remain in the world and stands as the means to build an alternative future.

Blackness therefore extends itself as a loose and shifting signifier. It haunts the fringes. And it represents the contested spaces outside the borderline. Choosing not to completely divest the sign of this fluidity, Garvey extends its errant potential into the collective formation of a new political project. In this way, Garvey's conception of black internationalism is related to a crisis of legitimacy. Yet the migrancy which the sign of blackness denotes does not simply function as the eruption of some kind of unjust exclusion or exception (as a certain Du Bois-inspired reading might suggest).[64] Rather, the exception in this case is the rule: the possibilities for black self-

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[64] "[F]or Du Bois," Anita Goldman affirms, "African-American exile consists in an impaired relation to the state; it represents a deprivation of rights. The importance of this conception of exile becomes more apparent when we consider that the fact that for Du Bois, the exile's political position bears a striking resemblance to that of the civil disobedient: for the African-American exile, as for the disobedient, the experience of dissatisfaction with the state justifies an act of resistance that is in turn constitutive of political identity" (110).

government cannot be contained by the regulating ideal or teleological horizon of the imperial nation-state. It extends the program of black nationalism beyond its borders. The black nation is a global nation. And the identity of the New Negro to manifest from black internationalism carries the potential for decisive political action. “I say this positively,” Garvey boomed. “The time has come to give the Negro a chance to develop himself (*PO* 60).

The Black Star Line produced a discourse devoted, above all, to training members of the African diaspora to recognize that race consciousness involved confronting the existence of material conditions that had come to dominate social life. Of course, it might be argued that this required in modern life with or without race consciousness. But what made investing in the material conditions of industrialization so poignant was the ways in which the message of modernization could be situated in conjunction with the planetary reconciliation of the black diaspora around the globe. The dream image of a new stage in industrial modernity, displayed as spectacles for the black masses, vacillated between a desire that is expressed in the symbolic ship and a fear of the limits of realization that holds it in check. This is what gives wish images their power and thrill to mass audiences. To enter into a utopian fantasy of black renewal involves utilizing a form of seduction that can exercise control, even recalibrate the wishes of the mass public.

The idea of overcoming the ongoing physical limits of industrial civilization by calling up the Black Star Line, as a romantic dreamworld, a solace built on new industrial trade routes, gestured toward the radical potentiality of black industrialization. However, the production of a wish image, emergent in an imagined space of potential, does not directly correspond to the ongoing means of material production. Its fabrication involves a jump, an enthralled fascination with an alternative possibility, hence the superiority of the wish image of black redemption over

the existing conditions of racial relations. By rising above these physical limits, the sensory image gives life to the imagination, to the ability to place one's faith in the ecstasy of black futurity. The Black Star Line, as an industrial project of social advancement, remains haunted by the ragged texture and volatile symbolic form of its own mass spectacle. The symbolic form of black migrancy it denotes holds viewers in thrall, conjuring up the new global imaginary as a force of race renewal, but also—simultaneously, and perhaps inevitably, most certainly tragically—the failure of its realization will also begin to mark a desire to manage the waning of failed expectations in the historical closure of the postwar opening. It is to that tragic symptomatology of ruin we must now turn.

Docket 4 – The Passing of Black Utopia

> "We know that tragedy usually involved a 'change from prosperity to adversity', as Aristotle put it, though for Aristotle the only reason for having a king as the protagonist was the fact that he had fortune and prosperity to lose. And yet we know that the welfare of a king involved the welfare of his people, so his misfortune or misconduct would appear to explain the misfortune of his people."
>
> — Eva Figes

Folio 4.1 – Ruined Time

The End of a Primitive, Chester Himes' transitional novel, is more than a rich presentation and inimical critique of the end of the black cultural project. It also functions as political allegory for the problems involved in mediating the end of a worldview as historical subjects pass from one perceptible lifeworld to another, one cultural epoch to another. The emphasis on mediation takes shape through the perspective of a protagonist named Jesse, a writer from Harlem. He once made a modest living writing black protest novels that gave literary value to expressing the pain of turbulent racial experience. Tragically, though, Jesse's editor has just declined his latest manuscript. The new novel, featuring another cast of Harlem characters, was rejected on the basis that the genre will no longer sell. In the scenes to follow this publication rejection, he begins to internalize a restriction of the market as a weakness that confirms the personal failure of his own character.

Jesse wanders the streets outside his editor's downtown Manhattan office. In a haze of guilt and depression, he strolls the sidewalks aimlessly. Eventually, he walks past a bookstore. He stops, momentarily, to glance through the window at the bestsellers on display, searching

among the titles for novels he has written. The bookstore has not featured any of his books on display, and it becomes even more frightening for him to consider whether or not any booksellers even bother to stock his work on the shelves at all anymore. Without clear confirmation of his own literary status as a novelist of social importance, Jesse's thoughts lapse further into uncertainty and self-doubt.

He laments the new reality that no one will ever read his new unpublished novel. Then he recalls the nonchalant advice, given by his editor, to quit writing black literature. "Why do you fellows always write this kind of thing?" His editor rebuked. "Some of you have real talent. Why don't you try writing about people, just *people*" (62)? When first confronted with this blunt appraisal at the publishing office, Jesse was so shocked by the direct effacement of black cultural value that he could only muster an ineffective, sarcastic rebuttal on the spot. He countered this editorial guidance to pursue cultural assimilation with only a single, flippant phrase: "'White people, you mean?' His editor reddened. 'No, I don't mean *white* people. I mean people" (62). The black writer cannot write about issues that are universal enough, *people* enough. "You fellows," he thinks to himself. The words of rejection rattle inside his head.

He stares again at the book jackets on display and notices a novel titled *Lost Horizon.* It sets him aback. The title perfectly captures his own ineluctable and irreversible movement toward a premature but catastrophic end. "Good and lost right here," he thinks to himself (62). What his editor sees as a transitional phase in the black writer's development of expression—dark-skinned thoughts only to be passed through for something better—is a discernable transfer that falls outside the trajectory of the black novelist's work. The impossibility of his literary career making a fresh start to appease a more saleable, commodifiable, culturally assimilable, nebulous set of expectations involves the closure of the black aesthetic project. But the fact that

this closure remains immanent, whether he likes it or not, becomes the thought that overwhelms him with disquieting urgency. Black assimilation appears imminent. Here, the tragic stage is set for the transfer of cultural motive.

To experience the present as ruined time draws forth the question of how to mediate loss. It is also a powerful statement of the problematic that Fredric Jameson in *Marxism and Form* calls the issue of *mediation*: "How do we pass . . . from one level of social life to another, from the psychological to the social, indeed, from the social to the economic? What is the relationship of ideology, not to mention the work of art itself, to the more fundamental social and historical reality of groups in conflict, and how must the latter be understood if we are to be able to see cultural objects as social acts, at once disguised and transparent?" (xiv). This set of questions is important to discussions about the role of cultural mediation in the cognitive processing of the political. In Jameson's dialectic, there is an interconnectivity between the material structure and the sociopolitical field. Put another way, there is a dialectical struggle between structure and society, between the formal structures which appear in social life to give it organization and meaning and, in turn, the way in which social life itself regulates these formal structures.

Jameson's definition remains preoccupied with mediations which allow us to see how culture is firmly located in the political, and vice versa. Mediation allows us to pass between levels within social life and to experience the passage between these otherwise disparate set of points between social and economic zones as contiguous, as part of one larger, complete system. Mediation allows the lifeworld of capitalist modernity to appear complete—so complete, in fact, that there seems no realistic escape. Its totalization is implacably at work everywhere at once, and this inability to envision an outside, this cognitive failure to summon up an alternative geoeconomic arrangement, becomes difficult to imagine without radically breaking from the

ongoing terms of aesthetic mediation. But what can this attempt to work out the problem of mediation, which as Jameson argues is also a problem "of character formation, of social influence, of genuine lived experience of class and society" (216), also tell us about how the aesthetic process is equally involved in the transformation of historical time? How does mediation play a role in suturing up the overlaps and time lags as we move not just between contiguous political zones but from one sense of chronology to another, one period of historical experience to another? The response of the New Negro movement to the question of what role should mass culture play in the historical recalibration of social relations is both famous and infamous.

That newness was expressed by Alain Locke in his editorial curation of *The New Negro* anthology of black arts. The 1925 collection of African American fiction, plays, poetry and music firmly cemented itself within the post-Garvey era. This fundamental reappraisal of black advancement marked a turn away from political organizing. Locke insisted instead that ideals of social progress would manifest themselves through a culturalist doctrine that connected the liberation and advancement of the black character in American life to artistic creativity. Emphasis on the primacy of cultural practice marked a clear departure away from the prior iteration of New Negro personhood envisioned by black activists.

In that earlier formulation, we must recall, the radical awakening of black consciousness was directly linked to revolutionary political and social action. Refusing to turn the other cheek to racial oppression, "the New Negro is no coward," Garvey announced in the 14 June 1919 issue of *Negro World*. "He is a man, and if he can die in France or Flanders for white men, he can die anywhere else, even behind bars, fighting for the cause of the race that needs assistance" (MGP 1: 416). The historical irony here, of course, is that just a few years later Garvey himself

would end up behind bars. Found guilty of mail fraud by an all-white jury on 21 June 1923, the UNIA leader was quickly transported to Tombs Prison, where he spent three months before eventually being released on bail pending the outcome of a formal appeal. This return to political activity was short-lived. The US Circuit Court of Appeals denied the petition, and on 4 February 1925 a bench warrant was again issued for Garvey's arrest. The leader returned back into government custody, this time transported away from Harlem, moved as far as possible from UNIA headquarters at Liberty Hall. He was given the maximum sentence. Serving out a five-year stint in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary meant that the leader of the New Negro movement no longer posed the same threat of mass organization.

Theodore Kornweibel remarks on the intention of federal guardians to preserve the racial status quo: "Clearly, zeal to enforce mail fraud statutes was not the government's primary motivation. Rather, as a self-appointed guardian of the sociocultural consensus on which white hegemony was based, the Justice Department sought to silence Garvey's assertions of race pride and black self-determination" (130). The genesis of the New Negro character could not be comfortably tolerated by men like Hoover because an array of tenacious convictions to newness had been identified in government reports as a threat to existing racial arrangements. A confidential memorandum specifically warned J. Edgar Hoover of the need to blunt the force of this new black character: "Radical propaganda has made noteworthy headway among the colored people in the country during the past three months. . . . Beyond a doubt, there is a *new negro* to be reckoned with in our political and social life" (MGP 1: 491). This New Negro mood seemed to transform social hardships into steadfast commitments to the racial cause for political advancement. But without effective implementation, and the leader of the race movement now in

prison, a political vacuum had been created, and the rapid arrival of this vacuum materialized in 1925 only as a historical demand to be filled.

Black America had been awakened to the possibility of racial renewal, and Locke's 1925 publication of *The New Negro* anthology seemed well-poised to make a cultural breakthrough. In this reconstruction of the image of the black American character after the Garvey verdict, newness is no longer defined through political action but rather newness is aligned with cultural practice**.** Henry Louis Gates describes this transformation of consciousness as it would engulf the black world in 1925:

> Locke's New Negro was a poet, and it would be in the sublimity of the fine arts, and *not* in the political sphere of action or protest poetry, that white America (they thought) would at last embrace the Negro of 1925, a Negro ahistorical, a Negro who was "just like" every other American, a Negro more deserving than the Old Negro because he had been reconstructed as an entity somehow "new." (147)

Gates is correct that Locke maintained a resolute commitment to the black arts. But note the temporal confusion here between the Old Negro and the New Negro. In one sense, the terms denote a clear historical progression from one to the other; yet somehow the trope of the "Negro" is also said to remain "ahistorical." To suggest that black culture is timeless would seem to contradict any notion of a historical shift. How can this be? Gates explains that the seeming contradiction in terms relates to a fundamental distinction that Locke makes as he codifies the New Negro cultural movement of the arts as ahistorical because the location of black culture must be celebrated to exist in a venerable and timeless place. The cultural sphere remains distanced from revolutionary political activism that might emerge in a clear historical event.

Everything here depends on the distinction between black culture and black radical politics. The cultural sphere and the political sphere are understood as two distinct areas in American public life. Rather than suture culture and politics together, Locke holds them apart. This fundamental separation is crucial to understanding Locke's argument because after making this distinction he argues that one can only follow in logical succession from the other.

Mediation happens first. Political acceptance will follow shortly after. It cannot occur the other way around. The failure to understand this unidirectionality is precisely what caused the failure of the black population to be fully accepted as vital contributors in American cultural life. "At the moment," Locke argued in 1925, "one may adequately describe the Negro's 'inner objectives' as an attempt to repair a damaged group psychology and repair a warped social perspective" (116). In accordance, the mass desire to find a "new mentality for the American Negro" involves locating a host of strategies and tactics that are only just beginning to emerge into view. "And as it matures we begin to see its effects; at first, negative, iconoclastic, and then positive and constructive" (116). Only the latter formulation, for Locke, could cut through the divisive political atmosphere which had cramped and fettered the black imagination to a small corner of American life. His point is that iconoclastic calls for political action had the opposite effect intended.

Although he notes that "Garveyism may be a transient, if spectacular, phenomenon," one that most certainly inaugurated a mass vision of black utopia among thousands of individuals of African descent, Locke was convinced that black radicalism was not an authentic expression of black identity but a negative political theology that denied the ongoing existence of vibrant black cultural traditions already emergent and on the verge of being universally venerated in America (118). Belief in change arises, like all ideologies built on negative critique, with clear intentions

to circumvent ongoing political and social arrangements. But in Locke's estimation, iconoclastic demands for global reform and political inclusion had only led to an increase in racial animosity. A counter-political attitude of black political advancement had only increased levels of social discrimination, not ameliorated divisions, and in Locke's appraisal this popular phenomenon caused a secondary "spite-wall" to be "built over the color-line" (115). The New Negro political movement failed to enact anything truly new, and in fact this failure further galvanized hostilities between black and white Americans. As a remedy to this racial impasse, Locke was convinced that foregrounding black cultural achievements across the arts would inevitably lead to advances.

According to this new cultural reconstructionist doctrine, black "cultural contributions, past and prospective" must be celebrated with the aim of giving each unique feature an integrated place in American life. At numerous moments in Locke's forward to the *New Negro* anthology, the reader is positioned as bearing witness to the establishment of cultural exchange as if it were already beginning to take shape. "Subtly the conditions are molding a New Negro," Locke argues in the present tense (115). This was the new promise already being enacted. Indeed, the volume itself is built on a kind of tautology: the publication of *The New Negro* anthology praised its own arrival as a new dawn in modern American life. Walter Benn Michaels observes that "Like Coolidge's Americans desiring to be supremely American, the 'New Negro's' aspiration to modernity generates a project out of tautology. If, in other words, the New Negro was new insofar as he managed to be himself, the 'Old Negro' was old because he hadn't quite managed to be himself" (87). From this standpoint, the Negro's ability to discover an artistic purpose beyond "protective social mimicry" and a "psychology of imitation" involved a modernized commitment to finding black originality (117). "[T]he Negro to-day wishes to be known for what he is, even in his faults and short-comings," and so the Negro's claim to cultural

originality, to know thyself, can only be established through a constructive effort to locate the wellspring of black cultural authenticity for what it is (116). Embarking on this cultural journey of self-discovery will allow black America to "rise from the social disillusionment to race pride, from the sense of social debt to the responsibilities of social contribution" (Ibid).

Locke's New Negro culturalism, however, splits into two incompatible parts. Modern "enlightened" folk on the one hand, yet bound to timeless authenticity on the other, these simultaneous claims about black culture create a great deal of tension in the process of attempting to verify the wholeness or oneness of black culture. Various critics have noted that talking about the black Americans as one unit collapses key differences between members who have been misidentified, misrecognized, and wrongly ascribed simply based on skin color identification. Intentional or not, *The New Negro*, Nancy Fraser observes, "exposes the false symmetry of approaches that assume all groups and individuals stand in essentially the same relation to the problem of recognition of difference" (173). At the same time, though, sidelining such differences may at times be warranted. Fraser adds: "Locke reminds us that all [black] groups and individuals stand in essentially the same relation to the problem of recognition of difference" (173). Pragmatic needs for solidarity, even if they posit some false sense of essentialist unity, is an allowable error because oppressed peoples should act as unseparated identities and present a unified front against the kinds of discrimination which, simplistic or not, collapse differences equally to affect all members of this marginalized group.

Yet Barbara Foley questions whether Locke's trivialization of black radical activity in the post-WWI years may have too easily weakened the fight for political justice into a playful desire for cultural autonomy and creative expression. "While Locke would in 1925 proclaim in relief that the New Negro had abandoned the 'arid fields of controversy and debate' for the 'productive

fields of creative expression’,” Foley notes that “the leftist New Negroes of the immediate postwar period . . . clearly had a different notion of the function of art within a more general theory and praxis aimed at profoundly transforming existing social relations” (*Specters* 69).

There is another consideration here as well. Contrary to Locke’s assertion, wishful thinking about cultural autonomy is hardly possible since mediation is inevitably wrapped up in political ideology. As Jameson reminds us, the two are hardly inextricable because of the dialectical interplay between form and content, between material structure and the sociopolitical field. Locke’s *New Negro* is of course a metaphor that makes a comparison between blackness and newness, and the allure of this cultural emblem is one that designates what Jameson calls “[t]he attractiveness of the sign . . . stemmed precisely from the way in which it allowed something else, something disproportionate and incommensurable, to be substituted for the immediate data of consciousness itself” (224). Mediation therefore does not stand outside political debate but in fact assists in generating the very appearance of this field along with the ability to discuss it.

The wave of reaction after the decline of Garvey’s New Negro movement coincided with Locke’s advancement of *The New Negro* as a distinctive artistic project. But it wasn’t simply politics in general that went missing in this deliberate shift away from the failures of social militancy. A very specific configuration had been lost. In a 1919 editorial titled “The New Negro and the UNIA,” Garvey remarked: “There is an endless chain of Negroes all over the world, and wherever Negroes are to be found” there must also be “determination of the New Negro to re-possess himself” (“The New Negro and the UNIA” 93). Yet the “universal” mandate of the UNIA, which mobilized calls for a black global imaginary, fails to emerge in Locke’s redefinition. Achievements of the colored race are viewed in the American context as a

competition for national recognition. And this aspiration for national assimilation flattens the productive global political dynamics once associated with the postwar rise of the black international movement.

Locke's editorial curation fundamentally reworks black migrancy from a global to a national search for belonging. In a 1925 special issue of *Survey Graphic*, Locke announces the centrality of the black migrant to American life. Black Americans traveled north during the Great Migration, carrying their local cultural rituals along with them, eventually to resettle in *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, a phrase which served as the title of the special issue. Locke announced the convergence of the black masses in Harlem as this provided the new paradigm guiding his anthologizing project:

> If we were to offer a symbol of what Harlem has come to mean in the short span of twenty years it would be another statue of liberty on the landward side of New York. It stands for the folk movement which in human significance can be compared only with the pushing back of the western frontier in the first half of the last century, or the waves of immigration which have swept in from overseas in the last half. Numerically far smaller than either of these movements, the volume of migration is such none the less that Harlem has become the greatest Negro community the world has known. . . . Harlem represents the Negro's latest thrust toward Democracy. . . . a deliberate flight not only from the countryside to the city, but from the medieval American to modern.
>
> Harlem is. . . . a race capital. . . . The tide of Negro migration, northward and cityward, is not to be fully explained as a blind flood started by the demands of war industry coupled with the shutting off of foreign migration, or by the pressure of poor crops coupled with the increase of social terrorism in certain sections of the South or

> Southwest. . . . The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the northern city centers is to be explained primarily in the terms of a new vision of opportunity. . . .
>
> In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. . . . Without pretense to their political significance, Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia. (629)

This offers a much different representation of Harlem than the crime-ridden slums providing the background setting to Himes' *Cotton Comes to Harlem.* In rearticulating the terms of a geographical movement through which the New Negro will take on new value, Locke's reframing of Harlem, now a hotbed of "group expression and self-determination," is viewed as the logical extension of American patriotism and endurance. To refuse recognition, to refuse to incorporate the "Negro poet, student artist, thinker" into the process of national meaning and national memory, is, in Locke's words, to refuse "a deliberate flight not only from countryside to city, but from mediaeval America to modern" (630). Above all, Barbara Foley points out, "Locke's migrants were bearers of a culture" (219). Black subjects may have moved into urban centers as "half-awakened newcomers," but Locke explained that they "provide an exceptional seedbed for the germinating contacts of the enlightened minority" ("The New Negro" 218). These black migrants brought with them vibrant cultural practices which meld alongside the "rush of the human tide" that has converged on northern city centers. Here Locke reworks the xenophobic threat of racial advancement announced in Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color*, one that turned the world into contested political spaces for racial domination. Positing a new alternative to such racially-charged language, Harlem is a modern national space, "a city of migrants," and the cultural achievements will "carry forth respect across America" (630).

Among the many contributors to Locke's volume which directly represented the black urban metropole, Rudolph Fisher's story "City of Refuge" follows the migration story of a Southern black man named King Solomon Gillis who first learned about the black sanctuary city of "Negro Harlem" from a travelling preacher in the South. The specter of lynching looms large and Solomon barely escapes North Carolina after shooting a white man for reasons not fully divulged. Fearing white retribution, he heads north for safety. He arrives in Harlem to find an urban space that seems so utopian it even has black uniformed policemen on the street:

> 'Done died an' woke up in Heaven', thought King Solomon, watching, fascinated; and after a while, as if the wonder were too great to believe simply by seeking, 'Cullud policemans!' he said, half aloud, then repeated over and over, with greater and greater *conviction.* (2)

The notion of conviction takes on several connotations in the story. At first, Harlem seems to live up to its reputation, providing the opportunity for Gillis to live out a moral life of convictions. Though he soon learns that Harlem may be a vibrant modern city space, full of black crowds looking for excitement and opportunity, but "it was an old crowd," and thus a locus for racial exploitation (11). Evidently, the awakening of the New Negro consciousness had not yet fully taken shape. Instead, the prospect of advancement involved a moral step backwards. One can quickly become rich by pedaling drugs, gambling rings, or through prostitution, all which require paying off the police.

It is not without irony, then, that Gillis is arrested at the end of the story for sticking up for a girl who was resisting kisses from an abusive man that had paid off the police. The moral conviction to do the right thing is rewarded with a criminal conviction. "Harlem," Gillis learns the hard way, is a "Land of plenty. City of refuge – city of refuge. If you live long enough" (11).

In this morality tale the audience is shown a new Harlem too easily corrupted by an old crowd of Old Negroes, and the tragic conclusion brings into focus the need for progressive values in the rapidly expanding black metropolis. Without moral conviction, social possibility in Harlem is no better than it was in the South, and the nation itself is no better off. What's also intriguing here is that the notion of a wrongful conviction draws forth the specter of the Marcus Garvey trial, as Gillis is dishonestly taken in to police custody. That said, Rudolph Fisher's national allegory published in *The New Negro* should not be confused with a global tale. The subject of global race affiliation is now a subject deemed defective under the new restricted cultural terms of New Negro nationalism. The new cultural project acts as a cleansing force to purge the stifling failures of black political tragedy.

