Hemingway and the Black Renaissance
Hemingway and the Black Renaissance

Edited by
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“Hemingway exemplified the spirit of the twenties in America more vividly than any other contemporary American novelist.”

—Wallace Thurman, *Infants of the Spring* (1932)

“When Hemingway wrote *The Sun Also Rises*, he shot a fist in the face of the false romantic-realisists and said: ‘You can’t fake about life like that.’ . . . [Hemingway] has most excellently quickened and enlarged my experience of social life.”

—Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (1937)

“Hemingway is tremendous, especially when he describes a character’s emotions. He’s a writer of great emotional power. He doesn’t make any judgments about man, society, or life in general.”

—Chester Himes, Interview, “Conversation with Chester Himes” (1955)

“I consider that I have many responsibilities, but none greater than this: to last, as Hemingway says, and get my work done. I want to be an honest man and a good writer.”

—James Baldwin, “Autobiographical Notes” (1955)

“. . . while one can do nothing about choosing one’s relatives, one can, as an artist, chose one’s ‘ancestors.’ . . . Because Hemingway loved the American language and the joy of writing, . . . the unique styles of diverse peoples and individuals come alive on the page. Because he was in many ways the true father-as-artist of so many of us who came to writing during the late thirties.”

—Ralph Ellison, “The World and the Jug” (1963)

Hemingway’s prose possesses “an aura of an echo, something incantatory, almost sacred, . . . a vibration, . . . close to prayer, . . . a ritual, . . . a veneration that creates that echo that is in Hemingway’s style.”

—Derek Walcott, “Hemingway and the Caribbean” (2010)
The editors met in Washington DC at MLA 2005, when GEH put on the “Hemingway and the Black Renaissance” panel for one of the Hemingway Society sessions. A year later we mapped out the book’s themes over a bottle of Rioja at the historic HS conference in Ronda, Spain. Indeed, several contributions to this book came about through HS meetings, including the annual convention in Kansas City, in 2008. Consequently, we wish to acknowledge our debt to the Hemingway Society for giving us an opportunity to share our scholarship and ideas.

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In his first memoir, *The Quality of Hurt: The Early Years* (1972), Chester Himes recalls a French newspaper reporter asking his opinion of Ernest Hemingway. Posed during the 1950s by a member of the Parisian press who anticipated interviewing the newly arrived black American author, the question is apposite. Like his friend Richard Wright, the black émigré writer who became a kind of phenomenon among French intellectuals and journalists during the postwar period, Himes is following in Hemingway’s footsteps by taking up the role of the deracinated American author who has relocated in Paris. Into the bargain, Himes has fashioned through his prison and crime fiction a reputation as a leading exemplar of the hard-boiled style, a mode recognized as synonymous with Hemingway. Himes’s reply to the Parisian journalist’s inquiry offers insight into the African American writer’s thinking on the subject of Hemingway’s writing:

I burst out laughing. I apologized for my apparent rudeness and explained that her question had reminded me of an incident in a restaurant in New York called Cyrano’s, where I was having a drink at the bar with my first editor, Bucklin Moon, while awaiting a table for supper. There was an elegantly dressed drunk occupying the stool next to me who was saying: “I don’t really like *A Farewell to Arms.* After I had read it for the fifth time I really decided I didn’t like it.” (186)
The Quality of Hurt repeatedly invokes Hemingway, the autobiography’s remarks taking on something of a patchy conversation with the senior author, and the majority of the references clearly indicate Himes’s high regard for Hemingway’s literary art. Indeed, interleaved into the impression Himes gives that the white author’s writing served as a model for his own literary labor is the notion that Hemingway’s narratives played a vital role in forming the black author’s perception of existential experience. When Himes narrates his experience of a Spanish bullfight, he naturally thinks of Hemingway’s Death in the Afternoon (1932), but the reflection is intensely personal. Himes recalls how Hemingway’s study of bullfighting related to his own narrow surviving of the scandalous 1930 “Easter Monday” prison fire while serving his seven-and-a-half-year term in the Ohio State Penitentiary. Death in the Afternoon’s “forced contemplation of death” assisted Himes in facing forthrightly the authentic meaning of violence and mortality and therefore the essence of life (326). The model of Hemingway’s compelled confrontation with reality helped the black author forge his characteristically straightforward style, Himes suggests, and, paralleling his direct approach, informed the controversial author’s often shocking subject matter. And in the 1955 interview granted Annie Brièrre, the French journalist who initially had solicited the black author’s estimation of Hemingway, Himes spells out in certain terms his veneration for the white author: “Hemingway is tremendous, especially when he describes a character’s emotions. He’s a writer of great emotional power. He doesn’t make any judgments about man, society, or life in general” (2). Such are precisely the sort of objectives Himes aspired to in his own writing.