Folio 4.2 – Black Leviathan

"The denial of tragedy," John Brenkman asserts in his book on imperial war and democracy, "amounts to a denial of responsibility. Not just moral responsibility, but ultimately political responsibility" (22). The poignant insight arrives in a searing critique of the "idealistic fervor and self-confident messianism" that has warped perceptions about human loss of life and ultimately justified violence, even civilian deaths, as the means to an end, thus upholding American democracy whilst entering into brutal wars, and legitimating various other forms of oppression in the name of democracy's defense (22). Indeed, some of the most formative moments in the life of the American republic, up to and including the false pretenses for entry in the second Iraq war, can be read as adhering to the logic of disavowal which distances tragic consequences outside the parameters of political judgement. Whether it be a complete refusal of

responsibility, the loss of competency, cognitive dissonance, gross negligence, willful ignorance, or lazy avoidance of the difficult calculus required in making rational political decisions, in all these formulations we must struggle to locate the dangerous lack of reflection which reduces the formative dimensions of judgement.

Tragedy creates victims. And Brenkman astutely observes that unnecessary casualties are caused when a national leviathan prone to fear and self-interest wields its sovereign will in the name of national security, intervening in international disputes, forcefully undermining the search for peaceful global relations, and replacing this search for ethical and political deliberation with brutal acts of violence. Global security is destabilized by blind attempts to privilege national security over the universal value of human life. To unpack this contradiction, Brenkman enlists Hobbes. We know that Hobbes forged his views horrified by the English civil war, and having barely survived this period of political disintegration, he came to view absolute sovereign authority as a necessity to ensure the peace and security of the people of the commonwealth. The transition from the dangerously volatile state of nature to the orderly laws of nature involves a nonviolent covenant. This covenant stands as an agreement to obey the same common authority. Yet although the covenant itself is nonviolent, one formed in language, maintaining the sanctity of this agreement may need to be protected using force. "[C]ovenants," Hobbes reminds us, "without the sword, are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore notwithstanding the Laws of Nature . . . if there be no Power erected, or not great enough for our security; every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength" (223-4). Words of common solidarity are protected by the sword. But therein also lies the paradox. For to resort to violence to protect the nonviolent covenant of civil society would also seem to demonstrate a regressive turn back towards the violent state of nature.

Brenkman notes the political consequences of this tragic fall back into the bloody realm of chaos, and in doing so mobilizes Hannah Arendt's crucial distinction between sovereign might and the disintegration of this same political power into violence. "Might is the capacity for violence, and violence marks the breakdown of power" (9). Whether enacted internally in the polity or externally at war, violence serves as a clear movement away from the lawful principles guaranteed by the multitude's nonviolent covenant. Indeed, it marks the movement away from politics itself, away from the "new domain of values (justice, equity, modesty, etc.)," on which improved life depends, and back into a prepolitical, lawless domain (63). A combination of fear and hubris may form a convincingly effective public relations strategy for a government to cement public opinion about the need for war, but too often in American politics a reliance on military power has substituted for brokering a peaceable solution. Politics breaks down into violence, and in such moments we can locate "a wounded, half-blind leviathan, thrashing about in geopolitical seas [that] does not see the fragility of democracy at home and the difficulty of inaugurating it abroad" (9). A national monster is made out of cultivated fear, marking itself as the only true victim, and blind to collateral damage as disputes are resolved with a power beyond responsibility.

But where Brenkman notes the denial of tragedy as a political distortion, one that hides its true victims outside the national fold, and disavows political responsibility, what makes the Marcus Garvey trial so salient in American legal discourse is that it remains so heavily laden with claims about tragedy. Might the marker of tragedy create its own historical victims rather than simply expose them? Like any label of value, there must also be exceptions to the rule of using tragedy to expose irresponsible political actions. Are there instances when attaching the semantic marker of tragedy to a pivotal event in the country's history functions to undermine the

processes of political judgement, causing the rational possibility for deliberation on difficult knowledge to break down and lose the commitment to rigorous examination?

Tony Martin's *Race First,* an early study of the Pan-African movement, notes that "Insofar as [Garvey's] program was foiled short of its ultimate realization in his own lifetime, his career represents a monumental *tragedy*, an epic of heroism and courage overcome by catastrophe" (359). Martin is careful to point out, though, that "the larger tragedy in no way detracts from the multitude of successes that were Garvey's accomplishments" (359). The rumination on tragedy in many ways reaffirms widespread public sentiments about the end of an era. It also shows tragedy as a direct bringing into consciousness the repercussions associated with complex human entanglements. The concentration of pathos in this configuration demonstrates an unavoidable and difficult collision between the racial limitations put on black freedom in America and the resolute commitments of a Harlem leader who remained determined to break through these limitations with aims for global political renewal.

At the same time, though, there appears to be a kind of historical contest over who gets to designate the historical phenomenon of the New Negro movement as a tragedy. After the legal verdict, the motif of tragedy was used both to denigrate and venerate the movement in varying degrees. "Why is Garvey in prison anyway," the *Detroit Independent* asked, speculating that "the same lamentable fate that befell Marcus Garvey, regardless of innocence or guilt, might probably befall any other Negro leader" (in Grant 409). The *Chicago Whip* went even further, romanticizing the tragedy of the fallen leader: "Behind his sordid, sombre prison's walls this black man with Napoleonic vision sits crushed in body and mind" (in Grant 409). Indeed, Colin Grant's 2009 biography, *The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* is premised on preserving the tragic arc of this political leader. Grant notes that "no one had been able to galvanize the masses

as Garvey had" and so the movement was "virtually spent as a force" (447). That fact seems undeniable. We might even go so far as to say that the failure of another black leader to emerge on the scene to revive the New Negro political project demonstrates the extent to which the endeavor of creating a black world was an impossible project, made up of disparate ideological investments. But this still does not quite take us close enough to reveal the radical openness of the world-historical moment out of which the mass movement was generated. The retroactive inscription of the narrative frame with a clear beginning, middle, and an end seems to arrange the political actions in such a way as to assume that the project of political renewal was doomed from the start. Action is always vulnerable to contingency, and yet the plurality of aims remains stricken from the record or at least held out of view. The crucial question seems to be missing. Why this insistence on tragedy?

Aristotle defines tragedy as a "well-constructed plot," the "representation of an action" that is serious and is displayed "as a single complete action . . . which has a beginning, a middle, and a conclusion (10). Hence the insistence on Garvey's linear rise, the development of his message of black renewal, and his tragic yet inevitable fall from grace. "If it is properly constructed," notes Aristotle,

> tragedy reduces the soul's emotions of pity and terror by means of compassion or dread, which are aroused by the representation of pitiable and terrible events. By 'reduces' I mean that tragedy aims to make the spectator have a due proportion of emotions of terror and the like by arousing these emotions through representation. Tragedy . . . has as its end the catharsis of these emotions, which gives rise to the pleasure proper to tragedy. (48)

Good tragedy functions as a way to address the terror of mediation. And the best kind of tragic plot functions to cover up its any weaknesses in its own mediation by insisting that the

inevitability of failure is the only narrative possibility worth considering. This narrative emplotment calls forth an untimely historical lesson that evokes pathos and fear which may seem undesirable but otherwise the lesson it provides will remain untold. The most crucial component of telling the story, and setting the community back on track, involves the recruitment of catharsis. Such incidents arouse "pathos and fear" in equal parts, and from this tragic lesson we arrive at the following observation. Tragedy presents actions to the community which identify catharsis as a necessary achievement, one that cleanses the wound opened by a tragic action. Literally catharsis means "cleansing," "purification," or "purgation," terms which stand in opposition to that which is "shocking," "dirty," or "polluting" (200). Such terms, purified of error, demonstrate a lesson in setting things right.

In viewing these components of tragedy, the viewer attains a sense of liberatory mediation. No wonder the court remains so intent on framing the Garvey case in the terms of Greek play. It not only provided a narrative frame to tell the inevitable collapse of the Black Star Line. This tragic script also verified the strength of the legal process as the proper form of mediation for telling this story. Law enforcement, prosecutor, judge, and jury—a Greek chorus—harmonized together to form the procession that would decry Marcus Garvey as a race agitator. During the legal trial, it was the District Attorney who framed the leader of Black Star Line as a man whose tragic flaw was the failure to take responsibility. This was due to a very peculiar "kind of prejudice, typical of Garvey. It was his custom," the jury was told, "to blame obstacles and threatened failure on enemies of his race who were trying to crush the commercial and independent spirit of the negro" (MGP 6: 64). While it remains unclear how such a statement could ever be taken truthfully, given the evidence that the US State Department had itself surveyed the Black Star Line, and even infiltrated its ranks, the suggestion is clearly that

Garvey's rise to power was to be read by the all-white jury as a tragic hero for the new modern era. The New Negro leader embodied the tragic character of a race agitator.

Yet where the Federal Prosecutor used the tragic mode to frame to critique black transformation as a flawed promise, David Scott's work on black emancipatory projects flips the tragic script back on colonial modernity, reading modern time as a tragic arrangement. Scott insists on the tragic as the proper mode to reveal how the influx of colonial modernity involves a regressive movement of cancelling out alternate political arrangements that might carry forth change and transformation. Scott's insistence on the tragic is no accident. He consciously upholds Hayden White's notion that the stories we tell about the past take the shape of very specific narrative forms. He even quotes White's *Metahistory* directly: "Providing the 'meaning' of a story by identifying the kind of story that has been told is called explanation by emplotment. If in the course of narrating the story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has 'explained' it in one way" (46). And if the story is structured as Romance, the historian has explained the past another way. For "Romance," Scott adds, "is a drama of redemption" (47).

Scott challenges historical accounts of the Haitian revolution which have tended to narrate the slave revolt in romanticized terms as the heroic development of something truly new: black slaves heroically acting out their new dreams of enlightenment. He does not deny that Haitian slaves rising up against their masters presented a daunting challenge. The historical odds were stacked against Toussaint Louverture and his collogues so certainly in that respect the revolutionary act stands as a nearly impossible and formidable political feat. Scott's contention involves the myth of the hero used by political historians to frame the event's reception. He finds this romantic configuration objectionable because it involves making grandiose claims about

Toussaint leading barely literate slaves out of savagery and marching them heroically towards modern enlightenment. C.L.R. James relies on this romantic form of emplotment in *The Black Jacobins:* "Soldier and administrator above all yet his declaration is a masterpiece of prose excelled by no other writer of the revolution. Leader of a backward and ignorant mass, he is yet in the forefront of the historical movement of his time (198). The possessive "his time" tends to overlook the possibility that the black leader had few other options available.

Rather than a truly free choice, Scott argues, black revolutionary action "was a choice constituted by the modern world and, therefore, a choice partly constructed through its conceptual and ideological apparatuses" (115). Scott understands "the problem of modernity . . . in the Foucauldian sense of a positive power structure, a historical formation of certain constitutive and productively shaping material and epistemological conditions of life and thought" (106). Modernity is a structure with narrow limits that is lived inside. Viewed this way, perhaps it wasn't much of a choice at all. Toussaint's options were limited: either return a slave or choose a bloody insurrection against France. Scott urges us to view Toussaint's choice as a tragic dilemma not only, or not simply, because too enthusiastically embracing the passionate convictions of bloody revolution tends to hide bodies of modernity's victims. The tragedy of colonial enlightenment is one that does not ask for volunteers, and any wisdom it provides through the "privilege of insight, a seeming benediction, is paid for with a terrible blindness" (171). It is in this tragic sense that modernity is dream destroying: it produces a set of conditions which places limitations on human actions. Modernity is lived from the inside, and the only way forward to begin to recognize these tragic limitations and find our way out of the present.

On the question of the relation between the Black Star Line and the tragic limitations of modernity, Garvey faced a difficult choice in the summer of 1920. According to the company

records subpoenaed as evidence, and exhibited at the court trial, stock selling during this period was very successful: “In the first four months of 1920 over 35,000 shares of stock were sold” (MGP 6: 53). However, the sale of stock at five dollars of share was hardly enough to sustain the corporation’s operational costs. A shipping contract was secured to transport a load of coconuts. The *S.S. Yarmouth,* a tramp steamer equipped with both passenger decks and cargo holds, originally purchased in 1919 as the first ship in the company fleet, was sent to the West Indies. In May of 1920 seven-hundred tons of coconuts, destined for New York City harbor, were loaded on board the ship. However, Garvey saw an opportunity to display the payload to prospective stock investors. According to court records: “Garvey did not permit that cargo to go [straight] to New York but ordered the boat to go to Philadelphia where a meeting had been scheduled for the purpose of selling stock” (MGP 6: 54). He knew that for many black Americans reading about the Black Star Line in the *Negro World* advertisements was one thing, but seeing the physical presence of the ship in person would be much more persuasive and convincing. After mooring the ship in Philadelphia for the public relations stop, however, “Garvey would not permit the boat to go to New York but ordered it to Boston, where another big stock selling campaign was in progress” (MGP 6: 54). By the time the ship finally arrived in New York, all seven-hundred-tons of coconuts were rotten, and the owners sued the Black Star Line for more than three-thousand dollars.

These rather tedious financial details mattered during the court trial because the government was attempting to prove that the Black Star Line, from its inception, did not represent a feasible commercial operation but was rather a cunning ploy designed to sell stock. As far as the viability of the business operation goes, though, the questions raised were not completely unwarranted of course. There remains much doubt whether or not the Black Star Line

was ever a viable commercial venture without the surrounding fanfare. In fact, this was not the first time that the Yarmouth had been paraded around harbors. An event referred to by the Federal Prosecutor as the "famous whiskey cruise" saw the Black Start Line transport 15,000 cases of whiskey out of New York harbor. The cargo was carried at a loss, and 500 cases onboard went mysteriously missing as the ship provided the showpiece for UNIA meetings for the sale of stock. Captain Cockburn confirmed in court that the deal secured by the Green River Distilling company was far too low for such valuable cargo, and the fees received did not even cover the cost of the coal to run the ship engines. As a public relations campaign, however, the move did appear justified in convincing thousands of black Americans to become UNIA members and invest in the racial uplift venture. The correlative question about financial viability, however, was never asked by the prosecution. The shipping market itself had fallen into rapid decline. After the Great War, the need for ocean-liners to haul passengers and war supplies across the Atlantic had plummeted. Many small companies went under, as did larger corporate operations.

In the prosecution's argument we find a direct assessment of the business venture as a moral failure. The tragic flaw exposed to the jury involved Marcus Garvey's decisions to forgo profits and his hubristic willingness to risk substantial monetary deficits simply to secure the sale of stock with capital gains that paled in comparison. But again, the court audience is left with a false sense of right. There are questions of racial uplift which failed to register as righteous motives and instead fell incoherent before the jury. The Justice Department deliberately pushed the black international movement outside the realm of reasonable debate in a federal courtroom. One blatant example in the court docket reads:

> Even if by a liberal stretch of the imagination one can conceive of such a thing as the Black Star Line, [and it] was conceived for the purpose of redeeming the negro, it can hardly be seriously contended that the end, however laudable, would justify the false promises and pretenses of which Garvey was guilty. Redemption movements may not be capable of being tested in terms of dollars and cents, but they cannot be supported and enervated by lies and broken promises. (MGP 6: 64)

Our reference to rightness is defined here as one that hinges on the moral character of the corporation's president. This conclusion holds whether or not the movement found success among its members, or even if the business was financially successful for that matter. The flawed business decisions made by Garvey to choose publicity over profit margins allowed black members of the population to see their investments manifest in physical form at harbors across the Atlantic seaboard. Yet the entire venture with hundreds of employees and thousands and investors was somehow reduced to one man. The statement of conviction on the official trial transcript reads: "Improprieties of conduct and attitude if there were any, were entirely on the part of Garvey" (MGP 6: 66). The phrase "if there were any" haunts the certainty of the conviction handed down in federal court. But what is clear is that the tragic hero is distinguished here from ordinary mortals by an uncompromising partiality that evokes pathos as he drives forward with absolute determination toward inevitable failure.

The etymological origin of tragedy stems from the Greek word *tragos* (goat) and ôidê (song). The tragic mediation of the past enacts the burden of the scapegoat in front of the audience. As Figes notes, "The origin of the word 'tragedy' is thought to lie in the Greek word for goat, and though ritual associations are obscure one inevitably thinks of the Israelite scapegoat, which Aron was required to send back into the wilderness with the sins of community

on its back" (11). Exile of the tragic hero cleanses the community of its misgivings. Morality is restored. By this account, the black migrant figure conjured up by the leader of the New Negro movement is also deemed defective and pushed outside the frame of the national community. The leader of this movement is reduced to a political monster, a black leviathan, whose sovereign power as leader of New Negro movement is unmasked as dragging others downward and deemed a national tragedy. And here we arrive at Scott's tragic determination that the modern world is dream destroying. The attempt to privilege a contingent new form of black futurity over the ongoing market forces of capitalist modernity was struck down in federal court as an irredeemable action. Garvey's tragic dilemma involved a choice between popularizing an alternative future—a new speculative dreamworld for the New Negro—or working within the confines of a system of modernity to set up a Black Star Line. His failure to enact either of these possibilities marks the problem of transforming the very conditions in which modern life as a whole is organized.

But this is not the only reading. Against the notion of modernity as dream destroying, Hayden White presents a different argument by suggesting that the tragic form itself is dream destroying. This narrative frame used to tell the story of historical time marks a delicate achievement because "tragic art is both realistically illusionist and creatively destructive. By transforming the horror of the primal void into beautiful images of superior human lives and then destroying them" (338). Tragedy conjures up what seems to be a superior vison only to expose its limitations and ultimately destroy it. This appears to markedly differ from Scott's reliance on the tragic mode to demonstrate the encroaching difficulty to see our creative lives replaced by modern lifeforms that seem to offer no escape, or sense of a way out. Instead of a claustrophobic sense of historical imprisonment we are momentarily exposed to a dream image which has the

capacity to forget what we know about everything that is wrong with the world. "By transforming the horror of the primal void into beautiful superior human lives and then destroying them," White remarks, "tragedy destroys the old dreams upon which human culture is based and clears the ground for the construction of new dreams" (338). Given this radical capacity to evoke a change in human perception, tragedy demonstrates itself as a powerful counterforce capable of exposing the limits to ongoing arrangements of historical time. Tragedy may evoke closure, but it simultaneously calls forth an awakening.

Folio 4.3 – Recognition's Properties

"We desire for ourselves a fixed and permanent place in the affairs of the world—fixed and permanent from the viewpoint of autonomous recognition," Marcus Garvey affirmed in a prepared statement read on his behalf to a crowd of Harlem supporters (*PO* 338). Garvey's failure to appear in person at the public event on October 28, 1925 was hardly typical. Although Liberty Hall in New York City was in fact the main meeting venue for mass gatherings of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), its founder and President-General, Marcus Garvey, had recently been returned to the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary earlier that year by government authorities on a trumped-up mail fraud charge. Garvey's legal battle, although ultimately unsuccessful after reaching the U.S. Court of Appeals, brought nationwide media attention to the long crusade of government agencies to block the Back-to-Africa movement's magnetic impact on the black urban masses.

Unremitting, even after the loss, Garvey's words penned from prison rang out that day in Harlem with disquieting urgency. An office staffer served as the line of transmission to UNIA members, voicing Garvey's hopes to continue to channel the energies of national discontent to

unite a race and to dislodge and divide the fixity of imperial power. Framed in a redemptive political language, the message strove to again inspire, and hold open, a desire for black futurity. It underscored the will of an oppressed black minority to continue to rise up, not just for social equality within America's borders, but more extensively to seek out and take every conceivable action toward securing "autonomous recognition"—which, according to Garvey, meant finally gaining the "unbridled freedom of self-development and self-expression" only possible with the creation of a new African polis (*PO* 338). That growing desire for members of a disenfranchised black population to become the agents of their own political recognition as the most effective means to know, to understand, and to realize a new form of legal personhood would give rise to a cultural movement that would in turn redefine the terms of America's racial and collective belonging. Yet one of the great paradoxes of twentieth-century political history was that Garvey had not envisioned black internationalism's commitment to cultural recognition as the determining ground for action and political membership to end up renewing the primacy of American identity as it did.

The Back-to-Africa movement proceeded from the belief that to start to contest inherited fantasies of black inferiority required jettisoning an entire series of negative identifications, while simultaneously calling for a strengthened reinvestment in the politics of recognition as the most effective means to supersede a history of disenfranchisement and to attain the unrealized emancipatory potential of black identity. Like many a supposedly natural phenomenon, recognition is a product of invention, its advent being located in the modern age of rights. Not only is its existence in the world of human affairs a political invention, liberal recognition must itself be understood as inventive; it can be constructed and reconstructed, taken away or expanded to reinvent and thus to redefine the very terms of modern personhood. To recognize a

person is to invest them with a certain value. And that is not all. Recognition functions as a regulatory practice of interpellation which turns individuals into subjects, and identities into political property.

The trouble with recognition is that it is already inscribed in self-consciousness as desire, regulating and limiting how one's identity can appear to oneself, and doing so logically presupposes the question of how one can appear to others. No wonder Garvey tries to reinvent recognition as a means to get around a longstanding problem in liberal discourse. Kelly Oliver has persuasively explained that "the desire to be seen, to be recognized, is a paradoxical desire created by oppression" (Oliver 24). Oliver describes the conflict of political recognition as "it is a conflict over freedom. The other takes my freedom, possesses it, and is the catalyst for my freedom" (41). The need for recognition creates a pathological desire for recognition. Agency is hierarchically inscribed in such a way that freedom depends on the looker to confirm one's own status and position in the world. In the historical epoch of liberal modernity, this ranking system circumscribes desires fused to values, norms, assumptions and practices in line with the liberal belief of progressive stages of human progress. Confronting this hierarchical gaze of recognition, black Americans were challenged to understand rights recognition not as a naturally historical occurring phenomenon—as the tenets of classic liberalism might suggest—but more rigorously as a mode of social control decisive in the manufacture of subjectivity and a reduced determination of belonging for persons of color.

Garvey's concern was to address how a tragically diminished subjectivity had been conferred by those in power. This process installed the desire for recognition onto those who were deemed powerless and disempowered. As long as the active agency of white Americans continues to be premised on the fiction of inferiority and black people, he argued, "no good or

ethical purpose can be served" on either side of the color line, "but the continuation of world confusion, immorality, and sin" (339). Recognition, then, is not just a phenomenological act—simply making individuals appear in public—but operates ontologically to produce and condition subjects as political beings created and delimited by the very conditions of a viable existence to speak and act in the modern world.

More remarkable, perhaps, is that rather than jettisoning these liberal precepts altogether, his revolutionary cause intensifies the desire for a "Race First" self-recognition, elevating the self-worth of the African diaspora to the highest imperative. Elsewhere Garvey went on record to reiterate the historical fact that the "Negro was brought to this country much against his will from Africa." Only by directly confronting how the "United States has acted as a deter[e]nt to the higher aims and aspirations of the Negro" could the race begin to correct the pattern of misrecognition as necessary to force a new beginning in world-historical relations. This new "Race First" recognition was necessary for an enlightened group of New Negroes to found a new "nation of its own on the continent of Africa, where members may be given the fullest opportunity to develop themselves" (MGP 6: 4).

By June 1924, Garvey had communicated his plans to raise a $2,000,000 fund to finally realize objectives of the Back-to-Africa campaign. Time had come to take swift and decisive action to "Leave that part of the white man's civilization in New York, in Harlem, in America, because we have a new civilization in Africa" (MGP 5: 590). He articulated the need to develop a Colonization Program in "the black republic of Liberia, west coast of Africa, as a permanent home for scattered Negroes of the world who desired to live in a free country of their own where they may enjoy benefits of real freedom, liberty, and democracy" (MGP 5: 595). The call for

geographical relocation was premised on the fact that even the President of the United States had forsaken the black race:

> President Coolidge has told you, and I am glad he has, 'Negroes, damn your souls forever, work for yourselves'. (applause) You must recognize this one thing—this is a world of races. There is no brotherhood of man anywhere in the world. No such animal exists. (MGP 5: 649)

Garvey also frightened the Talented Tenth by going for the political jugular. After mentioning members of the black elite including Du Bois and Johnson, Garvey then turned to discuss Pickens: "he does not believe in the potency of the Negro; he does not believe that the Negro can do anything for himself" (MGP 5: 649). While this divisive tactic may have been effective enough to generate applause in the audience, it is also the case that Garvey did not solely rely on combative rhetoric to get his point across. In other moments, he deployed a more sympathetic rhetoric necessary to persuade black Americans on the need for sufficient calm reflection on the reasons for full equality for ten million people. One tactic complimented the other.

Garvey's later speech, at the 1925 Harlem rally, would go so far as to assure any sceptics in attendance that the "Race First" project of black internationalism would never equate to black supremacy. The history of the slave experience and its troubling aftermath was such that the generations of black Americans descended from bondage had been taught hard lessons on the need to end oppression for the betterment of collective life on earth. Many continued to suffer nearly insurmountable hardships conferred by colonial oppression. The "Race First" project of African liberation therefore walked a decidedly fine line, if also impossibly, between the advancement of the black race and the equal treatment of others outside it. "In our desire to achieve greatness as a race," he affirmed, "we are liberal enough to extend to others a similar

right. We are not selfish in desiring all to the exclusion of others. We believe in the doctrine of 'live and let live'" (338). Of course, to take seriously Garvey's call for black exodus from America meant confronting the disquieting problem of how two distinct forms of belonging could be so easily disarticulated from one another without reproducing the damages caused by the logic of racial essentialism. How could blackness be neatly separated from whiteness? Does the one drop rule apply to the "Race First" project? How black, precisely, must one be to return back to Africa? Could sailing home function to dignify members of the current population with lighter skin in a way that would mitigate the threat of black on brown racism? Such queries were never fully aired in Garvey's speech, eliding crucial questions about the legitimacy of his vision.

Rather than restricting blackness as an ontological category, he was more intent here on extending the concept of blackness across state lines, pointing to a collective Africanness beyond America's borders, demonstrating the expansive power of black recognition as a worldmaking force capable of ending racial oppression. "Race First" recognition flows precisely from the strange power of the African diaspora to recognize itself as existing outside any modern sense of borders arbitrated by the oppressive laws of the white imperial states. The name "Africa," Garvey insisted, must be understood to play a decisive role in the drama of global existence. An individual's legal designation as an American citizen, it now seemed increasingly clear, could be construed as something other than to culturally identify as an African American.

Yet, ironically, Garvey's call for "autonomous recognition" of the African peoples was not the only voice to be heard in support of black expatriation from America on that day. His speech, "The Ideal of Two Races," performed double duty as both a message of reaffirmation to UNIA members as well as to "unhesitatingly endorse" John Powell, leader of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, whom Garvey invited to speak at the Harlem rally. The publicity stunt would

be repeatedly recalled in newspaper editorials to cement Garvey's dubious reputation in the popular press. The reader of Garvey's written script cannot help but be struck by the paradoxical assertion that "the two organizations should work together for the purpose of bringing about the ideal sought—the purification of the races, their autonomous separation and the unbridled freedom of self-development and expression" (338).

We are compelled to ask: what sort of mutual investments in finding a diplomatic solution might have led Garvey, in Powell's words, to take the "occasion to ally himself with other enemies of the race?" (341). In previous speeches, Garvey had publicaly declared white supremacist organizations to be the "invisible government" of the United States. He viewed the prospect of negotiating with the true seat of institutional power as the most effective means to avoid the pitfalls of liberal hypocrisy all too common in discussions conducted under the pretexts of setting aright injustices of American race relations.[65]

This was not the first occasion in which Garvey had considered the ordering force of white power in America. Four years prior, on 7 September 1921, Garvey remarked on "a defense of the Ku Klux Klan by a white minister, the Rev. Dr. Caleb A. Ridley of Atlanta, Ga., in a speech delivered before an audience in Tulsa, Okla" (MGP 4: 34). The speech was later published in the 11 August 1921 issue of the *Gl[o]be*. The reading of the bible delivered by the white minister was one that spread the gospel of white supremacy in conjunction and alignment with the tenets of Christian exceptionalism:

the lecturer says, among other things—a preacher, mind you, a great divine, claiming to

[65] Using the example of rich black professional to draw attention to the disparity of public influence, Garvey once wrote: "You may argue that he can use his industrial wealth and his ballot to force the government to recognize him, but he must understand that the government is the people. That the majority of the people dictate the governments, and if the government is against a measure, a thing, a race, then the government is impotent to protect that measure, thing or race" (Garvey 33)

> represent Jesus Christ on Earth—that “a white man is a white man, whether he lives in New Jersey, in Indiana, in Oklahoma, or in Georgia,” and that “it is a white man’s job to see that civilization comes under the domination of no inferior race so long as he lives. (MGP 4: 35)

Garvey then considers Reverend Ridley’s resolute defense of white supremacy in the name of the Lord in comparison with the feeble work done by the NAACP to secure an equal position for the black race.

> I will show you the character of the company in which Dr. Du Bois likes to be and now has around him in the Pan-African Congress. He is in the company of black men in Paris, one of whom says, with the unanimous approval of them all: “If I were to choose I would reply: ‘I am a black, but I am a French first’. (MGP 4: 35)

Choosing country over race was, for Garvey, a naively colorblind position, and it failed to account for the racial tumult of 1921. Nonetheless, the “thirty deputies to Dr. Du Bois’s congress—men who have big positions and big titles given to them by white folks—” have been granted the remarkable but also useless privilege of pretending that race was not a marker of one’s position in society. It was precisely this deferral to colorblind nationalism which had caused Du Bois to lose sight of the true cause of black disenfranchisement in the imperial nation-state. “I had a black mother and black father,” Garvey recalled. “Can you imagine that they could have conceived me as British first?” (MGP 4: 34). It is precisely the “Race First” reality of the modern world that Du Bois’s Pan-African Congress had failed to bring into view. Passivity to act only within the existing terms and limits of the imperial nation-state system had replaced race black radical advocacy on a global scale. Garvey reflected with consternation:

> The thing is preposterous, monstrous, particularly when, on the other hand, you stop and

> consider the sentiment rapidly spreading across this country [America] as represented in the Ku Klux Klan, and the fact that spirit of the Ku Klux Klan is in 80 to 90 percent of white Americans. Of course, only [imperial wizard] Simmons and his crew have nerve enough to avow openly the principles of the Klan and defiantly demonstrate Ku Klux Klanism; but it is in the heart and souls of others who are not manly and bold enough to demonstrate it. (MGP 4: 34)

Rather than broker a "monstrous" compromise that continues to hold the black race on the bottom of a white world, Garvey insisted on essentializing the marker of black identity as the only way forward. He then leaves his reader with a choice. It's either Garvey or Du Bois:

> Here you have two leaders and two extremes—one of power who is clinging to his racial identity; the other who has no power and who is giving it away, subordinating and destroying his race identity, the greatest weapon that the Negro has for his development. (MGP 4: 34)

Since emancipation, equal treatment of the Negro race was premised on the ideal of asserting the primary importance of American citizenship over the status of any particular skin color. But the game of national recognition remained fixed. Promises of economic parity and equal treatment failed to materialize. White Americans continued to wield their race privilege as a secret weapon to ensure their own advantage over blacks. This historical tale of racial disparity emboldened Garvey's message for the Negro population to finally put race first over country. Of course, for a black leader to advocate race pride is one thing, but to make contact with the Ku Klux Klan is quite another. The political stunt was unforgiveable given that it might further embolden the white pride hate group to expand its terror campaign of lynching blacks in the South.

However inexcusable, court records do verify that it was only once Garvey was indicted on mail fraud that he employed this political strategy to broker a political alliance with the white supremacist organization which he believed held a firm but furtive grip on the United States. The SDNY bench issued a court warrant on 10 January 1922 for the alleged criminal violation. Two days later, Garvey was arrested for fraudulent use of the mails and held on $2500 bond.

Garvey's arrest was not the only government action pertinent to race relations to occur during this month. Only two weeks later, on 26 January 1922, the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill, which had been drawn up to classify lynching as federal felony, passed the House of Representatives, but the bill failed to pass in the Senate chamber. In a remarkable twist, rather than blaming American lawmakers in the seat of power, Garvey immediately blamed Du Bois for the disastrous failure to protect vulnerable black American citizens. The NAACP leader had led a widely publicized campaign to bring attention to the cause. Garvey argued that the campaign had resulted in the exact opposite effect intended. "They raised a great howl," Garvey observed, "but their provocations backfired." The NAACP campaign, he observed,

> made every Senator throughout the nation to understand that the Negro in the north had constituted himself as a political power, a political factor, and that no Senator or no Congressman could continue his career except with the good will of the Negro. No white man is going to stand for that. (MGP 5: 156-7)

The wrong kind of political recognition had been conferred onto blacks. Those blacks who stuck their heads out would be punished. The reinforcement of the colonial gaze marked a major setback. Rather than take decisive action to end white vigilante killings of black members of the population, Senators acted in accordance with the wishes of the majority white electorate to protect its own interests first. For Garvey, the failure to criminalize lynching as a federal felony

had clearly exposed the fact that white power reigned as the invisible government of the United States.

It was not without a certain irony, then, that only a few weeks later, on 15 February 1922, the federal grand jury formally indicted Marcus Garvey for Section 215 of the federal criminal code in violation of the mails. Garvey could not have committed the criminal act in question. The government was made aware of this detail. Orlando M. Thompson, Vice-President General of the BSL, gave a revealing witness statement a week later to Bureau Agent Mortimer Davis. Thompson was asked: “Was Garvey in the United States when the first advertisement mentioning the Phyllis Wheatley appeared in the Negro World?” He replied: “No sir.” Agent Davis then asked: “Who prepared those advertisements?” Thompson admitted: “I think I had something to do with them” (MGP 4: 549). Despite this witness testimony confirming that Garvey was out the country when the envelope containing the supposedly fraudulent stock advertisement was mailed, the charges against Garvey were not dropped. This failure of the law to act in the pursuit of justice galvanized Garvey’s assertion that the government was acting in bad faith against black Americans.

On 22 June 1922, some four months after his federal indictment, and facing intense pressure by UNIA members to find an expedient resolution to the association’s troubles, Garvey interviewed Edward Young Clarke, imperial Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan. Garvey then sent a report by cable to Liberty Hall, which indicated that he had just met secretly in Atlanta with the acting leader and principal recruiter of the KKK:

> In a conference of two hours he outlined the aims and objectives of the Klan. He denied any hostility toward the Negro as a race. He expresses sympathy for aims and objects of Universal Negro Improvement Association. He believes America to be a white man’s

> country, and also states that the Negro should have a country of his own in Africa. He denied that his organization, since its re-organization, ever officially attacked the Negro. He has been invited to speak at the forthcoming convention to further assure the race of the stand of the Klan. Interview will be published in Negro World. (MGP 4: 679)

The interview was published, but not without an ensuing public backlash. Garvey had grossly miscalculated how this interview would detract and undermine rather than build support for his "Race First" project of African advancement. Cozying up to a white supremacist organization known to be responsible for lynching black members of the population did more to shed countless supporters, particularly in the South, than it did to build support. Many speculated that the damage was irreparable. The UNIA leader became an easy target for his political rivals to publicly attack.

The July 1922 issue of the rival *Messenger* featured a searing editorial by Chandler Owen, titled: "MARCUS GARVEY! THE BLACK IMPERIAL WIZARD BECOMES MESSENGER BOY OF THE WHITE KU KLUX KLEAGLE." Part of a recent Garvey speech delivered in New Orleans was reprinted in the article:

> This is a white man's country. He found it, he conquered it, and we can't blame him if he wants to keep it. I am not vexing the white man of the south for Jim Crowing me because I am black. (MGP 4: 758)

Owen then retorts:

> These are the words of that self-styled, courageous, so called 'new Negro' leader who is going to free Africa of the white man's menace. This fool talk, too, emanates from the blustering West Indian demagogue who preys upon the ignorant. (MGP 4: 758)

Owen's critique of the leader of the New Negro is rife with xenophobic nativism. Garvey was not born in America, and Chandler Owen is quick to stoke fears in America about a "West Indian demagogue [who] preys upon the innocent." Mixed in with these fraught observations, though, are comments which fixate on the legitimate question of a black political leader attempting to make political associations with a white supremacist association in America. The threat of lynching was rapidly growing alongside the increasing membership and presence of the KKK across the country. To aid and assist the growth of this white terrorist organization, in any fashion, was to serve as an accomplice to the growing threat of white on black violence, particularly in the South.

Despite this negative press, whereby Garvey's rivals labeled him the "Black Imperial Wizard," Garvey stubbornly refused to drop the "Race First" program. Of course, the emphasis on racial essentialism was not a late addition to his cause; rather, the "Race First" doctrine formed an innate component of the UNIA project from the very beginning. In "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself," penned in 1923, Garvey explicitly outlined the ultimatum he believed UNIA members must face: "The Negro needs a nation and a country of his own" or else the African diaspora would remain forever unable to organize a resolution, tragically stuck in an unwinnable struggle for equality within white terrestrial borders, and more globally fated to remain "[s]cattered as an unmixed and unrecognized part of alien nations and civilizations" (*PO* 23). Not surprisingly, then, brokering this compromise under the precept to maintain the "purity of the races" was welcomed by both Garvey and Powell as a sea change in black-white relations. But it also rendered Garvey particularly vulnerable to political backlash from foes and UNIA members alike. Still, he openly viewed the arrangement a much-needed alternative to the failed promises of international law, especially after having become

increasingly skeptical of the League of Nation's inauguration of subtler, friendlier forms of domination, which in turn functioned to mask the oppressive reality of colonial policies that flowed from might.

This impatience with the global order had previously taken other forms by black Harlem leaders. Hubert Harrison's 1920 *When Africa Awakes* notes the tumultuous unrest growing in the Pan-African world of his time. In a remarkably salient passage denouncing the "blighting, baleful" influence of bankers on Wall Street, who rigged America's two-party democratic system, he points toward electoral reform in America to end this "corrupting influence." However, Harrison does not seem entirely convinced by his own solution to diversify the democratic system beyond Republicans and Democrats. He ends the section only to admit the contingencies of larger forces at play: "whether or not the new movement for a Negro party comes to a head or not, the new Negro in America will never amount to anything politically until he enfranchises himself from the Grand Old Party which has made a political joke of him" (53).

In a 1919 editorial in *Negro World*, Garvey expresses his particular disappointment with the failed promises of international diplomacy to address America's racial problem at the League of Nations' talks:

> [Woodrow] Wilson, [George] Clemenceau, [Vittorio] Orlando, David Lloyd George and the rest have signed the treaty of peace, but it is a peace for a certain class of white men; black men have nothing to do with this thing, for black men are not yet free. There can be no abiding peace until all men are free, so I ask that all Negroes prepare now for the next world war, twenty, thirty or forty years hence. (*NW*, 5 July 1919)

The UNIA had, in fact, sent a delegation to the League of Nations to lobby for entry into ongoing discussions on the minorities provisions, but the black delegation was turned away. Not even the

American President would support the black delegation's petition at the Peace Conference, which spoke to the limited gains possible to be made. The failure for black persons to be granted recognition also exposed a bifurcation within the black community itself. In stark contrast to W. E. B. Du Bois, whose universalist rhetoric drew on the Declaration of the Rights of Man to arrive at a careful balance of Negro integration into American society, and who spoke against a natural and essential ethnic identification, Garvey argued instead that the UNIA stands for universal suffrage, and therefore limiting the Negro question to a national question was to betray the greater cause of racial uplift throughout the world. The New Negro, unlike the Old Negro, could not be lulled into complacency with a false sense of confidence in the American system.

He opted for a realpolitik solution, however toxic and misguided, one that would no longer depend on lofty promises of national reconciliation and desegregation, nor pursue the ratification of formal global treaties. Inviting Powell, a firm believer in segregation, to stand on stage at the UNIA event in Harlem, therefore, was for Garvey the first critical step toward brokering a backdoor compromise with the real seat of American power—outside established diplomatic channels—to ensure both sides would at last become unified in their commitment to maintaining the essential oppositions between the races and the need to advance beyond the stalemate for an ultimate form of segregation through racial separation into two distinct nation-states. However, to brazenly announce the need for black separatism, even to the point of collusion with the KKK, was viewed as a desperate move. Garvey was excoriated for reducing the radical potential of African self-determination down to a dispirited vision.

Still, Garvey did not back down, largely to the detriment of his own message. "I unhesitatingly endorse the race purity idea of Mr. Powell and his organization," Garvey wrote, "and I have pledged my moral support to the program in that direction, expecting of the

honorable and honest of his race the same regard and support for ours" (339). In sum, whatever the inherent flaws in the alliance between Powell and Garvey, it also remains unclear whether or not their attempt to create a new practice of global cartography to chart mass populations, and thus to inaugurate a new "interpretation" of what counts—a new world picture—was ever possible. What is clear, though, is that this was a calculated publicity stunt. Garvey and Powell sought to alleviate mass moral panic caused by the racial upheaval after WWI by dividing the globe based on essential cultural identities. The uncompromising solution they conceived could not operate without preserving a racial opposition between population groups. Yet for both parties, this founding antagonism seemed a necessary and unavoidable contradiction for the world picture to begin anew. "Those who are against it," Garvey argued in his 1925 speech addressed "to the Negros of Harlem" are "the enemies of both races, and rebels against morality" (339).

Black solidarity across nation-state lines offered a defense against a geopolitical system that functioned to divide and pit the black race against one another. In a speech named "An Appeal for the Black Race to See Itself," Garvey drove home his message of black historical development: "The evil of internal division is wrecking our existence as a people, and if we do not seriously and quickly move in the direction of readjustment it simply means that our doom becomes immanently conclusive." Somewhat astonishingly, Garvey attempted to turn the recognitive gaze back on the colored peoples of the world, and to use this racialized gaze in ways that would allow a group of disenfranchised peoples to see their common affiliation beyond the confines of a condemned and wretched people of the earth. "I sought to emancipate millions of Negroes all over the world from political and industrial thralldom," Garvey noted, "which was too big an effort for rivals within my own race to stand; and those other races who profit by their

exploitation and servitude regarded me as a dangerous menace to be rid of by all means" (PO 333).

Although the attempt to install a global color line was riddled with ambivalence from its outset, for Garvey to even conceive of a political alliance with the leader of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America marked a significant closure of historical potential. It was desperate attempt by a man indicted by the US Government to restart the Back-to-Africa campaign. Garvey may have run out of options, but to decisively turn his back on the most vulnerable members of the UNIA in the South, who lived with the daily terror of lynching, only to see their New Negro leader side with the Ku Klux Klan, denied the complexity of black liberation. Nonetheless, Garvey proceeded from the belief that the world was already split into two halves. Only by recognizing the implicit nature of racial bias in the modern world would it be possible to refuse the terms of modern alienation held in place by the "invisible government of the United States" (PO 335).

In this final sequence of events, the mass dream of black utopia, which had once called forth the potential for black planetary reconciliation, was reduced to a crude demand for recognition from the very ethos of white supremacy that the mass project of black renewal was created to break away from. Crucially, the New Negro project had not always been envisioned as one that primarily depended on others for advancement. It was first and foremost a dialectical struggle between black identity and the eventual transcendence of that limited identity, if only to reach for and eventually attain a higher form of blackness. In this dialectical arrangement, the UNIA objective was never the subsumption of blackness. It was a form of social protest marked by an anti-assimilationist struggle to identify, champion, and legitimate the self-worth of the African diaspora. By 1925, however, all that was left of the creative force of the Negro uplift project to act as a world-making force was the memory of a lost potentiality for a radical rupture

that existed beyond the existing global arrangements of race power and racial domination. Garvey's repeated demands for recognition from the KKK signified a lowered set of geopolitical expectations. The mere power transfer he asserted in order for the world to become a differentiated space, black and white, constituted a stubborn picture of race and racial difference. The "Race First" principle of anti-assimilation had paradoxically emboldened rather than transcended a flawed imperial world-system.

The New Negro movement's concern with the persistence of domination may have been necessary to point beyond structural limits, as required for a wholesale transformation of the colonized and a reconstruction of the international order, yet the systematic underpinnings of the "Race First" project left intact the core of racial essentialism. It denied the complexity of black liberation. Garvey's failure to better formulate the black dialectic of advancement was catastrophic. Any fleeting sense of the New Negro movement to operate as an anti-systematic worldmaking project had not been sufficiently thought through. As we will soon see, the lack of a viable plan to remake global relations beyond the gaze of racial recognition also failed to undo the constituted power of the imperial nation-state system.

Folio 4.4 – Harlem Fantasia

Claude McKay's 1928 novel *Home to Harlem* would turn the black sea voyage narrative on its head by imagining the black migrant as capable of gaining political standing in America through the freedom to drift between urban metropoles within the domestic borders of the United States. Michelle Stevens notes that as a new set of expectations advanced steadily "black subjects . . . laid claim to territory within the nation as they tried to lay claim to their own equal rights as citizens" (142). America's urban centers represented a sense of new opportunities for

black migrants returning home once the world-making ambition of the postwar opening had shut. This fundamental reworking of the migratory dream of black redemption into assimilationist tactics for survival under the changing historical conditions therefore represented McKay's conflicted attempt to simultaneously hold open the redemptive possibilities symbolized by the anticipatory wish image of the black migrant while inserting this narrative of displacement back within the confines of the national frame.