Himes was by no means the only African American author of note to display an intense esteem for Hemingway, however, as those who are familiar with Ralph Ellison’s praise for the white author know. It may not seem surprising that two black authors of the mid-twentieth-century period should set great store by Hemingway’s stimulus except that Himes and Ellison in their time inhabited something like polar positions in the world of African American letters. Himes regarded himself and indeed was critically perceived as the brash chronicler of explicit violence in African American life, a writer who turned a glaring light on American society. Alternatively, Ellison dedicated himself to generating a lyrical fiction that would wed African American folktale and jazz musical forms to avant-garde modernist prose techniques, with a view toward fashioning a pioneering prose that would take its place on the shelf alongside the most historically influential American novels. Indeed, though he highly regarded
Hemingway, Ellison held Himes in disregard, unhappy “to be lumped in reviews with Himes as fellow pupils of ‘the school perhaps founded by Richard Wright,’” as Ellison biographer Arnold Rampersad remarks. Ellison’s view of Himes’s most celebrated novel, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, was that author and text were abysmally indivisible: “To Ralph, Himes’s story seemed crude and uneven, and its author as hungry and neurotic as its hero” (Rampersad 2007, 203). Ellison also privately chafed when critics compared *Invisible Man* (1952) to Himes’s novel *Lonely Crusade* (1947), Rampersad reports, because both narratives arguably portray psychologically unstable protagonists and consist of “Communists, black and white”; Ellison found Himes’s novel sensationalistic and “dishonest in its pseudo-intellectuality” (218–19). Fittingly, while visiting Paris in the mid-1950s, during the period when Himes was still habituating himself as an expatriate, Ellison complained of Himes being “so in love with his vision of an absolute hell that he can’t believe the world has changed in twenty years. He would impose further madness on the world instead of increasing our capacity for reality” (328). For his own part, Himes publically reproached Ellison’s withering “statements about the craftsmanship” of black writers as “a little bit pompous” (Himes 1970, 66).

Although Himes and Ellison occupied antithetic positions in African American literary culture, each could call Hemingway his own, and an understanding of this situation helps begin to illuminate the diverse ways in which black authors could lay claim to the white modernist’s authority. In contrast to Himes’s manner of weaving Hemingway’s presence into his own autobiographical narrative, Ellison’s admiration for Hemingway emerged in a noticeably more belletristic approach. In the 1946 essay “Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity” Ellison criticized Hemingway’s writing for composing black characters in order to fashion whiteness, yet two decades later, in the seminal essay “The World and the Jug” (1963), Ellison discusses the indispensability of Hemingway’s writings in his pursuit of the tactic he needed to craft *Invisible Man*. Ellison’s esteem for Hemingway should come as no surprise to the attentive reader of his 1952 novel. When Invisible’s grandfather says on his deathbed that “our life is a war” and that he’s been “a spy in the enemy’s country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction” (16), Ellison is rewriting a line from “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (1936), a comment that Harry utters in despair as he, like Invisible’s grandfather, nears death. Harry has deceived himself that he was fighting on another front, that in living with the rich he could be “a spy in their country” (Hemingway 1987, 44). Those who had read “Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black
Mask of Humanity” may have been a bit surprised to see Ellison lionizing Hemingway—to see that by the early 1960s Ellison had reversed his opinion of Hemingway.3