In the first chapter of the novel, "Going Back Home," the black protagonist named Jake notes that he had initially sailed to Europe after enlisting as a soldier to fight in the war. But rather than sent to the front to fight for freedom the black soldier was instead kept in tow to perform the most basic and rudimentary tasks required to service the white army: "He touted lumber—boards, planks, posts, rafters—for the hundreds of huts that were built along the walls of Brest and along the coast between Brest and Saint-Pierre, to house the United States soldiers (4). Jake quickly became disillusioned with the racist underpinnings of the war fought between white empires, and so he deserted the army to work the docks in England. While at first his army defection had offered a sense of liberation, it becomes gradually apparent that being undocumented and untracked offers no sense of feeling at home in the world at all. He admits that working the docks had brought little happiness: "He felt all alone in the world" (7). Jake's modern sense of alienation is one that entails him feeling like a bad national citizen, a subject Brent Hayes Edwards defines as a "bad nationalist, a subject deemed defective by nationalism" (239). Ray's longing for home soon realizes itself not in a desire to return back to white America but instead the vision he begins to dream of involves a return back to the black community of Harlem.

The symbolic ship which once took him to Europe becomes refigured as one that would transport him back into a feeling sense of belonging and kinship as a member of the black community. As Jake boards the ship, he sings a redemptive song to himself about finding the home he has lost:

> "Take me Home to Harlem, Mister Ship! Take me home to the brown gals waiting for the brown boys that done show their mettle over there. Take me home, Mister Ship. Put your beak right into that water and jest move along." (9)

When he finally crosses the Atlantic, and reenters Harlem, the black individuals he meets are not depicted as national subjects but rather members of an internal migrant colony. Living in Harlem affords the possibility experience this black international space within the nation. But Jake's homeless, fugitive reverie is tested in Part II of the novel when he meets a Haitian intellectual. Ray's true foreignness appears as one that undercuts the American Negro. The Haitian speaks in a French accent as he tells his personal story as a descendent from black revolution:

> Jake sat like a big eager boy and learned many facts about Hayti before the train reached Pittsburgh. He learned that the universal spirit of the French Revolution had reached and lifted up the slaves far away in that remote island; that Black Hayti's independence was more dramatic and picturesque than the United States independence and that it was a strange, almost unimaginable eruption of the beautiful ideas of the "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" of Mankind, that shook the foundations of that romantic era. (131)

The story of black revolution here is itself a romantic tale. It marks a story that occludes why a black Haitian would ever need to go to America at all. Jake is thoroughly impressed by the fact that a small island nation had ever managed to win self-determination from the French colonial state. He admits it to be an aspirational story of "black people, who fought for collective liberty

and was struggling to create a culture of their own" (134). But the sublimity of this grand foreign achievement also sets it apart. "How strange," Jake says. This foreign tale briefly rattles Jake's imaginative vision of Harlem exile as black sanctuary. One dream has undermined another, if only momentarily. The story of black revolution undercuts the ability to hide the contradictions in viewing Harlem as a black island built on solid ground within the imperial nation-state.

But this fleeting glimpse of a black world beyond American boundaries give way to animated scenes of vibrant life in Harlem. The black metropolis is characterized by nightly irruptions of blackness. It a space of leisure filled with night clubs, speakeasies, dancers, and prostitutes. The jazz clubs in Black Harlem give access to "sensual dream" that beats to the sound of a "primitive" drum:

> Tum-tum . . . tum-tum . . . tum-tum . . . tum-tum. . . . The notes were naked acute alert. Like black youth burning naked in the bush. Love in the deep heart of the jungle. . . . The sharp spring of a leopard from a leafy limb, the snarl of a jackal, green lizards in amorous play, the flight of a plumed bird, and the sudden laughter of mischievous monkeys in their green homes. Tum-tum . . . tum-tum . . . tum-tum . . . tum-tum. . . . (196-7)

Jake's adventures occur in a space where luxury and poverty intermingle. Although the streets of Harlem may show signs of disrepair, escape is only ever a few steps away.

In a scathing 1928 book review of *Home to Harlem*, printed in the *Negro World,* Garvey castigates McKay for turning the poor black neighborhood into a fabricated cosmopolitan dreamscape of ecstasy, lust, and primitivist impulses. "The book of Claude McKay's is a damnable libel against the Negro," writes Garvey. "It is doing a great deal of harm in further creating prejudice among the white people against the Negro" (MGP 7: 238). In McKay's

Harlem dreamworld, the vision of returning Back-to-Africa is reduced to an act as simple as walking into a night club. “White publishers use Negroes,” Garvey adds, “to write the kind of stuff that they can desire to feed their public with so that the Negro can still be regarded as a monkey, some imbecilic creature” (Ibid). The wish image of the black migrant once carried forth by the New Negro movement as a black diasporic agent on the cusp of finding new transnational alliances has been monetized by the American culture industry as enthralling primitive entertainment. While the animated black bodies in McKay’s novel seem to offer a vision of liberation, the structure of this racialized spectacle means that liberation is only illusory. The immense marketability of this Harlem “fantasia,” as Garvey terms it, has found its way into the living rooms of white Americans. Through this demonstrable change in cultural mediation the UNIA’s calls for a liberatory black cultural project to emerge and bring together “400,000,000 Africans around the world” has been replaced with commodified irruptions of primitive blackness reduced to harmless shocks and surprises consumed by white audiences.

The “real tragedian,” of the novel, Garvey concludes, “in spite of his many misfortunes, is not Jake, but Ray, the Negro student” from Haiti (MGP 7: 241). For this black foreigner has the capacity to understand the racial underpinnings of the black slave revolt and yet he cannot find a way to again bring these old dream fragments back into the modern realm of political action. Garvey quotes a passage of the novel to emphasize this political failure to his *Negro World* readers. Ray says,

> The fact is, I don’t know what I’ll do with my little education. I wonder sometimes if I could get rid of it and go and lose myself in some savage culture in the jungles of Africa. I am a misfit—as the doctors who dole out newspaper advice to the well-fit might say—a misfit with my little education and constant dreaming, when I should be getting the

> nightmare habit to hog in a whole lot of dough like everybody else in this country. Would you like to be educated to be like me? (241)

As an intelligent thinker, Ray appears to be equally fascinated and repelled the black masses in Harlem living out their own improprieties. That may be true enough. But the tragic knowledge that Ray carries with him is much more profound. Racial domination has been shored up by the commodification of black culture and, worse yet, the black masses have bought into this new modern form of alienation. "Here, one feels," Garvey laments, "an unspeakable tragedy" (Ibid). The tragic knowledge that Ray carries with him is the encroaching uniformity on his dreams of black advancement. And this knowledge is *unspeakable* because past dreams of the planetary affiliation of the black diaspora have been replaced by effusive promises that the marketability of black culture in America is the same as the redemption of black culture. The New Negro movement has been replaced by the unspeakable tragedy carried forth with the salability of the Harlem Renaissance.

Hayden White points out that the crucial question when identifying tragedy as a dream destroying force is whether or not there is any way to stop this pattern of historical erasure once it begins. This purging capacity, this self-destructiveness of the tragic genre, which cleanses existing arrangements, and clears the ground for something new to emerge, will also eradiate a previous shape of historical memory. Notwithstanding this point, remembering and forgetting are not exclusive acts but rather stand in dialectical relation to one another. In fact, the very premise of tragedy is that we are able to hold multiple temporalities in our head at once as we work through human actions and the beliefs in the future these actions demonstrate to carry forth. The problem is not that history is completely lost. "The problem of man is that he remembers too much," White remarks. To which he adds:

> Out of this capacity to remember [the] past all specifically *human* constructions arise. It is not a matter of man's needing memory: it is the glory and perdition of man that he irredeemably has memory. Therefore, he *has* history, whether he wants it or not. The question, then, is whether the capacity to remember has not been so overdeveloped and become a threat in itself. (348)

In effect, the tragic burden has been turned upside down. The revolutionary possibility of tragedy to show the limited arrangements of human action, and to call forth something truly new, is burdened by the possibility that this cleansing force will be abused to do more harm than good. In Nietzsche's "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life," we are warned that "tragedy may well call forth" the power to mediate history as "the profoundest and noblest power," but can also be misused "as a seducer to existence" (102). Past and present do not quite align in our historical memories. This is the definition of historicity, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. He likens this untimely existence to having to carry around these fragmentary pieces like undigestible stones: "modern man drags around with him a huge quantity of indigestible stones of knowledge" (78). As tragedy imposes a mythical form onto history, it also requires us to carry the burden of knowledge that what has passed may never again be activated or even valued as it once was.

Memory is a timeless faculty, but this can also be a curse. The world-historical consciousness carried forth by the New Negro movement once offered a way to advance a new modern character for a new modern age, a personality that orientated itself toward the future vision of a global black imaginary. This clearing of the historical ground was to advance the black personality beyond the mythic Negro stuck in time. Smashing the world view into montage allowed for new constellations to appear. Utilizing this same process, too, black diasporic

belonging could so expediently become delegitimized in the national memory. Pasts are used and abused and, in this sense, historical consciousness is always in the service of the present.

Folio 4.5 – Paper Tiger

At the court trial, Garvey would insist in his own defense that the US Justice Department's case depended on forcing the historical closure of a black political movement that was only in its infancy and yet to fully arrive. The problem was that an insufficient understanding of the New Negro political formation blocked the all-white jury from grasping the crux of the Pan-African movement. The utopian construction of the New Negro as free black selfhood remained an unfinished project. Whether or not the Black Star Line was a promissory venture that could sustain itself in real time was not as important for Garvey as yielding change historically and materially so that a new global vision could one day emerge on the horizon to remake the future of the world. Although the movement's venture into black commerce had been fraught with setbacks, its leader displayed confidence that the plan for racial renewal had already begun to gain traction around the world. "At the beginning of the 1920s," Achille Mbembe reminds us, "Garvey was convinced that a political readjustment of the world was underway. This readjustment was propelled by the rising up of oppressed peoples and dominated races who struggled against the global powers" (154-5). This new world historical project for the New Negro rested on changing the dynamics of the general concept of the nation-state as an apparatus of sovereign power that for generations had fixed the terms of black subjugation. And it was precisely the organizational threat of black global imaginary to the imperial nation-state, its irreducible difference to sedimented political power, that brought forth its collision with American law.

The limited facts surrounding the court case were rhetorically enhanced with historical arguments made by the federal prosecutor about the unachievable promissory venture of the Black Star Line. This structure of intermixture between the prosecutor's speculations about the movement's fate and his juridical authority to speak knowledgably and in accordance with the rhetorical conventions of the law came to fill in the speculative gaps between the present moment and the future yet to arrive. Such appeals to the historical—if not ontological—priority of the law over its most vulnerable subjects also rendered visible the gulf between the transcendent ideal of justice as unconditional and the US government's complicit involvement in fixing the terms of modern justice to coordinate the hereditary struggle for economic and political power in alignment with imperial sovereignty.

To mark this distinction between unconditional justice and the appearance of justice in the service of political ends, Garvey levies the juridical anxiety about the lack of evidence, and in such moments he assumes the mantle of a legal philosopher. Invoking a series of legal betrayals that have suppressed natural freedoms, foreclosed future promises, and forced the project of racial renewal onto a tragic timeline, the black leader begins by noting an earlier instance when the system of modern jurisprudence turned its back on its own citizens. He states the historical facts of a previous legal case in which "[a] District Attorney once had condemned and subsequently electrocuted an innocent man charged of murder" (PO 335). Oddly, newspapers across the United States did not publicly denounce the government prosecutor for failing to uphold the objectivity of legal reasoning, and instead exalted the District Attorney's "skillful prosecution and brilliant" legal intellect. After calling attention to this defective moment in the history of American justice, Garvey corrects the record by explaining that what was widely publicized as a display of legal brilliance was in actual fact nothing more than a self-serving

"effort to convict the accused on manufactured and circumstantial evidence with the eye of creating a reputation for future success" of the prosecutor "in his profession" (335). Careerist aspirations to get ahead in the legal profession inevitably lead to cutting corners, suppressing the facts at the expense of the freedom of others, and in this instance the pursuit of personal gains forced juridical violence and ultimately death onto an innocent victim. The decline of justice as an ethical principle in American law is linked to the pursuit of private interests. "Justice," Garvey asserts, "is left more to the feeling, like or dislike of the individual charged with the responsibility of administering it, rather than to its ethical interpretation" (PO 191). Moreover, "if the individuals" tasked with the responsibility of upholding justice "are wrong," or invested in personal gains, "we suffer from the result" (PO 191). Deterioration of the juridical order is permitted to occur, Garvey argues, because modern law remains more invested in consolidating its own juridical authority, in protecting its monopoly on violence, a power assured by those who administer the law, than in protecting justice as an incorruptible principle that safeguards the future against the repetition of unwarranted acts of political violence.

To further expose the limited credibility of due process in American jurisprudence, Garvey focuses on the link between the law and time. Here he argues with direct reference to his own legal fate:

> To be convicted for using the mails on the evidence of a rubber stamped, empty envelope that could have been stamped and posted by any enemy hired agent with the intent that promoted the prosecution, is a departure in our system that may lead to the incrimination and conviction of any man in our civilization who trespasses within the bounds or province where there is such a man. In modern jurisprudence, controlled as it is, by politics, wealth and power, the "marked" person falls a prey to the hunter who sets the

> "legal" trap that never fails to "catch" the individual when badly "wanted." It is only a question of time when every individual "sought" or "wanted" is "caught" by the legal entanglements prepared for the purpose of rendering harmless and permanently silent those not desired or who may constitute themselves a stumbling block in the way of privileged or hereditary power. (PO 332)

Time and justice work together in such instances. Their coordination forms the "legal trap" which Garvey understands as rendered by way of a constitutive iterability that does not simply preexist the Pan-African movement but remains infinite, omnipresent, and all-encompassing to the extent that modern jurisprudence "never fails to catch" an errant shift or mutation in political thinking detrimental to the uneven structure of hereditary privilege that controls the principle of legality in modern American life. The paradox here, of course, is that the law only appears infinite due to its prioritization of historical limitation over transcendence—of regulative control of the administrative means and futures of justice. Modern law's force of temporal closure offers the appearance of totality. The decisive question, then, is not whether or not Garvey failed to make the right choice to comply with the mail fraud laws. While this question lies in the background, the reference to the law as a "trap" in the revisionist historiographical sense—as that which marks historical disturbances as threats to the juridical order and captures them as prey—allows one to think of the possibility that legal entanglements are regularly required by the law to repeatedly activate and thereby justify its own self-authorizing work. The problem of imperial law is thus an exemplary instance of modern historicity in its most fundamental sense. It renders legible the struggle to control material history. Modern law's appearance as both justice and the ordering force of modern social relations both presupposes and supplies the requirement for the law to enable the continuation of the imperial recording of events.

Garvey's brief treatise "Give Blacks a Chance" further raises the question of justice in a modern age: "If the Negro is inferior why circumvent him; why suppress his talent and initiative; why rob him of his independent gifts; why fool him out of the rights of country; why imprison his intelligence and exploit his ignorance; why keep him down by the laws of inequality?" (*Philosophy and Opinions* 83). Here we find the logic of imperial expropriation at work. The modern demand for justice to right the wrongs of the past becomes difficult for Garvey to disentangle from the everyday operations of modern jurisprudence in legal courts across America. This difficulty to discern the conceptual difference between law and justice in the historical project of legal modernity arises because the system of law that controls the procedures of justice in modern life is enmeshed in a set of historical demands to maintain hereditary privilege. Under these "laws of inequality" which maintain an uneven distribution of racial and social privilege, demands for justice to be enacted in order to change the course of colonial history are somehow twisted into the urgent legal imperative to convert everything it touches into a pre-set moral judgement over the past. Indeed, modern legal subjects themselves appear to be formed by a spurious legal process that, while disingenuous, holds enough juridical power over the public record of events to shift the terms of "racial awakening" from a teleological horizon of expectation for justice to a suspended temporality.

As a result of this constraint on the project of legal modernity, a constraint which paradoxically guarantees the permanency of the system of modern justice to enact itself into the future, black revolutionary time was reconfigured by the law as tragic time. The legal constraint on black futurity comes down to this: the very legibility of justice, emerging through the interpretation of existing laws, provides symbolic legitimation for imperial law to respond by reiterating its own authority over the historical record to counter revolutionary future time. In

assessing the self-styled permanency of national law, Rebecca Comay insists on the impossibility of the law ever calling forth a truly new public event in the history of the world. Law and revolution remain antithetical. "*[R]evolution is against the law,*" she explains. "Revolution is illegal both de facto (there can be no positive legislation authorizing the suspension of this legislation) and de jure (there can be no right to suspend the right as such)" (37). The law is at odds with revolution because the emergence of a new political event is by definition outside the enduring conditions of its own legality and legitimacy.

It is in this sense that the project of black redemption for some "4,000,000,000 Negroes around the world" also demanded a theory of the revolutionary event. To break free from the tragic symptomatology of blackness, the New Negro political movement needed to both defy and overturn the preconstituted discourse about what the future of justice should look like. For Achille Mbembe, the realization of this new future is one that involves the "promise of a reversal of history" (157). But enacting this promise to overturn longstanding historical configurations of racial disenfranchisement involves an immense amount of struggle. For the very concept of black identity has long remained trapped within the "brutality" of an imperial project that sought, above all, "to dry up the capacities for its victims to create their own symbolic world. With most of their energies diverted to basic tasks of survival, they were forced to live their lives only in the mode of repetition" (154). "To be Black and therefore a slave" to a system of colonial subjugation, a system that persisted even after the abolition of slavery, he adds, "was therefore to have no future of one's own" (154). Here the diminution of possibilities for self-attainment must be read alongside the incipient locution which binds the tragic Negro character to the "now time" of the world held in place. Thus, a logic of reiteration must be broken in order for the production of a new black subjectivity to emerge outside of this tragic emplotment of black experience. It is

precisely a revolutionary break from the incessant lack of possibility, from the somatic conditions of impossibility, and towards the newness of the future as required for black individuals to reconstitute themselves as free subjects, that binds the Garvey movement to the structure of a revolutionary event. The relegation of the black population to a tragic chronology in the ongoing constitution of world-historical time could only be broken through decisive temporal rupture. A new lifeworld was anticipated to emerge as the black subject came to rediscover himself or herself as an autonomous source of creation. "Out of the loss and destruction," Mbembe argues, "came the power of creation, a living substance capable of giving birth to a new form in the world" (154). The creation of the more "worldly" trope of the New Negro emerged as a new form in the world of language. The rhetorical force of speaking about the rise of the New Negro as if it had already occurred allowed for this new black transnational politics to begin to enact itself simultaneously on a cultural and political level. "For Garvey" in particular, Mbembe adds, "the ultimate event was, essentially, called to produce itself in the future, at a time that no one could predict but whose imminence was manifest" (155). A principled commitment to renewing black thought as a potent but hitherto unpredictable ordering force in the creation of the future world required a readjustment of the living conditions that had diverted "blackness" to a mechanism for objectification and deprivation.

The New Negro emerged in everyday speech as a directional trope, adhering to the rhetorical logic of deixis: pointing towards the future time of its own utopian construction, though the precise coordinates of its own movements toward itself were not fully determined in advance. It was, therefore, a speculative trope insofar as the new beginning it called forth remained unfixed and unrestricted by commonplace denotative meanings. The radical blackness ascribed to the New Negro was set adrift in the Garveyite text in such a way that its futurity or

anticipated horizon as a force of renewal could no longer be contained by the predetermined conditions of the modern world. Mbembe notes that "Garvey . . . imagined a vast moment of desertion, or at least an *organized retreat.* He was convinced that the West was in decline" and "with no spiritual foundation it could not last indefinitely" (154). That future expectation for Western supremacy to soon run its course meant preparing for the arrival of a new global terrain no longer bound to the repressive timelines of an empire already in decline. Marking this radical transformation of the conditions of the geopolitical order, Mbembe argues that "the Black Man was for Garvey a largely deterritorialized subject" (155). The future time of this new globalized movement, a movement without traditional borders, demonstrated an eagerness to step away from the elite nationalism held in place by existing colonial powers.

Calling forth the emergence of this new black identity in a postnational, deterritorialized space, Garvey famously affirmed: "I know no national boundary where the Negro is concerned" (PO 25). This statement occurs in a speech titled "Great Ideals Know No Nationality." Here Garvey explains the limitations that the modern nation-state put on great principles like racial justice and freedom for members of population:

> All intelligent people know that one's nationality has nothing to do with great ideals and great principles. If because I am Jamaican the Negro should not accept the principles of race rights and liberty, or the ideal of a free and independent race; then you may well say that because Jesus was a Nazarene the outside world should not accept his doctrine of Christianity, because He was an "alien." (25)

It would be absurd to claim that higher moral principles such as justice for oppressed peoples could only rightly belong to national subjects in one global region or another. Thus, when Garvey argues that "I know no boundary where the Negro is concerned," he is attempting to

force a radical historical break from the territorial system of the nation-states[66] that threatened black identity with extinction—that is, rendered black subjects as illegitimate agents of historical change in the world.

The New Negro movement, in its most radical form, imagined blackness as a postnational category. Yet, at the same time, the emphasis on "Africa" as the common place of origin for black diasporic peoples strewn across the world was hardly deterritorialized. How could this be? "In the Garveyite text," Mbembe observes, "to say 'Africa' was to start down a path in search of the substance of the sign—a substance that preceded the sign itself, and the form in which it had been called to manifest itself" (155). Mbembe's claim here is that Garvey's Africa, like the category of blackness itself, remained a shifting an enigmatic signifier. More to the point, it was precisely this ambiguity from which the black movement drew its power. The radical flexibility of the New Negro as an identity formation that remained in flux, undergoing change, as a future-oriented classification of identity, hinged on activating the surplus energies beyond the constricted forms of identity recognition and repressive borders of national sovereignty. The project of black redemption is thus bound up with denaturalizing the territorial limits placed on black identity, which reduced and fractured apart black collective power into splintered communities across the world while, at the same time, demanding a new political event that would readjust the terms of existence for members of the African diaspora to account for their surplus agency which existed outside the nation-state system. The degraded world could become transformed if this excess energy became activated as a world-making power, its radical

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[66] Such pronouncements would lay the groundwork for Malcolm X's 1964 speech "The Ballot or the Bullet." I am indebted to Karyn Ball for making this connection. Malcolm X's parents, of course, were Garveyites involved in the political activities of the UNIA. For a good overview of his Garveyite parents, see Ted Vincent's "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X" (*The Black Scholar*, vol. 2, no. 2, March-April 1989, pp. 10-13, reprinted in *The Portable Malcolm X Reader*, pp. 519-26).

potentialities for renewal enacted to accelerate the passage from a Western system in decline and toward the inevitable actualization of a better future world.

To emphasize the necessity of global transformation, the Garveyite text moves directly into a survey of the stalled revolutionary project of the modern democratic republic. The black leader argues that those in power who control the nation have forgotten the originary democratic ideals and principles in their own pursuit of raw power. Garvey writes: “People who rule (being selected by the masses of their own) forget when they come into power that they have an obligation to those who placed them in authority and through selfishness arrogate to themselves all that is good within the nation to the exclusion of those who suffer” (25). Hence power to control the nation-state system is placed into the “hands of the select few, and selfishness of administration by these few they cause the majority of the masses to always exist in want. Through this want, a spirit of dissatisfaction springs up among the people, and they, in their passion, seeking to correct the evil, tear down governments” (25). The revolutionary “spirit” Garvey speaks of here is constitutive of an emergent black mass that has grown dissatisfied with what others have termed the “race of old masters capable of making laws for itself and imposing those laws on others” (Mbembe 155). Indeed, black internationalism marks a problem for the law because the readjustment of responsibility it calls for to pluralize the terms of justice beyond the nation-state also tests the legitimacy of power held by old masters over the legal order.

The struggle for black renewal, therefore, involves staking out a precarious border zone between sedimented histories of legal power and the desire to call forth a new beginning that exist beyond inflexible conceptions of justice. The revolutionary justice this postnational cause calls forth marks the movement away from law-maintaining power. “Revolution,” Comay asserts, “marks the place where the very distinction between legality and legitimacy” will be

tested (38). These ongoing terms of legislative authority may even fall apart or otherwise become rendered illegible in the effort for black subjects to produce their own futures. Here we find a principled commitment to restoring legal thought to a position of groundlessness; that is, to clear away the predetermined fate necessary for black thought to explore the binding terms of legality not from within law but rather from a freestanding position no longer historically confined by the normative parameters of existing nation-state law. This productive activity in which agents seek to actualize themselves as part of an imminent new sociality takes shape through a process that does not necessarily ascribe to the legitimacy of current legal authority but rather tests its outermost limits.

This process is world-historical in two senses. The collective pursuit of racial justice seeks to look for opportunities to expand the world-system beyond systems of rule like the Jim Crow Laws that suffer from a restriction of personhood. But, more important, the activity is world-historical because it exemplifies what Rebecca Comay describes "as the demonstration of a kind of miracle: it makes publicly viewable what is unviewable, unthinkable, and strictly impossible—the ex nihilo self-production of sovereignty at the very moment of its destruction" (40). The illegitimate underpinnings of sovereign power are questioned at the same time as a new social body comes into existence as a revolutionary force in the world. However, to resurrect the exhausted term "revolutionary" releases a crescendo of escalating repercussions. Comay warns:

> even to investigate the historical genesis of sovereign power, to suspend the grip of the law if only long enough to contemplate the idea of law's illegal origin in the founding act of violence is already to place yourself outside the law, to put yourself in the position of the originary legislator, to become your own progenitor, in effect, and tantamount to blasphemy and treason—both a "pointless" and yet most "dangerous" speculation. (38)

New forms of social power arise under conditions where the old terms of historical sedimentation must be radically overcome. Indeed, the ongoing legitimacy of the law as the arbiter of justice depends on preserving this original moment of creation in order to legitimate its own authority as a legally-sanctioned process to rule over those who challenge its authority. Moreover, the tension between "pointless" yet "dangerous" speculation is precisely the historical threat at issue in the Black Star Line trial. Recall, for example, how Mattuck attempted to detach the future-oriented dream of black renewal from the sale of company stock in order to delegitimate the future of a new political movement that threatened to delegitimize the Justice Department's control over the historical record of events. In addition, the law's resistance to historical change appears paradoxical because the law once originated as the product of historical change. This paradox characterizes the paradoxical decisionary power of juridical authority in the modern republic. To cover up the gap between law's promise for justice and its actualization as a force that operates to close down new possibilities for rendering justice as possible, we find technologies of writing—marking, archiving, and indexing the historical record in such a way as to give the illusion of historical authority over the archive it creates. What the law records is the meaning of the past in order to legitimize the grammatical code to which the legal text always already owes its existence as the authoritative record of events.

To move beyond the closed terms of this discursive structure of relations, to move beyond Lacanian lack, which incessantly sutures desire for justice to its own limit, involves exposing the possibility for derivations in the act of juridical encoding that might lead to a new understanding of justice itself. Perhaps this is why Achille Mbembe explains that "[f]or Garvey, defining oneself through lack was no longer enough. […] In the wake of the negative work of destruction, the Black Man had to become someone else, to construct himself as a subject

capable of projecting himself into the future and investing in a desire" (154). The project of black redemption, in this sense, involved a move away from the metonymy of the imperial nation-state and its institutions that functioned to reinstate existing symbolic power through the logic of reiteration. Here we come upon something of the upmost implication: the critique of imperial reason is never only limited to the present day. Because the motif of metonymic nationalism runs throughout the history of the modern world, as the legislator and instantiation of historicity itself, the conditions of the time were in fact the product of the nation. Yet the structure of desire that gave rise to black internationalism could not be reduced to the needs of the nation—or of needs more generally. For need is lack. "Although sensitive to the idea of need," Mbembe clarifies, "Garvey was careful not to reduce desire to need. He sought instead to redefine the very object of Black desire—the desire to govern oneself" (154).[67] And though Mbembe at times asserts that Garvey aspired towards "developing a black African nationality," this does not tell the full story since the very concept of nation limits obscures the ability to give birth to the miracle required for an entirely new world yet to appear (156). At its most radical, Garveyism was invested in a form of black *natality* that remained groundless, in the Arendtian sense, to the extent that its end point was not predestined in advance. Black natality runs counter to the repetition of negation. Refusing to equate blackness with interminable infancy, the black diasporic imagination adheres to principle of semantic drift, of difference through geographical

[67] Similarly, Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* explores the social damage caused by lack, and she contends nothing less than that the black poet can draw on the principles of lyric practice to rewrite the ongoing terms of negative appearance to break the black body free from the structural deficit of being. But this breech cannot occur without taking significant risks. "Recognition of this lack," Rankine writes, "might break you apart. Or it might illuminate the erasure that the attempted erasure triggers" (24). Choice is the method of poetic making, and as the black lyricist takes control of the creative process to produce new forms of appearance and being for social persons, she must work hard to transcend the "repetition of negations ('no, no, no')" which reduce, regulate, and ultimately produce the harmful sentiments of "visceral disappointment" cast upon black bodies in a white national space (24-5). The black lyricist takes control of the processes of creation as required to reconfigure the constitutive relations between appearance and being, and this poetic takeover provides an analogue for the social possibility to move blackness beyond an identity category configured by lack—that is, to move blackness beyond the restriction of intelligibility.

movement, and above all to the future openness of the very concept of justice-to-come for black subjects.

Radically expanding the conditions of possibility for black members of the African diaspora involved embracing the radical capacity for symbolic difference, what Derrida terms the "*dérivée*," a wandering away from a clearly predetermined destination. It is precisely in this kind of radical embracement of the unknown future, of black natality as an investment in the undecidability that exists beyond the preconditions of the now, which suggests that justice itself, the very function of doing justice, involves a process of reinvention that will never quite reach its destination, at least not the kind of miraculous event or termination point that can be predetermined in advance or as expected. Radical justice, in other words, is open-ended. "Where there is anticipation . . . of a calculable instant," Derrida argues, "there is no longer any future, there is thus no longer any event to come, nothing to come, no longer any other, even no more heart of the other, and so forth" (*Death Penalty, vol. 1* 256). What this means is that the dissemination of any possibility for black revolution will never quite adhere to the symbolic logic of the day, precisely because the fate of its non-arrival must no longer become bound up in a legal process that temporarily delays if only to repeatedly inhibit the possibility of a new kind of justice to emerge. Derivation is the form to break with the regulative lack that gives rise to the imperial time of justice.

In making race the starting point of a critique of imperial and white nationalist politics, Garvey sought to identify the systems of power that disallowed black individuals to be responsible for themselves and responsible for the world in which they lived. This expropriation of responsibility, however forced, held in place by systems like the law, manifested itself during the trial in the form of an archaic reminder that, under the Jim Crow Laws, black individuals

could not act as agents of justice in pursuit of a better world; thus, to have no access to justice is to have no future of one's own. Instead of calling forth the power of creation, the law as an imperial force consolidated its own power by conferring destruction onto persons who attempted to function outside the preexisting national order. Modern jurisprudence disallowed black subjects to act as responsible agents vested with the power to remake their own world as necessary for justice to emerge.

Perhaps, then, as a result of this offsetting process of modern law, a law that operates to both *legitimate* its own national fictions as well as to *delegitimate* other political visions that remain unfavorable, thus coordinating both legibility and legitimacy, as well as illegibility and illegitimacy, we find some years later poet Claude McKay returning back one last time to the story of Marcus Garvey in *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, if only to suggest how the black leader had so quickly become decoupled from the historical experience of black Harlem. Writing in 1940, McKay symbolically refers to Garvey as the "'Black Tiger' and 'President General' of the Negro World, Marcus Garvey" (178). McKay was hardly the first to have popularized this nickname. He simply repeated a normalized phrase long embedded in American parlance.

In a speech dated June 17, 1923, Garvey notes how this racialized metaphor of black man as a ferocious animal that must be tamed first emerged in the court proceedings:

> Among the many names by which I have been called, I was dubbed by another name a couple of days ago. The District Attorney, with whom I have been contesting the case for my liberty and for the existence of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, in his fervid appeal—in his passionate appeal, to the gentlemen of the jury last Friday—said: "Gentlemen, will you let the tiger loose?" (MGP 5: 359)

The pressing demand for Assistant District Attorney Maxwell Mattuck to reduce the mass cultural potential for change, however imperfect, evidently necessitated this new legal allegory to be born. Garvey notes how "Mattuck, and his hirelings [...] used the press to stir up white public opinion against me during the trial" (PO 217). Legal influence over the American public becomes inextricable from the prosecution's efforts to decommission the futures of the Black Star Line as no longer politically viable nor relevant to the pursuit of American freedom. By deploying a racialized metaphor, one that compares the leader of the Black Star Line to a tiger that must be tamed by the American justice system, efforts by US prosecutors to seek justice crossed over into a domain far outside the realm of using justice as the arbiter of political agency.[68] The discursive act renovated the public image of black futurity into a tragic sign—a sign of ruin.

Of course, there is no such thing as an African tiger. The racialized metaphor works only through a semantic leap that compares the black leader of the Back-to-Africa movement with a species of animal that has never existed in the wild on the continent of Africa. To catch an imperialistic discourse in the act of using the law to construct its own historical fictions, and thereby to discern how legal power comes to use these fictions to paper over the gaps in its own racialized logic of justice, is to encounter the revisionist historical process of imperial time as it

[68] The primitivist link signaled by the semantic proximity of Garvey to the predatorial animal is described differently in Ishmael Reed's 1972 novel *Mumbo Jumbo*. Reed writes: "Until Marcus Garvey came along to rescue the American Negro he was basking in his lethargy like a crocodile sleeping in the sun" (31). Unlike the tiger metaphor spoken by the District Attorney to affix the race leader to the role of predator, Reed's metaphor opens onto a more complex project of historical speculation. Jonathan Eburne notes that Reed's semantically ambiguous "image of the Jamaican-born race leader as a Caribbean crocodile exemplifies the rhetoric of many of his critics: the 'rescue' proffered by Garvey yielded another form of exploitation, with the reptilian Garvey poised to snatch up his victims" (1). But when read satirically that image also pushes beyond the binary of redeemer or predator. The irony conveyed in "Reed's one-line assessment of Garvey's 'improvement' project stresses the ambiguities of his campaign," which tended to mobilize racial stereotypes only to point to their limitations as ideological constructs, a strategy that was meant to reject victimhood as a legitimate historical or political position" even as the UNIA's restless investment in the future gave context to a historical moment which demanded the "reversal of black fortunes" (2).

coordinates the dominant narrative of the present, with all the temporal contradictions that process implies. Indeed, this limiting configuration of the modern time of imperial justice operates by a kind of messianic reduction—a future deemed to be unrealizable. The legal text states what it prohibits, and this act of prohibition serves to render the radical openness of the revolutionary threat posed by black internationalism down to a single image—Marcus Garvey, the feckless *paper tiger*—thus flattening the revolutionary movement's mass cultural charge.

Among the numerous other 'indigestible stones' in the government documents there exists a telegram received by Federal Prosecutor Mattuck, sent from W.A. Domingo, "a Harlem negro," eventually printed in the *New York Times*. "Right-thinking negroes everywhere will applaud you for having caged the tiger at last," the telegram read (MGP 6: 87). Evidently, even members of the black race—members of the some "400,000,000 Negroes around the world—had come to rationalize the failed Pan-African struggle for black liberation in pejorative and tragic terms. No additional quotations from members of the black population in Harlem who still supported the Pan-African movement were printed. Such accounts were conspicuously missing in the *New York Times* coverage of the legal trial. In place of objectivity ran a single racialized metaphor, spoken by a Harlemite, with a phrase that redeployed the prosecution's discursive language used to reduce the black leader to a wild beast that must be caged—caught by the "legal trap" Garvey both exposed and became confined by. The fact that such a one-sided record of the court trial was printed at all in the largest newspaper in the United States demonstrates another cultural method by which the power of juridical decision comes to influence the public record of events.

The spectacular promises made by Marcus Garvey have led some critics to assert in passing that the first mass utopian movement of black sovereignty was operating on an "epic

timeline" (Eburne 5). Given the pace and scale required for enough capital to be accumulated to rewrite the terms of global capital, this premise certainly does appear to be the case. The epic sequence, as it rebelled against the prohibitive ideal of legality bestowed by lighter-skinned nations, no longer fit within the tragic timeline ascribed to darker folks. In promising reciprocity for black subjects, the stage was set for a clash between two modes of emplotment—two incongruous and often contradictory ways of narrating historical events. Yet whatever ideological and rhetorical positions on history may have divided them, Garvey shared with Mattuck a desire not just to change the historical record but to alter the narrative modes by which the sequence of events were written. For Mattuck, the shift in rhetoric from an epic to tragic timeline of historical events involved a change in registers as required to purge the mass utopian movement of its promise for global renewal. This hollowing out of revolutionary potential involved redressing the history of the Black Star Line as the only endeavor that mattered to the New Negro movement. Yet for Garvey the challenge was much greater, dependent as it was on the moral voluntarism of black subjects to fearlessly give up one set of attachments to national community and to audaciously invest one's faith and economic future in a higher ideal of justice for the global diaspora even as it remained a moving target—yet to arrive. By positioning black justice as a future horizon, the task remained epic in scope: that is, it involved rewriting the entire history of the world to make room for black sovereignty to emerge out of the tragic coordination of loss and disparagement in order to rework inherited categories about race.

The court's own investments in narrative return all but assured the black leader's conviction on a trumped-up mail fraud charge. In focusing on correspondence sent through the federal mails, the law stopped the delivery of an alternative future from arriving. Of course, the dominance of the imperial nation-state does not sustain itself automatically; rather it requires the

incessant suppression of residuals like black finance, deeming them defective, in order for American justice to acquire the appearance of ineluctability, of naturalness. While the jury's deliberations were made in private behind closed doors, we cannot rule out the possibility that the racialized historiographies of imperial dominance from which the black movement drew its potential, and attempted to set in decline, also carried the threat of imposing direct repercussions for members of the all-white trial jury.

What is resoundingly clear is that although justice for black subjects may not have arrived in the Garvey trial, the verdict carried forth clear historical repercussions that resonated into the future. The legal act—as a performative injunction barring the possibility for renewal—buried the radical potential for alternate futures of justice, which exist beyond the national imaginary, under the weight of litigation documents and records, court folios and dockets, public reports and private thoughts. The figure of black migrancy collapsed under the weight of colonial paperwork. Its capacity for epic change, for deviation from the script of imperial time, was redressed piece by piece, ship by ship, one subpoenaed business record after another, ultimately to paper over and devalue the prospect of a new world for the New Negro in national memory as a tragic failure. The promise of the future was relegated back into the past.

Closing Statement

A critical question haunts the law, one that raises doubts about the national fantasy of doing justice. That question can be phrased as follows: *what does the law want?* No closure can occur without persistently raising this question. Though, if we are to truly grasp how justice must be upheld as an unconditional principle, no sense of historical closure, no fulfillment of the desire for justice to come, may ever truly be said to be reached when the very horizons necessary to justly remake the world are foreclosed by the calculable processes of modern law.

Take, for instance, the notorious photograph of Marcus Garvey finally in government custody, an image captured as he was escorted by US marshals en-route to the Atlanta penitentiary. Note the single handcuff around Marcus Garvey's wrist. The other handcuff is not locked to his other wrist but instead can be observed wrapped around the wrist of a federal agent just below the hem of a grey suitcoat. Desire was met. The law got their man. "Justice" was done.

Fig. 3. Photograph. *Marcus Garvey, accompanied by U.S. marshals, on the way to federal prison in Atlanta, 1925.* Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8e0981a2-4adb-a10a-e040-e00a18063089

The image of desire fulfilled was circulated in major American newspapers. It was also circulated around the globe in trial reports by the world press. How, exactly, did this image of Marcus Garvey as physically linked to the arm of the law, unable to break free, so perfectly match the desire of the justice system to see this man incarcerated within its own corrective system? Was it perhaps the US Justice Department's relentless pursuit to put the leader of the Pan-African movement behind bars that began to coordinate and reframe the very possibility of doing justice, reorientating mass public desires, and permanently reframing the public's view of what justice should look like?

Such questions remain fraught with difficulties, especially when raising them in the historical present. However, in asking *what the law wants*, how it relies on mass cultural practices to both configure what it wants, and preside over what we want, the principle or ideal of doing justice is framed in very particular ways as the law serves to correct the past. My thinking here is informed by W.J.T. Mitchell, who asks what pictures want. Mitchell writes:

> there is no way we can avoid asking what pictures want. This is a question we are not used to asking, and that makes us uncomfortable because it seems to be just the sort of question that an idolater would ask. . . . What do the images want from us? Where are they leading us? What is it that they *lack*, that they are inviting us to fill in? What desires have we projected onto them, and what form do those desires take as they are projected back at us, making demands up on us, seducing us to feel and act in certain ways? (25)

For Mitchell, pictures contain a lack that transforms the identities of those who look. This emptiness at the core of the cultural image structures the desire of the spectator to fill in this lack through the very process of looking. The image desires to be looked at. We gaze back.

Mitchell's assertion about pictures can be adapted for the purposes of decolonizing legal history as follows: it is impossible to avoid asking the question *what does the law want?* This is a question we are not used to asking, and that makes us uncomfortable because it seems to be just the sort of question that a criminal would ask, one which leads the process of justice toward inevitable corruption. But avoiding the question also seems untenable because failing to ask it could just as likely lead to corruption when we turn a blind eye away from the interworkings of legal authority, and thus allow the law to overstep its reach and take on a criminal life of its own.

Thus when Mitchell writes that "pictures go before us" and that this "image repertoire" that "cuts across the media," from film to literature, legal documents to newspapers, even "to the behavior of ordinary people in everyday life," and thus this set of images seems "to have a life of its own," we can begin to see how the image of American law itself—as an aspirational picture of justice as fairness that holds our attention and guides or public understanding of the nation—likewise serves to project its national desires back on us, demanding, above all, that we continue to hold faith in the absolute authority and jurisdiction that it holds over us (25, 297). As long as we desire justice as a value that must be upheld in national law, an icon to uphold, it would seem impossible to live completely outside and unaffected by the desiring processes this expectation entails. But what happens when this desire for the law to enact justice begins to waver? How does the law reaffirm territorialized assumptions about lifeworlds as it is practiced in the face of despair? In such moments, like the Garvey trial, when the structure of desire threatens to be undone, its limits exposed, what exactly does the law want?

The answer that comes into view is relentlessly historical in nature. The law wants to fix time. It wants to right a temporal disturbance. The law wants to continue to go before us, to configure our desires for future justice, and thus to restore faith in a system of national jurisprudence that structures the terms and limits of what justice could ever mean to us in modern life.

Perhaps the most dramatic and vivid form of this desire to renew faith in law is to be found in cases where new forms of value and modes of exchange are introduced into the world that challenge the historical legitimacy of national law, enacting world-historical processes that extend beyond its jurisdictions, outside its borders, threatening to remake processes, actions, and capacities of justice anew. And yet there is something paradoxical in saying this, insofar as the usual notion of the law is that it remains static, impartial and unchanging, holding supreme authority over the historical record, compulsively repeating the desire to uphold fair deliberation as the marker of justice in every case.

Exposing gaps in the collective memory thus threatens to weaken the complacency of national fantasies about the synchronic past as a seamless continuum. Among them, the question of how to witness the past justly, rightly, with full political responsibility, how to properly hear a delayed echo in political time, and to force a reengagement with the disruption to political thinking, poses a distinct challenge to the unshakable faith in history's slow progressivism, of unwavering periodicity, of modern history as incremental change. Moreover, the call for justice to exercise historical judgement as a reparative force is what sets the groundwork for a public act of remembrance to transform the past, to suture up the divided memory of the past, presiding over a fugitive memory, making contemporary political time into a product shaped by the operations of legal historicity, and legitimating this deliberative process in such a way as to

overcome the untimely interruption it must first identify and bring to public attention in order to justify, and thus self-authorize, its own correction. The law's preoccupation with the power of remembrance holds the past to a common standard, and, where necessary, oversees the implementation of an ethical corrective. It exhorts us, repeatedly, to make the past thinkable by projecting onto past actions the commonsense premise that there is a shared test of experience by which the public "we" comes together. This shared test, as a thinly disguised blend of anxiety, nostalgia and uncertainty, therefore stands as part of the effort for the national imaginary to again solidify, with enough clarity of memory, to renounce, refute, or refuse to condone an action that has already taken place. A full-fledged political crisis is designed to be averted by subjecting a disturbance to juridical process. But such crises are also required in order for the authority of the law to appear before us. Justice is therefore history on the point of emerging from its own contested prehistory. Yet for this same reason it tends to fall short.

What the Garvey trial brings into remarkable focus is that the very desire to uphold the law is structured by what it lacks. The key piece of evidence went missing. The gap in the court transcript, as earlier described, marks a caesura in which the linear sequence of national time was thrown out of whack. What this lack makes clear is that there is a structure of desire that drives colonial law, and it also drives us to place our faith in the law to close up the global disorder that it creates. But there is also possibility for reversal. Rather than place our faith in the continuing unfolding of a calculable process, we may begin to strive for a knowledge of beginnings without endings, and do so by returning back in time to discern how the law functions to close off past memories of world-historical transition.

Tracing historical irregularities, discontinuities, gaps and jumps in the historical record allows us to view what Jacques Derrida terms the "readability" of the law ("Force of Law" 270).

The law produces its own "intelligibility" and "interpretability" to "give a sense, necessity, and above all legitimacy" to its own interpretive structure as it reads historical events in present time (Ibid). This readability of the past, which involves a legal process of making sense of the past, is produced by the law alongside "the discourse of its self-legitimation" (270). But what calls for a Pan-African revolution make clear is that the demand for black empowerment—and ultimately for a new web of global relations—involves a complete overturning of the existing understanding of the readability of national law as the sole arbiter of justice. Deliverance of justice for nonstate actors requires forming new radical geographies of global affiliation.

In the traces of the New Negro movement that the Bureau collected in its imperial archives, we find the conjuncture of the law as a discursive practice with the repeated insistence by members of the dispossessed population to leap out the tragedy of black history in order to remake the world, reconcile peoples, and enter into a new dialogue with the future possibilities previously rendered unavailable by the legal fictions that delimit racial identities.

I have tried to show that critical history should attend directly to literary works by African American writers who have attempted to call up these dream fragments of the black revolution that was rendered impossible and thus failed to arrive, not to destroy this past history as the law desires, more so to rearrange these dream fragments of a shattered horizon, pointing to the limits placed on human freedom when the force of justice to come is rendered impossible. The emphasis placed on imagining democratic alternatives to state space and to the regime of legalized dispossession allows for us to proceed to rethink the history of decolonial projects beyond limited postcolonial accounts that link the project of human freedom back to the nation state as if it were the only possible horizon. The immanent critique of imperial projects like the law functions to demonstrate the dangers inherent to leaving problems rooted in human freedom

and global connectivity to the systems of fragile states. Thinking with black writers as they engage with this broken horizon—cataloging past futures—operates in accordance with Derrida's assertion that "the memory of the undecidability must keep a living trace that forever marks the decision as such. . . . The undecidable remains caught, lodged, as ghost at least, but as essential ghost, in every decision, in every event of decision" ("Force of Law" 253). American law justified itself by inscribing an absolute limit between its historical authority and the nonstate social formations which it chose to single out. But also, tragically, by installing this limit, and foreclosing the political newness of the New Negro movement, thus deferring any change once signaled by the investment in nonstate social formation, the law itself became entrapped in its own myopic historical system. Borders were drawn. Restrictions were enforced.

What made the Black Star Line enterprise absolutely other to US imperial law was that it did not connect seamlessly to the dominant narrative of the present. Left uncorrected, the historical particulars might then be free to enter into different patterns of meaning, reorganizing the terms of political power, and reforming imagined futures for nonstate agents who wished to form new radical geographies of global affiliation. It would be a great exaggeration to say that Marcus Garvey's attempts to overcome the strictures of the colonial world-system made good on its promise of revolution, or that his vision of the future entirely escaped from the structural limits he severely challenged and ran up against. But the law's persistent attempts to render the inscription of a border between itself and a black leader who engaged in political acts to transform the existing arrangements of racial dispossession only further exposes the law's investment in its own obsessive rituals of force. The imperial force of law defers the very promise of a fair world, marking itself in opposition to that radical openness of undecidability as outside possibility.

The limit on the historical imagination that holds the exercise of justice apart from realizing itself is also what creates the ghostly appearance of other dreamworlds, mass utopian spectacles, phantasmagorical futures, which must also exist beyond the law's historical rendition of itself by itself. So somewhere hidden in the national desire for the law to be enacted we can find that same legal structure as it is haunted by the ghostliness that deconstructs the very assurance of its own presence. Just as the letter did not arrive in court, justice itself did not arrive, because the promise of a new future could not arrive. That nonarrival, as a delayed echo signaling a loss of potency, defines a host of concerns that might have the power to challenge the complacency of our faith in the law as an unassailable system.

The ghostly ships of the Black Star Line now exist on the broken horizon of modern legal time. Their spectral presence continues to haunt ongoing assurances that today's dominant juridical discourse can ever proceed in a straight, progressive line forward. For the provisional future that was cancelled out was little more than a theological whisper of what might be possible. Here we find the historical limit of the knowable. How can any future be foreclosed if, by definition, the future of justice has yet to arrive? How could it ever be possible to cancel out a potentiality if this by definition remains a capacity which stands as an inactive or unrealized force for world-historical change? Can potentialities ever truly become lost, even as the national fantasy of justice goes on to repeat itself in the persistent transmission of lost promises?

Rescuing the *past futures* of New Negro movement help us to visualize modes of life and forms of relation that once existed as alternatives to the regime of legalized dispossession that goes under the name of nation-state law. As Marcus Garvey explained toward the end of his legal battle: "It is argued that the stamp of the Black Star Line, and the material of the envelope, Exhibit 112, taking in connection with other exhibits in the case[,] furnished sufficient proof that

the envelope was one of the envelopes of the Black Star Line. The proof to which reference is made does not appear in the record. [. . .] These are all 'assumptions" (MGP 6: 73). In fact, Marcus Garvey was not even in the country on the date when the letter was postmarked as sent through the federal mails. He could never have sent the single piece of material evidence that would inevitably lead to his conviction. Such details were glossed over during the trial.

Acknowledging that such instrumentalized thought was prone to abuses and corruption, and lacking in credibility, the New Negro movement's turn away from the assumptions of state law, as a nonstate turn, was a search for new forms of global openness, affiliation, and awareness of the need for untimely insights to begin to displace the old ossified array of progressivist ambitions and tired political ways of thinking. As Gary Wilder reminds us, "Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indignant and distorted as it will appear one day in messianic light. Likewise, political action is often a matter of blind leaps illuminated by flashes of untimely insight" (259). Thinking about the blind leap required to advance toward an alternative lifeworld must itself be recognized as situated at the intersection of the actual and the imagined, bridging between the possible and the impossible, the familiar and the estranged, thereby insisting testing new capacities, strategies, and modes of self-government, reconciling peoples by mapping out new webs of relation and networks of affiliation that cut across the strictures of longstanding planetary divides.

The wish image of the New Negro, as a provisional sign, a mass utopian vision of black global affiliation, not fully formed but rather in the process of forming itself, functioned to momentarily shatter the imperial world-system into montage, making global relations appear again as undecided. A new mass cultural desire for historical self-determination was rendered visible with the mapping out of new global trade routes to reconstitute the future prospects of

black finance. That sign of black futurity opened onto a future world, if only briefly, by insisting on radical geographies that must exist beyond the territorialist assumptions of the power brokers presiding over the governmental institutions of modern nation-states. Any sense of stability afforded by those old mechanisms of power could only be maintained by placing limits on the historical imagination. The systems and structures of legal power that predetermine our sense of the historical past and hold us captive as national subjects in the present need to be rethought in order to liberate the future of political time from the strictures of perpetual crisis. As Marcus Garvey explained to the federal court judge when he was called to the witness stand in the closing stages of the trial: “Justice is above the law, your Honor” (MGT 1359).

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Appendix: Annotated UNIA Timeline

This annotated timeline presents a chronology of significant events in the UNIA movement. Specific dates have been provided whenever possible though crucial gaps remain; such lapses are suggestive of the fact that a linear methodology cannot, on its own, accurately account for the rupture of the world-historical order that the New Negro movement sought to call forth.

17 August 1887	Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. is born in the parish of St. Ann, Jamaica to parents Malcus ("Marcus") Mosiah Garvey, a master mason, and Sarah Jane Richards, a domestic servant and produce grower. Amy Jacques Garvey notes that he was one of "eleven children, but all except Indiana and Marcus died in childhood" (*Garvey & Garveyism* 2).
28 October 1890	Garvey is baptized into the Wesleyan Methodist Church.
1901	Garvey begins a printer's apprenticeship with his godfather, Alfred E. Burrows, master printer at Alfred E. Burrows and Company.
1903	Garvey leaves school at age 14 after completing Standard 6 at the Church of England school.
1904	Garvey transfers jobs to work in the branch printery of Alfred E. Burrows and Company in Port Maria, the capital town of the parish of St Mary.
1906	Garvey leaves Port Maria and moves to Kingston, Jamaica to be employed in the printing department of the Benjamin Manufacturing Company.
November 1907	Garvey is elected vice-president of the compositor's union branch of the Kingston's Typographical Union.
18 March 1908	His mother Sarah Jane Garvey dies at age fifty-six in Kingston.
December 1908	Printer's Union Strike is declared by Kingston printers.
January 1909	Strike efforts collapse and the Kingston Printer's Union is disbanded.
	Garvey publishes the inaugural issue of his first weekly newspaper, *Garvey's Watchmen*; it is discontinued after three issues.
20 April 1910	Garvey elected to the role of Assistant Secretary for the National Club of Jamaica, formed S. A. G. "Sandy" Cox. In addition to learning about the management of the political club's functional newspaper, *Our Own,* Amy Jacques Garvey notes that working on Cox's leadership run provided Garvey with crucial experience in "campaigning for a political candidate" (*Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa* 33).

Late 1910	Garvey leaves Jamaica for Central America.
1911	Garvey lives for several months in Port Limon, Costa Rica. He edits the daily newspaper *La Nacion/La Nation*. He then travels to Colon, Panama and edits a triweekly newspaper before returning back to Jamaica later that year.
February 1912	Garvey is employed on a casual basis as an extra hand for the Government Printing Office in Kingston.
12 February 1912	Outbreak of the Kingston Streetcar Riot. Years later, Garvey recalled that he had come to the aid of Governor Sir Sydney Haldane Oliver, a self-declared Fabian socialist, who was "struck in the head by a brick." Garvey and another eye-witness "shielded the Governor of the day from attack" in the streets (MGP 1: 45).
April-May 1912	Garvey leaves Jamaica for London.
	Garvey attends law and philosophy courses at Birkbeck College, London.
8 July 1913	Garvey applies to the British Colonial Office.
October 1913	Garvey publishes an article, "The British West Indies in the Mirror of Civilization: History Making by Negroes," in the *African Times and Orient Review.*
10 December 1913-early January 1914	Garvey visits Paris, Madrid, Monte Carlo, Boulogne, and other European cities.
14 January 1914	Garvey visits the Scottish cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.
Mid-January 1914	Garvey returns to classes at Birkbeck College.
June 1914	Garvey publishes an article in the *Tourist* titled: "The Evolution of Latter-Day Slaves: Jamaica, A Country of Black and White." He recounts the history of Jamaica for his London audience, detailing the unjust conditions which triggered the 1831 slave rebellion. "The uprising," Garvey writes, "did great damage to the properties of [slave] masters. . . . It was crushed by the militia, and a large number of the slaves were executed and maimed." Since then, however, the rule of law has installed an "atmosphere of equality and comradeship" on the island. "Unlike the American negro," he states, Jamaicans can vote. "The laws are framed by the local Legislative Council, of which white, colored and black men are members, elected by popular suffrage" (MGP 1: 42). The article was republished in Jamaica in the 13 July 1914 issue of the *Gleaner*.

17 June 1914- 8 July 1914	Garvey returns by ship to Jamaica. Garvey was listed "as only one of three third-class passengers on the *S. S. Trent*. On the passenger manifest, Garvey lists his occupation as a journalist. The *S.S. Trent* left port from Southampton, England, on 17 July 1914, stopping in Barbados, Trinidad, and Panama before arriving in Jamaica on 7 July 1914" (MGP 1: 45).
8 September 1914	Marcus Garvey writes a letter to Booker T. Washington after learning that the founder and president of the Tuskegee Institute was to travel to Europe for meetings. Garvey writes, "I have been keeping in touch with your good work in America. . . . I have just returned from a tour in Europe where I spent two years studying the Negro's place there. I am also hoping to be in England about March next year after paying a visit to the U.S.A. I intend lecturing in a few European Cities on the condition of the West Indian Negro" (MGP 1: 67).
17 September 1914	Booker T. Washington replies to Garvey's letter with an invitation to visit the Tuskegee Normal and Farm Institute.
20 July 1914	First meeting of the UNIA and ACL on the election of officers.
3 August 1915	The *Daily Chronicle* reports that Marcus Garvey, President of the UNIA, addressed a large gathering at their hall in Charles Street. He proposed the possibility of establishing in Jamaica a black technical institution modeled after Washington's Tuskegee Institute.
21 August 1915	The First Annual UNIA report is released. It notes that in the first year "the organization had been making headway," but to truly "promote within the country a universal confraternity and strengthen the bonds of unity and brotherhood among the races. . . . Money is needed to make a success of the object of the society" (MGP 1: 130).
1 October 1915	Garvey publishes a fund-raising appeal in the *Gleaner* for the UNIA to raise monies required to travel to Washington's Tuskegee Institute in order to gain the technical expertise and managerial skills required to establish an "Industrial Farm and Institute" in Jamaica.
14 November 1915	Death of Booker T. Washington in Tuskegee, Alabama.
22 November 1915	The UNIA holds a special memorial meeting. Garvey delivers a eulogy on "The Life and Work" of Booker T. Washington in Collegiate Hall.
4 February 1916	Garvey writes a letter to Emmett J. Scott, Secretary of the Tuskegee Institute, indicating that the UNIA leader had corresponded with Washington about a visit to America.

26 February 1916	The *Gleaner* publishes an announcement that R. R. Moton, newly appointed Principal of the Tuskegee Institute, will visit Jamaica. The article includes a retraction of a false report which "appeared in our columns yesterday." A letter "from the pen of Mr. Simeon De Leon . . . suggested that there is no organized negro society in this island to welcome Major Moton. The *Gleaner*'s correction notes that UNIA leader "Mr. Garvey is glad Major Morton is coming here" and that "he intends on arranging a welcome meeting" (MGP 1: 175).
29 February 1916	Garvey writes an apology to R. R. Morton for the UNIA reception that was ruined by the false media report: "I desired an interview with you, and I also desired that my association be honored justly by welcoming you and Mrs. Morton to our shores, and we were making arrangements to this end, but we were discouraged by the unkindly attitude of my personal enemies who have been using their unrighteous influence to defeat the purpose of having the Association do honour to an illustrious brother" (MGP 1: 177).
2 March 1916	Emmet J. Scott sends a letter to Garvey to confirm that if the UNIA leader still plans to travel to America that "we shall be very glad to welcome you to the Tuskegee and visit the institute" (MGP 1: 186).
6 March 1916	Garvey departs Kingston aboard the *S.S. Tallac.*
24 March 1916	Garvey arrives in New York City.
25 March 1916	Garvey visits the NAACP's *Crisis* office.
May 1916	An item printed in the *Crisis* (no. 12) announces that "Mr. Marcus Garvey, founder and president of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, is now on visit to America" (MGP 1: 194).
9 May 1916	Garvey holds his first public lecture in America at St. Mark's Church Hall. The small event launches Garvey yearlong speaking tour across America.
19 September 1916	A letter signed by more than twenty Jamaican expats living in the United States is printed in the *Jamaica Times*. It denounces Marcus Garvey's "deplorable picture of the prejudice of the Englishmen in Jamaica against the blacks" and "his preference for the prejudice of the American to that of the Englishman" (MGP 1: 196).
6 April 1917	*America declares war on Germany*
May 1917	Garvey returns to New York City after speaking in thirty-eight states. He forms the New York chapter of the UNIA.

12 June 1917 Hubert Harrison organizes “A Mass Meeting of Colored Citizens” at the Bethel Church to promote the inaugural meeting of The Liberty League of Negro-Americans. Marcus Garvey, still relatively unknown in Harlem, is introduced to the audience by Harrison. He speaks alongside Chandler Owen, Rev. Clayton Powell, and other prominent black organizers.

2 July 1917 *Race riots break out in St. Louis*

8 July 1917 Printed address by Marcus Garvey on “The Conspiracy of the East St. Louis Riots.”

25 November 1917 Marcus Garvey addresses a large gathering at the Lafayette Hall. *Home News* covers the event in their 2 December 1917 issue, noting that the UNIA leader spoke on “The Opportunities of the Young Negro.”

8 January 1918 *Woodrow Wilson delivers his Fourteen Points address to Congress.*

3 June 1918 Report by the American Protective League sent to the Bureau of Investigation: “I was informed by a Sargaent [sic] of the Police, badge No. 407, that there was a man named *Garvey* (colored) who preaches every night against white people, generally from 134th Street to 137th Street and Lenox Avenue. On several occasions he has tried to overhear the conversation, but being in uniform, the man would walk away and say no more” (MGP 1: 244).

17 June 1918. UNIA is incorporated in New York State.

July 1918 UNIA publishes the *Constitution and Book of Laws Made for the Government of the Universal Improvement Association, Inc., and African Communities League, Inc., of the World.*

31 July 1918 Certificate of Incorporation of the African Communities League is filed and recorded in New York State.

17 August 1918 First issue of *Negro World* published.

7 November 1918 Postal censorship authorities intercept parcel mailed by Garvey containing “twelve copies of an appeal to the racial instinct of the Negroes (calculated to incite hatred for the white race)” (MGP 1: 295-7).

8 November 1918 *Armistice signed*

10 November 1918. An open convention of the Negroes of the world is held by the UNIA at the Palace Casino. A promotional message for the event published in the *New York Call* ran with the headline “NEGROES OF THE WORLD HOLD CONVENTION FOR RACE’S WAR ARMS (MGP: 1: 284). At the event,

	"attended by perhaps 2,000 negroes" a set of "Peace Aims to the Allied Democracies of Europe and America" are formulated and expectations for "a proper recognition of the Negro's rights" (MGP 1: 288).
12 November 1918	Bureau of Investigation report for the period of 9 November, titled "In Re: Marcus Garvey, Negro Propaganda," references a printed circular by the UNIA indicating "that there would be a mass meeting on Sunday evening November 10th at the *Palace Casino, 135th Street and Madison Avenue*" (MGP 1: 285).
	A second Bureau report submitted the same day, titled "In Re: Negro Agitation Socialist Activities," confirms that "A convention of Negroes was held." Marcus Garvey's "speech bordered closely on sedition in that he prophesised a revolution of the negroes in the United States unless their demands were granted." As a result, "[t]his organization's movements will be followed from time to time" (MGP 1: 286)
30 November 1918	*Negro World*, vol. 1, no. 16, published with the headlines "NEGROES AT VERSAILLES";"LIBERTY! LIBERTY!"; it also includes an invitation for "The Men and Women of the Negro Race to Attend a Mass Meeting in Palace Casino" (MGP 1: 299).
1 December 1918	UNIA elects delegation to attend Paris Peace Conference at a mass gathering held at the Palace Casino.
9 December 1918	Emmett J. Scott interviews Marcus Garvey in Washington, D.C. at request of Military Intelligence Division.
19-21 February 1919	*Pan-African Congress, organized by W. E. B. Du Bois, meets in Paris.*
21 February 1919	Garvey appeals to the US Congress to reject ratification of the League of Nations.
February 1919	UNIA opens a restaurant in Harlem.
	Negro World banned in British Honduras (Belize).
1 March 1919	Eliézer Cadet, UNIA high commissioner to the Peace Conference, arrives in Paris.
9 March 1919	Cadet delivers the "Peace Aims" drafted by the UNIA at the 10 December mass meeting to the president and secretary of the Peace Conference.
	UNIA meets in New York and hears "Report of the Negro High Commissioner" at the Peace Conference.

27 April 1919	Garvey announces plan for launching the black steamship venture.
14 June 1919	Public debate between Marcus Garvey and William Bridges. A report in *Negro World* proclaims the UNIA leader's decisive victory over "William Bridges, a stepladder agitator of the avenue, who for over two years has been attacking the reputation of prominent public men and organizations for the purpose of finding a way to sell a lot of literary rubbish he publishes under the name of 'The Challenge'" (MGP 1: 435).
16 June 1919	Garvey questioned by New York Assistant District Attorney Edwin P. Kilroe about the Black Star Line's finances.
19 June 1919	Report published in the *World* newspaper: "DISTRICT ATTORNEY SINKS 'THE BLACK STAR LINE'. HEAD OF NEGRO STEAMSHIP COMPANY PROMISES NOT TO COLLECT ANY MORE FUNDS" (MGP 1: 431).
	Marcus Garvey pens a private letter to the News Editor of the *World* alleging that "your newspaper has misrepresented the truth to the reading public. . . . I ask that you send a reporter to the meeting to glean the facts for yourself as the veracity of your paper will be attacked by the principal speaker of the evening" (MGP 432).
27 June 1919	BSL files for incorporation in the State of Delaware to ward off the threat of litigation in the United States. Board of Directors are elected.
July 1919	Claude McKay publishes "If We Must Die" along with several other "Sonnets and Songs" in *The Liberator.*
12 July 1919	Internal letter at the Bureau of Investigation recommends that the New York division pay "particular attention be given to the activities of the negro radicals, particularly '*Marcus Garvey*'" (MGP 1: 458).
20-21 July 1919	*Outbreak of race riots in Washington, D.C.*
27 July 1919	*Outbreak of the Chicago Race Riots.*
	UNIA Liberty Hall is established. A meeting is held to dedicate the old Metropolitan Baptist Church building.
28 July 1919	Garvey is again questioned about BSL by New York Assistant District Attorney Kilroe.
2 August 1919	Garvey dismisses Edgar M. Grey and Richard E. Warner as BSL directors and officers.
	The *Negro World* publishes editorial: "Two Negro Crooks Use Office of

Deputy Attorney Kilroe to Save Themselves from Jail." Garvey writes that "two vagabonds robbed the association and its allied corporations, and when Mr. Garvey returned to New York he started an investigation to have the men arrested and they sought the aid of Kilroe, who offered them immunity if they would frame up Garvey." The editorial also alleged that "Kilroe plays the fool in New York by misusing his office as Deputy District Attorney to persecute honest Negro leaders (MGP 1: 475).

4 August 1919 — Kilroe files court complaint of libel against Marcus Garvey.

5 August 1919 — Garvey is arraigned before the City Magistrate.

12 August 1919 — J. Edgar Hoover writes two memorandums recommending that *The Messenger*, run by A. P. Randolph and Chandler Owen be investigated, and that Garvey's UNIA should likewise be investigated.

13 August 1919 — US Attorney General requests more information on pursuing deportation proceedings against Marcus Garvey.

15 August 1919 — Memorandum for the Director of Military Intelligence warns of the threat of the New Negro movement to national security.

Anonymous tip by an "American citizen" is received by U.S. Attorney General in Washington, D.C.; it questions Garvey's citizenship and calls for the UNIA leader's silent deportation.

Bureau of Investigation instructs New York Division to immediately forward its summary file of information on Garvey to prepare "at the earliest moment a case of deportation" (MGP 1: 482)

22 August 1919 — Bureau of Investigation report filed. Their top informant "who is probably the best in the United States […] considers Garvey and the "Negro World" the largest and most dangerous figure in Negro circles to-day" (MGP 1: 495).

25 August 1919 — Mass Meeting of the UNIA at Carnegie Hall to promote the sale of BSL stock. Garvey is introduced to the crowd by Chairlady as follows: "The *new negro* is here, a man, a full-fledged man, asking, demanding his rights of the powers that be—the Hon. Marcus Garvey**"** (MGP 1: 500 my italics).

28 August 1919 — Three indictments filed by grand jury against Garvey, charging him with libel against Edwin P. Kilroe, Edgar Grey, and Richard Warner.

29 August 1919 — Garvey is arraigned before Court of General Sessions and sent to Tombs prison; he is released on $3,000 bail.

3 September 1919	Garvey pleads not guilty to libel.
15 September 1919	Bureau of Investigation instructs its New York division of a plan to collect evidence required for Garvey's deportation proceeding.
	BSL Board of Directors authorizes purchase of the *S.S. Yarmouth.*
17 September 1919	BSL signs contract to purchase the *S.S. Yarmouth* for $165,000.
28 September 1919	Garvey arrives in Chicago to address BSL campaign meetings.
30 September 1919	Garvey arrested in Chicago for violation of Illinois Blue Sky Law.
2 October 1919	Garvey convicted in violation of Blue Sky Law and fined $100.
14 October 1919	Garvey wounded in assassination attempt by George Tyler in New York.
15 October 1919	George Tyler commits suicide in jail.
19 October 1919	Garvey's first public speech after his assassination attempt.
20 October 1919	Memorandum of Agreement signed between North American Steamship Company and the BSL to finalize sale of the *S.S. Yarmouth.*
30 October 1919	UNIA mass meeting in Madison Square Garden.
	Bureau intelligence report notes that "Negroes held a mass meeting . . . to celebrate the purchasing of the first vessel of the Black Star Line." In addition, "The Hon. Marcus Garvey, D.S.O.E. made a powerful speech from the Bible[.] 'The first shall be last and the last shall be first' and since the negro had just started to awaken and move they would be first" (MGP 2: 133).
31 October 1919	BSL hosts reception for stockholders aboard S.S. *Yarmouth.*
1 November 1919	Garvey appoints Joshua Cockburn commander of S.S. *Yarmouth.*
5 November 1919	Plans announced to operate second BSL ship, S.S. *Phyllis Wheatley.*
23 November 1919	S.S. *Yarmouth* leaves New York Harbor for maiden BSL voyage to West Indies and Central America.
10 December 1919	British Military Intelligence report raises concerns on the global repercussions of the New Negro movement. It also notes that the BSL stockholders will soon vote to increase its capital stock (MGP 2: 166).

11 December 1919	The *Gleaner* reports that Edmund Smith Green, Secretary of the Black Star Line, is wounded by a bullet in a botched assassination attempt, but "his condition is in no way serious" (MGP 2: 167). Motivations unknown.
11 December 1919	Claude McKay writes a letter from London to Marcus Garvey in Harlem.
25 December 1919	Garvey marries Amy Ashwood at Liberty Hall.
26 December 1919-8 January 1920	Garvey and Ashwood honeymoon in Montreal and Toronto.
14 January 1920	Claude McKay writes a letter to the *Negro World*; it is published in the 13 March 1920 issue.
17 January 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth* departs New York Harbor on commercial run to Havana.
19 January 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth* found sinking 101 miles offshore with a cargo of whisky in its hold. The boat is assisted by the US Coast Guard.
22 January 1920	Rumors of dissention among BSL and UNIA officers published in *New York News.*
23 January 1920	Negro Factories Corporation files certificate for incorporation.
3 February 1920	US Government prohibition agents seize the cargo aboard S.S. *Yarmouth.*
5 February 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth* permitted to sail again to Cuba.
9 February 1920	Agent #800 reports that plans are underway to relocate UNIA headquarters from New York to Monrovia, Liberia. Garvey will also "start his drive for another boat of the Black Star Line" once the "Yarmouth [is] rechristened the 'Frederick Douglas" (MGP 2: 202).
22 February 1920	Garvey announces plans to expand Liberty Hall.
24 February 1920	Strike by 12,500 West Indian employees working on the Panama Canal and Panama Railway; Garvey sends telegram in support along with financial assistance.
26 February 1920	Garvey introduced at UNIA meeting as "prospective president of the new republic to be established in Africa."
27 February 1920	Garvey announces that BSL is recapitalized at $10 million.
6 March 1920	Garvey and Amy Ashwood Garvey separate.

	UNIA Meeting at Liberty Hall held on the theme of "sacrifice and success." Garvey reassures nervous investors: "I desire to acquaint the stockholders of the Black Star Line and members of the UNIA of the fact that our ship, the S.S. Yarmouth, was welcomed in Havana, Cuba. A great reception was extended to the captain and crew by the civil population of Havana. Mr. Green Smith, the secretary of the Black Star Line, was sent down to see the unloading of the cargo" (MGP 2: 233).
16 March 1920	Internal Bureau report notes that Marcus Garvey's plans for a "line of steamships manned entirely by negroes [. . .] could practically control the exports and imports to the West Indies as regards the portion supplied by the negroes." Word was spreading fast. At a Seattle meeting, two local negro doctors were "urging negroes to put every available cent into stock to further the corporations indicated" (MGP 2: 262).
19 March 1920	*US Senate rejects Treaty of Versailles.*
27 March 1920	The *Emancipator* launches a series of investigative pieces on the Black Star Line with headline "Black Star Line Exposed," noting "that the success of Garvey was built on the ruins of Harrison's failure" to advance a "type of radicalism with a view to impressing race-consciousness and effecting racial solidarity among Negroes" (MGP 2: 271).
28 March 1920	Garvey addresses members at Liberty Hall on the "Enemies of His Organization."
3 April 1920	Cyril Briggs publishes notice of reward in the *Crusader* for information proving the BSL claims of ownership of the S.S. *Yarmouth.*
9 April 1920	Marcus Garvey, Sr., dies in Jamaica.
22 April 1920	BSL's S.S. *Shadyside* begins excursions along Hudson River.
7 May 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth* arrives in Philadelphia from the West Indies after Garvey redirected its course. The cargo hold contains a load of coconuts to be delivered to New York.
9 May 1920	BSL announces acquirement of its third vessel, S.S. *Kanawha.*
12 May 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth* arrives in Boston.
19 June 1920	BSL wins libel suit against the *Chicago Defender.*
21-23 June 1920	Garvey speaks in Philadelphia.

28 June 1920	BSL requests to change S.S. Kanawha from American to British registry.
16 July 1920	Garvey invites W.E.B. Du Bois to join the UNIA's August convention and nominate himself to run for the position of "leader of negro people of America," a subordinate position to Garvey as global leader. Du Bois declines on the basis that not enough information is publicly known. He requests that Garvey answer questions for the *Crisis* (MGP 2: 432).
17 July 1920	*Negro World* advertisement announces the S.S. *Shadyside* will make daily trips along the Hudson River. "It costs a small fortune for the poor workingman to take his family to [Coney Island]. The price of these trips up the Hudson are placed within the reach of everyone" and they will include "music furnished by the Black Star Line" (MGP 2: 427).
24-25 July 1920	Garvey speaks in Washington, D.C. A Bureau report filed July 26 enclosed typewritten notes of the meeting, which included the following assertions: "Your money invested in the Black Star Line is safer than in a bank, because it is invested in ships. You will say, 'well, what if a ship goes down in the ocean?'. If a ship of the Black Star Line goes down anywhere it is covered by [25] per cent more than its original cost and insurance. That is to say, we bought the *Frederick Douglass* for $168,000 and she is covered with $200,000 in insurance. If she goes down tomorrow or tonight, we make money and have lost nothing" (MGP 2: 461-2).
26 July 1920	First annual BSL stockholder's meeting.
September 1919	Cyril Valentine Briggs founds the African Blood Brotherhood.
April 1920	Scribner publishes Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color.* Black newspapers including "the *Negro World* and the *Crusader* [were] enthusiastic about Stoddard's tract because, in spite of its egregious white supremacism, it acknowledged the threat posed to Euro-American imperialism by the postwar upsurge of peoples of color" (Foley *Spectres* 63). The Bureau typescript of the UNIA meeting held in Washington, D.C. also contains a reference to Stoddard's new book, suggesting that Garveyites read the claim about the global decline of white supremacy with great interest.
1 August 1920	Opening of the UNIA's first International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World.
2 August 1920	Garvey addresses the crowd at Madison Square Garden. A special *Negro World Convention Bulletin* reports on "The Biggest Parade Ever Staged": "The day was ideal for the parade; not a cloud flecked the sky; no untoward incident arose to mar the propitiousness of the event. All Harlem was bedecked with streamers and bunting and flowers" (MGP 2: 491).

9 August 1920	UNIA convention commences discussions for a Declaration of Rights.
10 August 1920	Garvey apologizes in court to Kilroe and offers to publish a retraction.
18 August 1920	Convention nominates candidates for UNIA offices.
	Bureau report by P-138 notes that Garvey's vice president "J. Certain is now at odds, owing to the drastic nature of the Bill of Rights. It is expected that he will resign in a few days. Certain told me that he was an American Citizen and could never sign such a Bill" (MGP 2: 605).
20 August 1920	Convention elects Garvey as the provisional president of Africa.
21 August 1920	Garvey publishes retraction in *Negro World* of Kilroe, Warner, and Grey.
31 August 1920	UNIA convention closes. 31 August declared as international holiday of the Negro's independence.
11 September 1920	*Negro World* prints the Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World under the bold headline "**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE NEGRO RACE**: THE NEGRO EMANCIPATES HIMSELF AND HAS BECOME TRULY FREE."
15 September 1920	British Ambassador circulates dispatch to various British consulates confirming that Marcus Garvey was elected to a "position which, according to newspaper reports, is held to constitute him as 'King of Africa', and which in any case would seem to imply some measure of leadership over negroes both within and without the United States" (MGP 3: 12)
30 September 1920	S.S. *Yarmouth*, anchored near Brooklyn, collides with S.S. *West Pool*, and is towed away by tugboats.
12 October 1920	Black Star Line forced to defer its August and September ownership payments on the S.S. *Yarmouth*.
11 December 1920	Garvey travels to Canada on two-week campaign to promote Liberian Construction Loan project.
1 January 1921	BSL misses its original launching date for the ship to be named S.S. *Phyllis Wheatley*.
	The *Negro World* publishes an editorial by Marcus Garvey warning its members to look out for "unscrupulous Negroes" who are selling

	"worthless stock under the guise that the people are buying stock in the Black Star Line" (MGP 3: 118).
2 January 1921	Garvey delivers Liberty Hall address on "W. E. B. Du Bois and His Escapades."
3 January 1921	Internal Bureau report circulates unproven allegation that Garvey is selling "stock without a licence; also said to be a radical" (MGP 3: 119).
1 February 1921	Six-person UNIA delegation departs for Liberia.
14 February 1921	BSL suit for damages against NAACP settled out of court by statement of correction in March issue of the *Crisis*.
17 February 1921	Garvey obtains British Passport for travel to the West Indies
24 February 1921	J. Edgar Hoover writes Anthony Caminetti, Commissioner General of Immigration to ask for cooperation and assistance: "I am today in receipt of information that Marcus Garvey, the notorious negro agitator who has for many months been a cause of disturbance in this country is departing for Key West." US Immigration should monitor "ports of entry on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, on the lookout for the return of Garvey, "who is a British subject and who should be closely questioned and examined before being allowed to again enter the United States" (MGP 3: 235).
25-28 February 1921	Garvey sails from Key West to Havana.
1 March 1921	Charles L. Latham, American consul general in Jamaica, requests instructions from Department of State regarding issuing Garvey a visa.
21 March 1921	J. Edgar Hoover pens report: "I have been advised by a strictly confidential source, that MARCUS GARVEY, who is now in Cuba, if prevented from returning to the United States, will attempt illegal re-entry." "He will board" the Black Star line steamer S.S. *Kanawha* "and be placed ashore somewhere along the south-east Atlantic Coast, at night" (MGP 3: 262).
22 March 1921	Garvey arrives in Kingston, Jamaica. His arrival is reported in the *Gleaner*: "Dressed in a dark brown palm beach suit, with a Panama hat, and wearing on his vest the insignia of his office, Mr. Marcus Garvey, President of the [UNIA], and the acclaimed leader in the United States of America of the colored race, arrived here yesterday afternoon from Santiago [Cuba] on the S.S. La Belle Sauvage of Messrs. (MGP 3: 263).
23 March 1921	Garvey addresses mass meeting in Kingston; he states that "Jamaica is the

	most backward country" in Western Hemisphere, and insists that "You have your constitutional rights! Demand them! […] Jamaicans, wake up!" "Because God is not satisfied with prayers alone!" (MGP 3: 281-2).
25 March 1921	State Department refuses Garvey's request for a visa on account of his activities "in political race and agitation" (MGP 3: lv).
25-28 March 1921	S.S. *Kanawha* leaves New York for Cuba with forth passengers aboard; redirects back to New York for valve repairs; resails two days later.
1-3 April 1921	S.S. *Kanawha* hits pier in Norfolk Virginia, sustaining stern damage, en-route to Jacksonville Florida.
2 April 1921	Letter by Rev. Ernst Price in the *Gleaner* claims that "The Black Star Line is such an unreliable thing that [Marcus Garvey] does not even come to Jamaica himself on a Black Star ship, but one owned by white men. The UNIA has not united the Negro people. . . . So I press this question to you: 'What has Marcus Garvey done to warrant him in appealing to you to follow him?'" (MGP 3: 325).
9 April 1921	S.S. *Kanawha* arrives in Cuba.
10 April 1921	UNIA officials in New York hold meeting and print a report in the *Negro World* announcing: "BLACK STAR LINE STEAMSHIP '*PHYLLIS WHEATLEY*' TO BE FLOATED MAY 1—RALLY TO RAISE $40,000 NEEDED TO MAKE LAUNCHING OF BIG SHIP POSSIBLE ON THAT DATE" (MGP 3: 350).
11 April 1921	Garvey's application for visa is refused by American consul in Jamaica.
12 April 1921	Garvey travels to Costa Rica before heading to Panama.
26 April 1921	State Department directs American office in Costa Rica to refuse Garvey's request for a visa.
28 April 1921	US Shipping Board grants permit for the Black Star Line to inspect the S.S. *Orion*; BSL offers $190,000 for ship.
4 May 1921	Garvey departs Panama City and sails for Jamaica.
7 May 1921	Garvey arrives in Kingston.
9 May 1921	UNIA petitions State Department to allow Garvey to return to America.
10 May 1921	State Department instructs American consul general in Kingston to refuse visas to all crew should Garvey's name appear as a crew member.

11 May 1921	J. Edgar Hoover submits brief to State Department on Garvey's activities, but concedes that nearly all of the corroborating evidence is not attached: "exbibits No. 1, 2, 3 and 5 are missing. We were unable to secure affidavits" (MGP 3: 398).
14 May 1921	Black Star Line's purchase offer for S.S. *Orion* refused by US Shipping Board.
17 May 1921	S.S. *Kanawha* arrives in Kingston from Cuba.
28 May 1921	Garvey sets sail from Kingston aboard the S.S. *Kanawha*; it returns to port for repairs after three days at sea.
31 May-1 June 1921	*Outbreak of Tulsa Race Riots*
1-7 June	Garvey lodges complaints against S.S. *Kanawha*'s master and crew.
9 June 1921	Black Star Line offers $175,000 to purchase the S.S. Puerto Rico.
14 June 1921	American consul general investigates Garvey's charges against the S.S. *Kanawha*'s "captain and chief engineer," but finds "these men have not shown themselves to be incompetent and they have not committed an neglect of duty" (MGP 3: 465-6).
25 June 1921	State Department authorizes the consul to issue Garvey a visa.
28 June 1921	Visa issued; Garvey departs from Jamaica.
2 July 1921	Special Agent P-138 reports that Hudson Price, associate Editor of the *Negro World*, has informed him that "6 months ago the [N]egro [W]orld['s] circulation was only 25,000 copies but now it has increased to over 75,000" (MGP 3: 506).
17 July 1921	Garvey finally returns to New York.
20 July 1921	Garvey addresses welcome meeting in Liberty Hall.
26 July 1921	Second annual meeting of BSL stockholders.
1 August 1921	UNIA Convention opens. Garvey delivers welcoming address.
2 August 1921	US Shipping Board accepts BSL offer to purchase S.S. *Orion*.
5 August 1921	Charges made against UNIA secretary general Rev. Brooks for alleged misappropriation of funds.

15 August 1921	Delegates of the ABB attend UNIA convention. Cyril Briggs sends letter inviting Garvey "to a conference on those major questions in the work for African liberation in which both yourself and I, and our respective organizations are intensely interested" (MGP 3: 667).
24 August 1921	S.S. *Kanawha* arrives in Antilla, Cuba; crew abandons disabled ship. US Consul messages Black Star Line officials to "[c]able eleven hundred dollars send passengers New York"; "steamer threatens total loss unless looked after" (MGP 3: 714).
26 August 1921	ABB delegates banned from UNIA convention.
31 August 1921	Bureau investigates whether Garvey can be charged for a Mann Act violation. Garvey delivers closing address at UNIA convention.
September 1921	Jean Toomer travels to Sparta, Georgia to work as interim principal of the Sparta Agricultural and Industrial Institute.
3 September 1921	US Consul ships *Kanawha* passengers back to New York.
6 September 1921	Shipping Board recommends cancelation of *Orion* to the BSL.
7 September 1921	Garvey defends his Africa campaign and attacks the Pan-African Congress in Paris arranged by W. E. B. Du Bois. Garvey remarks on the "fact that the spirit of the Ku Klux Klan is in 80 to 90 percent of white Americans. Of course, only [imperial wizard] Simmons and his crew have nerve enough to avow openly the principles of the Klan and defiantly demonstrate Ku Klux Klanism; but it is in the heart and souls of others who are not manly and bold enough to demonstrate it (MGP 4: 34).
18 September 1921	BSL files 28 lawsuits in New York State Supreme Court against the crew of the S.S. *Kanawa*, charging them with a conspiracy to wreck the vessel.
23 September 1921	Confidential Informant #800 reports that this month's issue of *Crusader* features a *Garvey Must Go* campaign directed by Cyril Briggs against the UNIA leader. #800 encloses the magazine for the Bureau's records.
5 October 1921	Shipping Board reengages with the BSL to comply with the contract to buy the S.S. *Orion.*
10 October 1921	George Ruch sends a confidential memorandum to J. Edgar Hoover:

"Confidential informant '800' reported to me in Washington last Sunday and advised that at the present time Garvey's movement is in extreme financial straights. Very little money is coming to the parent body other than membership dues in the UNIA, and the sale of bonds has practically stopped" (MGP 4: 113).

November 1921 — Hubert Harrison resigns as editor of the *Negro World.*

18 November 1921 — Garvey sues Briggs for libel over the October issue of *Crusader*.

December 1921 — *Crusader* published with Argee's satirical cartoon "The Moses That Was To Have Been. The Judas That Is."

4 December 1921 — *World* magazine publishes article "Negro Conquest," which asserts that Marcus Garvey is trying to take over the world with "a navy of three rickety old ships." The article castigates the vision of the UNIA as little more than a confidence scheme. "This is the verbiage in which the appeal for funds is made. Reduced to prosaic and dusty fact, the Black Star Line's potentialities are largely imaginary" (MGP 4: 241).

7 December 1921 — Court order issued for the BSL to sell the broken-down S.S. Yarmouth to the National Dry Dock & Repair Co for the account balances remaining.

21 December 1921 — US Shipping Board agrees to contract for the BSL to gain possession of the S.S. *Orion.*

22 December 1921 — Black Star Line issues $10,000 down payment to Shipping Board.

28 December 1921 — Anonymous letter to Attorney Harry Daughtery declares that "I deem it as my duty as an American citizen of the collored [sic] race to call your attention to a serious matter." Marcus Garvey is a "Foreigner and a menace. . . . It is the second K.K.K. in America" (MGP 4: 313).

10 January 1922 — SDNY Court orders Garvey to appear for alleged criminal violation.

12 January 1922 — Garvey arrested for fraudulent use of the mails; he is held on $2500 bond.

26 January 1922 — *The Dyer Anti-Lynching bill passed by the House of Representatives, but bill to classify lynching as a federal felony fails to pass in the Senate.*

8 February 1922 — Bureau report notes that an undercover informant was sent to a UNIA event at Trinity Baptist (colored) Church. "He appealed to those present to redeem Africa, stating that they could never find a real home in this country. He stated that the Ku Klux Klan had been organized ostensibly to oppose the Jews, the Catholics and the Negroes, but that, in reality, they

	are not opposing the Catholics or the Jews,—their real objective is to crush the negro" (MGP 4: 493).
14 February 1922	Garvey explains S.S. Phyllis Wheatley (S.S. Orion) is in negotiations in *Negro World* article.
15 February 1922	Federal grand jury indicts Garvey among UNIA officials for violation of Sec. 215 of the federal criminal code.
20 February 1922	Elie Garcia, BSL treasurer, suspends sale of BSL stock.
21 February 1922	Orlando M. Thompson, BSL vice-president, gives witness statement to Bureau Agent Mortimer Davis. Thompson is asked: "Was Garvey in the United States when the first advertisement mentioning the Phyllis Wheatley appeared in the Negro World?" He replies: "No sir." Davis asks: "Who prepared those advertisements?" Thompson admits: "I think I had something to do with them." (MGP 4: 549).
23 February 1922	BSL requests that the US Shipping Board end purchase of S.S. Orion.
4 March 1922	Garvey embarks on nationwide fundraising tour.
7 March 1922	US Shipping Board offers BSL the return of its deposit on the S.S. Orion less expenses.
28 March 1922	Garvey ordered to pay $8,508 for non-delivery of liquor to Pan-Union Company.
15 June 1922	Divorce of Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood is finalized.
25 June 1922	Garvey interviews Edward Young Clarke, Imperial Kleagle (principal recruiter) for the Ku Klux Klan and sends a cable to Liberty Hall: "In conference of two hours he outlined the aims and objectives of the Klan. He denied any hostility toward the Negro as a race. He expresses sympathy for aims and objects of Universal Negro Improvement Association. He believes American to be a white man's country, and also states that the Negro should have a country of his own in Africa. He denied that his organization, since its re-organization, ever officially attacked the Negro. He has been invited to speak at forthcoming convention to further assure the race of the stand of the Klan. Interview will be published in Negro World" (MGP 4: 679).
July 1922	Chandler Owen publishes editorial in the *Messenger*: "MARCUS GARVEY! THE BLACK IMPERIAL WIZARD BECOMES MESSENGER BOY OF THE WHITE KU KLUX KLEAGLE." Part of a recent Garvey speech in New Orleans is reprinted: "This is a white man's country. He found it, he

	conquered it, and we can't blame him if he wants to keep it. I am not vexing the white man of the south for Jim Crowing me because I am black." Owen then retorts: "These are the words of that self-styled, courageous, so-called 'new Negro' leader who is going to free Africa of the white man's menace. This fool talk, too, emanates from a blustering West Indian demagogue who preys upon the ignorant" (MGP 4: 758).
4 July 1922	Garvey delivers Liberty Hall address after his four-month speaking tour.
8 July 1922	Garvey announces plan to ask for resignations of all UNIA officials at the annual convention.
22 July 1922	Garvey sends petition to the League of Nations.
27 July 1922	Garvey marries Amy Jacques, his personal secretary, in Baltimore.
1 August 1922	Opening of the Third Annual UNIA International Convention.
	Garvey and James W.H. Eason (Philadelphia minister and Leader of American Negroes) quarreled violently during 1922 convention, almost exchanging blows on platform before delegates at Liberty Hall.
2 August 1922	Convention elects UNIA delegates for the League of Nations.
3 August 1922	UNIA holds trial proceeding for impeachment of J. D. Gibson.
6 August 1922	Pickens attacks Garvey at a Friends of Negro Freedom Meeting.
7 August 1922	UNIA impeachment trial of Adrian F. Johnson for disloyalty.
14 August 1922	Garvey suggests the formation of new party, the African party.
15 August 1922	At business meeting the Black Star Line is revealed as insolvent; plans for a subsidiary company are passed.
23 August 1922	Impeachment trial of Eason begins.
30 August 1922	Convention Report indicates that "trouble in the association and its finances was not due to any failure in the business activities of the association, so much as the inefficiency, incompetence and dishonesty of the individuals who handled the business. The business of the association had aggregated millions of dollars, and it had increased in greater proportion than the development of officers who were responsible for handling the business and hence mistakes were made" (MGP 4: 1033-4).
September 1922	Article in the *Crisis* by W. E. B. Du Bois claims that the BSL "steamship

	venture was the foundational stone of Garvey's rise to popularity among Negroes." It notes that "a definite plan to unite Negrodom by a line of steamships was a brilliant suggestion and Garvey's only contribution to the race problem. But, asked the critic, can it be done?" Du Bois weighs the "brilliant" prospect of uniting the black world through commercial enterprise against the shaky "history of the Black Star fleet" (MGP 5: 33).
11 September 1922	UNIA delegates to the League of Nations arrive in Geneva.
	Ousted UNIA official J.W.H. Eason forms rival Universal Negro Alliance.
22 November 1922	The *Crisis* publishes "See What Garvey Has Done," which contains public records of Garvey's legal statements provided in the lead up to the court case under oath.
27 November 1922	The Marcus Garvey trial, scheduled to appear in SDNY court, postponed.
December 1922	Jean Toomer finishes writing *Cane*.
December 11 1922	Garvey pens *Negro World* editorial "The Present Position of the Negro," blaming the failed Dyer Anti-Lynching bill on the NCAAP's political tactics. "They raised a great howl," Garvey notes, but their provocations backfired, "and made every Senator throughout the nation to understand that the Negro had constituted himself a political power, a political factor, and that no Senator or no Congressman could continue his career except with the good will of the Negro. No white man is going to stand for that. What has happened, therefore? The turning down of the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill in the Senate was but an act of resentment of the part of the Legislators of this country to prove to the Negro that they were not going to pass anything on the threat of our race" (MGP 5: 156-7).
26 December 1922	Trial postponed again.
January 1923	Press release issued to "The White Press of the World by Marcus Garvey. As an explanation of the aims and Objects of the [UNIA] of which he is President-General" (MGP 5: 202).
	W. E. B. Du Bois publishes second article in the *Crisis* on "The UNIA." It focuses more specifically on the leadership convention and also notes that "Mr. Garvey's claims of membership of the UNIA have been untrue even fantastic" (MGP 5: 208).
1 January 1923	Eason is shot in New Orleans after speaking at a black church. In hospital, Eason described the attack by who he believed were three Garveyites to ensure he did not testify at the upcoming Garvey trial.

4 January 1923	Eason dies of complications from gunshot wounds.
12 January 1923	Garvey has Elie Garcia arrested for petty larceny.
15 January 1923	Chandler Owen sends a letter to Special Agent James E. Amos indicating that "he has some information in regard to a letter or communication he was going to send to the Attorney General, and also to the press of the country, concerning MARCUS GARVEY" (MGP 5: 182).
23 January 1923	Editorial Letter by Garvey is published an answer to his critics in the *Negro World*; it also features a discussion of "The Enemies of the UNIA" (MGP 5: 193).
4 March 1923	Elie Garcia is convicted of larceny.
22 March 1923	Dyer and Shakespeare are found guilty of manslaughter for Eason's death.
2 April 1923	Dyer and Shakespeare each sentenced to 18-20 year prison terms.
14 May 1923	Garvey files writ to have Judge Mack dismissed from case due to his NCAAP affiliation.
18 May 1923	Garvey's trial for mail fraud begins; Assistant US Attorney Maxwell Mattuck delivers his opening address.
15 June 1923	Garvey makes the final address at his trial.
16 June 1923	Dyer and Shakespeare lose their appellant cases.
21 June 1923	Garvey is sentenced to five years in jail for mail fraud.
25 June 1923	Garvey's bail request pending appeal is rejected.
Early July 1923	Former *Negro World* editor Hubert Harrison publishes exposé "Marcus Garvey at the Bar of United States Justice" in the Associated Negro Press.
5 July 1923	The Marcus Garvey Committee on Justice sends letter to the US Secretary of Agriculture and encloses a "Petition to the President of the United States for Justice."
6 July 1923	Public petition for the freedom of Marcus Garvey is delivered to the Attorney General in Washington.
August 1923	International UNIA Convention cancelled; local divisions in Montreal, Washington, D.C., and New York hold local meetings instead.

2 August 1923	President Warren G. Harding dies in office; Garvey sends condolences to First Lady Mrs. Harding.
5 August 1923	*New York World* publishes Garvey's autobiographical article.
September 1923	*Current History* publishes Garvey's article "The Negro's Greatest Enemy."
10 September 1923	Garvey is released on bail after three months in prison.
13 September 1923	Mass Meeting at Liberty Hall celebrates Garvey's return.
25 September 1923	Immigration Department begins preparing new deportation case against Garvey based on his federal conviction.
3 October 1923	Garvey commences letter writing campaign to US officials on the "Negro problem."
6 October 1923- 2 November 1923	Former BSL Captain Hugh Mulzac publishes a series of articles in the Cleveland Gazette exposing "Why the Black Star Line Failed!"
31 October 1923	Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey arrive to visit the Tuskegee Institute.
1 November 1923	Garvey addresses Tuskegee Institute students.
5 December 1923	Garvey pens a letter of introduction to the President King of Liberia for the UNIA delegation. He appeals to the King's sentiments, noting that "a visit to America has bright you [in] close touch with the race problem, which presses greatly upon our people causing a great dissatisfaction, which leads large numbers of them to feel that the only place where they could have permanent happiness and peace is Africa, their Fatherland." Garvey also states that the UNIA "intends to have two large ships equipped between September and December 1924, for permanent trade between Liberia and America. We are now laying plans for the carrying out of this project" (MGP 5: 508).
11 December 1923	UNIA delegation leaves for Liberia.
1 January 1924	Editorial letter by Garvey in the *Negro World* announces: "The Universal Negro Improvement Association advocates the uniting and blending of all Negroes into one strong healthy race. It is against miscegenation and race suicide" (MGP 5: 512).
17 January 1924	Garvey gives address at Harvard.
2 February 1924	*Negro World* adds French section and a section edited by Amy Jacques

	Garvey devoted to the interests and pursuits of women.
16 March 1924	UNIA mass meeting held at Madison Square Garden.
22 March 1924	Announcement that the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company will replace the BSL.
May 1924	Du Bois pens another *Crisis* editorial against Garvey; this time Garvey is labeled "A Lunatic or A Traitor" (MGP 5: 583).
June 1924	Firestone Rubber Company signs preliminary rubber agreement with the Liberian Government, causing UNIA members to speculate that their "expulsion was related to the new foreign investment" (Stein 213).
3 June 1924	Garvey writes the US Shipping Board to schedule an appointment for the purchase of new ships.
7 June 1924	Garvey releases printed program for the August 1924 convention. The Bureau of Investigation obtains a copy for its records.
	Negro World article communicates UNIA plans to raise a $2,000,000 fund to develop a Colonization Program in "the black republic of Liberia, west coast Africa, as a permanent home for scattered negroes of the world who desire to live in a country of their own where they may enjoy the benefits of real freedom, liberty, and democracy" (MGP 5: 595).
11 June 1924	US Shipping Board Manager contacts General Counsel. He indicates that he "recently testified in the New York District case brought against Garvey," and that the former president of the Black Star Line is undertaking a new venture under the name of the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company, Incorporated. (MGP 5: 600)
14 June 1924	Editorial in the *Negro World* solidifies the Back to Africa campaign with a colonization program for Liberia: "Leave that part of the white man's civilization in New York, in Harlem, in America, because we have a new civilization in Africa. We have made arrangements whereby every industrious family going to Liberia will have twenty-five acres of land" (MGP 5: 590).
25 June 1924	*New York World* advertisement states that the colonization of Africa by Negroes is "Similar to Homeland in Palestine for Jews" (MGP 5: 610).
10 July 1924	The Liberian consul general to the United States refuses to grant visas to UNIA members. A press release notes that "no person or persons leaving the US under the auspices of the Garvey movement in the US will be allowed to land in the Republic of Liberia" (MGP 5: 611)

1 August 1924	Fourth International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World opens.
3 August 1924	Garvey cables world leaders including Ghandi, Mussolini, and the Pope.
	Garvey addresses convention and responds to attacks by Du Bois, Johnson and Pickens, noting that the "Ku Klux Klan is a white man's issue. You talk about the Ku Klux Klan being opposed to the Jew, the Catholic, and the Negro. Nonsense! The Negro has to fight the Catholic, the Jew, and the American white man. . . . [Pickens] does not believe in the potency of the Negro; he does not believe that the Negro can do anything for himself. President Coolidge has told you, and I am glad he has, 'Negroes, damn your souls forever, work for yourselves'. (applause) You must recognize this one thing—this is a world of races. There is no brotherhood of man anywhere in this world. No such animal exists" (MGP 5: 649).
8 August 1924	Dyer and Shakespeare are acquitted of Eason's death after a yearlong court battle.
9 August 1924	Special Agent Joseph G. Tucker writes one of several reports on his ongoing investigations into Garvey's 1921 tax return.
13 August 1924	Garvey announces the acquisition of the S.S. *General Goethals* for the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company.
18 August 1924	Marcus Garvey addresses convention: "The lynchings and burnings in the South attributed to the Klan paled into insignificance when compared with the wholesale killings and destruction caused by the working classes during the riots which took place at so many different places in the United States recently. The Jews and Catholics can easily fight the Ku Klux Klan because they own their factories and other commercial places where they can get employment, but when the Negro starts to fight his meal ticket is cut off, as he has no such establishments to give him employment" (MGP 5: 749).
19 August 1924	Negro World editorial by Marcus Garvey announces: "New Negro Steamship Company Secures First Ship For Africa" (MGP 5: 756).
22 August 1924	Article by Robert Minor is printed in the *Daily Worker* reporting that "Mr. Garvey admitted in his speech that the Klan kills and terrorizes Negroes. Mr. Garvey has read to the convention long articles published by the Klan sneering at the Negro as similar to 'baboons and monkeys'. Mr. Garvey admits from one corner of his mouth that the Klan is a reactionary terror organization against the negro, while with the other corner of his mouth he tells his followers that they cannot attack the Klan without even so much as words" (MGP 5: 768-9).

23 August 1924 — Garvey delivers annual report to convention.

September 1924 — Garvey embarks on national promotional tour for the sale of Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company stock.

2 September 1924 — UNIA delegates and deputies draft and endorse a petition for African repatriation and send it to President Coolidge. The statement of facts begins by noting that the "Negro was brought to this country much against this will from Africa," and by directly confronting how the "United States of America has acted as a deter[e]nt to the higher aims and aspirations of the Negro," the petition asks for "your help and co-operation to the end that our race be assisted in establishing a nation of its own on the continent of Africa" (MGP 6: 4).

18 October 1924 — Appeal brief of *Marcus Garvey v. United States* filed in the US Circuit Court of Appeals.

1 November 1924 — Advertisement in the *Negro World* for tickets to the rechristening celebration of the S.S. *General Goethals* as the S.S. *Booker T. Washington* to be held in New York Harbor.

2 November 1924 — S.S. *General G. W. Goethals* rechristened the S.S. *Booker T. Washington* of the Black Cross Navigation Steamship Line.

16 November 1924 — Garvey explains to UNIA membership in a speech at Liberty Hall that the radical program to "stir up revolution in Africa" had to be left behind because "things that we could have said in 1914, up to 1920 we cannot say now." In the "era of good judgement" and "diplomacy," he adds, "the real action that we must take to win this great fight of emancipating this struggling, down-trodden race of ours . . . will see the [UNIA] adopting a new line of penetration in the industrial, commercial and political world that will bring about in the new future the real results that we want" (MGP 6: 47-8).

10 December 1924 — US Attorney's office for SDNY files writ in the US Circuit Court of Appeals to recommend that the original judgement be affirmed.

15 December 1924 — Marcus Garvey's reply brief is filed in the US Circuit Court of Appeals.

10 January 1925 — Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company finalizes purchase of S.S. *Goethals.*

18 January 1925 — S.S. *Goethals* departs on inaugural voyage to the Caribbean.

3 February 1925 — S.S. *Goethals* arrives in Havana, Cuba.

	Garvey's appeal is denied by the US Circuit Court of Appeals.
4 February 1925	Judge Augustus Hand signs a bench warrant for Garvey's arrest.
	Article runs in the *New York Times*: "Garvey May Surrender"; prints telegram that Mattuck received: "Right-thinking Negroes everywhere will applaud you for having caged the tiger at last" (MGP 6: 87).
5 February 1925	Garvey returns from visit in Detroit via Albany and is arrested in the New York 125th Street train station.
6 February 1925	Garvey arraigned.
7 February 1925	Garvey moved from Tombs prison and taken to Atlanta in federal custody.
	The *New York Times* runs article with headline: "GARVEY GOES SOUTH TODAY TO SERVE TERM: NEGRO SWINDLER WILL BE OUT OF ATLANTA IN 3 ½ YEARS IF HIS RECORD IS GOOD" (MGP 6: 92).
8 February 1925	Garvey incarcerated in Atlanta Federal Penitentiary with convict number 19359.
10 February 1925	S.S. *Goethals* arrives in port at Kingston, Jamaica.
12 February 1925	Capitan and officers of the S.S. *Goethals* report to the American consul that no funds have been received to pay or provide rations to the crew.
14 February 1925	Garvey appoints UNIA management team to take over in his absence.
12 March 1925	Amy Jacques Garvey publishes pamphlet *Was Justice Defeated? A Critique of Garvey's Trial and Conviction.*
13 March 1925	S.S. *Goethals* arrives in port at Colón, Panama; Capt. Hiorth deserts vessel; officers then file suits for nonpayment.
16 March 1925	Garvey submits appeal petition to the US Supreme Court.
23 March 1925	US Supreme court denies Garvey's petition.
15 April 1925	Charles V. Vaughan appointed new Captain of the S.S. *Goethals.*
22 April 1925	Workers (Communist) Party of America issues declaration protesting imprisonment and calling for Garvey's immediate release.
25 April 1925	S.S. *Goethals* disembarks Port Antonio, Jamaica for America.

28 April 1925	Marcus Garvey's Pardon Delegation submits petition for release to President Coolidge.
1 May 1925	Garvey appoints Sherril Acting UNIA President-General.
6~8 May 1925	S.S. *Goethals* arrives in Jacksonville, Florida.
11 May 1925	Garvey's former attorney George Battle pens a private letter to Attorney General John Sargent requesting a pardon. He notes that "it is to my mind a great injustice to judge Mr. Garvey and his plan by this standard [of commercial enterprise]. He did not appeal to the commercial instincts of his people. His appeal was to the instincts of liberty and opportunity. . . . If these people are prepared to say, as I understand they are, that free opportunity was their goal and expectation, and not the profits that might come from the operation of the Black Star Line, there seems to me to be no doubt that Mr. Garvey should be pardoned" (MGP 6: 153).
14 May 1925	Ku Klux Klan members board S.S. *Goethals*, threaten passengers and crew; crew members on shore driven into swamp.
2 June 1925	Garvey begins extensive correspondence with Earnest S. Cox of the Anglo-Saxon's Club; Garvey's letter of initial contact notes that an initial pamphlet "Let My People Go," which advocated racial segregation and African repatriation, has "been brought to my attention by my wife[.] I appreciate highly the effort you are making" (MGP 6: 160).
6 June 1925	*Negro World* publishes Garvey's seminal editorial, later reprinted and retitled "African Fundamentalism."
June 1925	John Powell, president of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America visits Garvey in the Atlanta jail.
8 July 1925	US Attorney for New York recommends that Garvey's application for clemency be denied.
14 July 1925	US Postal Office Inspector recommends that Garvey's application for clemency be denied.
8 August 1925	Garvey cables Cox praising his book *White America*. Garvey notes that although it is an accurate depiction of the white viewpoint, "I do not and cannot agree with much of the historical data in reference to the black man. As a Negro I have opinions of my own, but I fully appreciate the fact that you have written from the Whiteman's v[ie]wpoint and in that I heartily agree and am in full sympathy" (MGP 6: 224).

14 August 1925	Garvey reprimands staff of the *Negro World* for publishing an editorial critical of Cox and Powell.
Mid-September 1925	Garvey requests special travel permit from Attorney General to straighten out UNIA financial affairs; permission denied.
28 October 1925	John Powell Addresses UNIA meeting at Liberty Hall.
2 November 1925	American Negro Labor Congress publishes demand for Garvey's release.
23 December 1925	Pardon Attorney, at the direction of Attorney General, writes Speaker of the House to confirm that Garvey's application for clemency is still under consideration.
26 December 1925	Garvey submits second application for clemency.
Late 1925	Alain Locke publishes *The New Negro*; he dedicates the anthology volume "To the Younger Generation."
January 1926	UNIA office building at 52 West 135th Street sold for back taxes.
6 January 1926	Pardon Attorney writes immigration commissioner about Garvey's deportation status, asking whether deportation could be arranged within 30 days if sentence commuted.
8 January 1926	US Attorney for New York clarifies that two years of imprisonment is required for a commuted sentence.
23 February 1926	Amy Jacques Garvey discusses Garvey's case with Attorney General in Washington, D.C.
16 March 1926	Amy Jacques Garvey addresses emergency UNIA convention.
20 March 1926	New officers loyal to Garvey elected at convention; Fred Toote elected new Acting President-General.
29 March 1926	S.S. *Goethals* sold at public auction in New York for one-quarter its purchase price.
3 April 1926	Cyril Briggs defends Garvey and blames the mismanagement of acting UNIA officials for the loss of S.S. *Goethals*.
24 July 1926	UNIA purchase Smallwood-Corey Institute in Virginia and renames it Liberty University.
12 September 1926	Liberty University opens for fall session.

Late December 1926	Nine members of jury that convicted Garvey in mail fraud trial sign affidavit recommending commutation of Garvey's sentence. Jury members confirm that they have been informed that "a warrant of deportation has been issued against the said MARCUS GARVEY" and that deportation upon release would confirm that he "he has been sufficiently punished" (MGP 6: 473).
17 January 1927	Garvey resubmits application for clemency.
25 February 1927	Attorney General holds short interview with UNIA officials.
March 1927	Prominent members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America write President Coolidge in support of Garvey's application for clemency.
8 June 1927	Earl Little, father of Malcolm X, and president of the International Industrial Club of Milwaukee, appeals to Coolidge for Garvey's release.
21 July 1927	UNIA defaults on Liberty University debt payments.
6 August 1927	Toote resigns as Acting President-General.
14 September 1927	Liberty Hall is auctioned.
15 September 1927	Garvey orders reincorporation of Liberty University, removing Toote from the board of trustees.
14 October 1927	Garvey threatens Toote with fraud arrest if he does not deliver Liberty University deed to the new trustees.
12 November 1927	Attorney General officially recommends Garvey's sentence be commuted.
14 November 1927	Department of Labor confirms that no stay of 1925 deportation warrant will be granted.
18 November 1927	President Coolidge commutes Garvey's sentence.
	Garvey released from Federal Atlanta Penitentiary and transported in federal custody to New Orleans.
29 November 1927	Garvey pens special message to UNIA followers: "The first chapter in the history of the Universal Negro Improvement Association is written, and I am about to open the second chapter in the urge toward African Nationalism" (MGP 6: 617).
2 December 1927	Garvey delivers farewell address from deck of the S.S. *Saramacca* to

	followers who crowd dock in the rain to hear his final speech in America.
10 December 1927	Garvey is greeted in the port of Kingston, Jamaica by mass demonstration.
26 December 1927	Amy Jacques Garvey arrives in Kingston from New York.
29 April 1927	Garvey, Amy Jacques Garvey and Hazel Escridge sail for England aboard the S.S. *Green Briar*.
6 June 1927	Garvey delivers landmark speech on colonialism and the rights of Africans at the Royal Albert Hall, London.
2 July 1927	Surveillance report on Garvey's speech filed with the US State Department and the Bureau of Investigation.
Early spring 1928	Harper and Brothers publishes Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem.*
11 September 1928	Garvey publishes *Negro World* editorial condemning the Harlem Renaissance writers as "a damnable liable against the Negro." He reviews Claude McKay's first novel *Home to Harlem*, arguing that the writer should be proud of his West African ancestry and stop falsely speculating that his parents were from Madagascar (MGP 7: 238-42).
23 November 1928	Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey return to Jamaica.
15 December 1928	Garvey announces Kingston as the site of the 1929 UNIA convention.
23 June 1929	Outbreak of riot at Liberty Hall between rival UNIA members.
1 August 1929	1929 UNIA convention opens in Edelweiss park.
12 October 1929	*Negro World* announces closure of Liberty University.
29 September 1929	Garvey publishes first issue of Jamaican daily newspaper, the *Blackman.*
April 1930	*Blackman* becomes a weekly; all publication is suspended in early 1931.
31 May 1932	Garvey again under investigation, this time by the US Post Office for conducting an illegal lottery through federal mails.
11 June 1932	Last issue of *Negro World* with Marcus Garvey listed as managing editor.
July 1932	Garvey begins new publication *New Jamaican.*
17 October 1933	Last issue of *Negro World* published in New York.

November 1934	Garvey announces relocation of world UNIA headquarters to London.
June 1935	Amy Jacques Garvey establishes restaurant and social club for African students and black activists in London.
26 October 1936	Garvey provokes letter writing campaign in protest of racist films and radio broadcasts.
12 August 1927	Garvey travels to Toronto to attend regional UNIA conference.
September 1927	Garvey tours Canadian Provinces.
7 October 1937	Garvey boards S.S. *Lady Nelson* in Halifax.
20 November 1937	Garvey returns to London.
3 September 1939	*Britain and France declare war on Germany.*
20 January 1940	Garvey experiences cerebral hemorrhage; his right side is paralyzed.
10 June 1940	Garvey dies in London.
21 July 1940	Memorial service for Garvey at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, New York.
10 November 1964	Garvey's remains are returned to Jamaica.
11 November 1964	Garvey declared Jamaica's first National Hero.