The narrative of how Ellison came to capsize his own opinion of Hemingway serves as a core text in the evolution of African American literary arts. Appearing in Shadow and Act (1964), Ellison’s “The World and the Jug” was written in response to leftist critic Irving Howe’s controversial criticism of Ellison, and published previously as two articles in the New Leader. Howe lauds Richard Wright and, invoking the title of Wright’s 1945 memoir Black Boy, identifies Ellison and James Baldwin as immature “black boys,” offspring of Wright who have turned against black socially conscious writing and who consequently have lost sight of the African American literary purpose. In his retort, Ellison severely rebukes Howe for presuming to police the style and subject matter of black writing: “In his effort to resuscitate Wright, Irving Howe would designate the role which Negro writers are to play more rigidly than any Southern politician” (Elli-son 1964, 120). Taking up Howe’s family trope, Ellison states that he does recognize Wright as his literary “relative” (140), but then effectively agrees with Howe that Wright’s literary art isn’t an influence on his own writ-ing. The importance of Wright’s existence for Ellison lay in his success as a bestselling black author in a racially discriminatory society, so Wright the author served as a model for Ellison himself to become a writer. But Wright’s writing, Ellison says, did not provide inspiration from which he could draw to create his own literary art.

Indeed, it is apt that Invisible’s grandfather, a forebear who waged his war against society, iterates Hemingway. In Ellison’s wish to break from the social realist protest literature of Wright’s Native Son (1940) and other black writing of the prewar period, he lists a select assemblage of white authors, including T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, and, above all, Ernest Hemingway as his “ancestors.” Hemingway is Ellison’s progeni-tor “because all he wrote . . . was imbued with a spirit beyond the tragic with which I could feel at home, for it was very close to the feeling of the blues” (140). The idea that fiction should be “imbued with a spirit beyond the tragic” was essential to modernist phase views of contempo-raneous writing. The wish to abolish the notion that twentieth-century literary art should rely on tragedy—the archaic idea that narrative action is determined by fate—is proposed in, for example, E. M. Forster’s 1927 essay “The Plot.” Modern fiction must discard the elements of classical drama in favor of its own motivating device, “suitable to its genius” (228), Forster says. For Ellison, the music student turned fiction writer, this new
“genius,” or affect, is industrial-age Black Migration music. Hemingway’s prose expresses for Ellison the sort of courage in the face of modern existential alienation that the blues voices. The import of Ellison’s comment—that everything Hemingway wrote was permeated with “a spirit beyond the tragic with which I could feel at home, for it was very close to the feeling of the blues”—has not been sufficiently thought through, not only for the implications such an declaration suggests for Ellison’s writing, but indeed for writing by a number of African American authors.

Albert Murray unmistakably shared Ellison’s opinion on the importance of Hemingway’s stimulus, echoing his friend’s theory of Hemingway’s writing being akin to blues music, and into the bargain, building on Hemingway’s impact, Murray adds the symbolic implications of the bullfight. Published a decade after Ellison’s “The World and the Jug,” Murray’s *The Hero and the Blues* (1973) makes Hemingway—along with Eliot, Thomas Mann, and André Malraux—the centerpiece of his argument, quoting with praise the proverbial remark in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935) that “writers are forged in injustice as a sword is forged” (Murray 1973, 35; Hemingway 1935, 71). That statement becomes the basis of Murray’s argument that “antagonistic cooperation” is necessary to great art (37–49). Once again, the blues plays a central role, as the blues singer, Murray says, does not try to solve problems or conflicts, but “he” does acknowledge and articulate them. He understands that there are no panaceas for pain and suffering, but he sees that they “cooperate” with his creative imagination to make his song. Reminiscent of Himes, Murray uses Hemingway’s bullfight as an example of his theme (42). Like the blues singer, the bullfighter “cooperates” with an adversary (the bull) to give violence meaning. In the ritual of the bullfight the torero becomes “the paradigm of the positive potential in all human behavior” (43).

Despite Murray’s fortifying of his friend’s praise for Hemingway’s writing as evocative of Black Migration music, the representation of Hemingway’s writing as “very close to the feeling of the blues” is the kind of statement that has perplexed and provoked Ellison’s critics for half a century. That a major white writer, and perhaps particularly Hemingway, might articulate with authenticity a crucial aspect of the black experience remains among Ellison’s most contentious declarations. Critics have interpreted Ellison’s remarks about the indispensability of Hemingway as a lack of awareness of black literary inheritance. Around the same time that Ellison scholar Robert O’Meally recognized the importance of Ellison’s insistence on Hemingway’s indispensability, the late 1980s, Valerie Smith inventoried the assorted criticisms that had accrued to Ellison’s act
of situating “himself in the tradition of American literary craftsmen and moral writers like . . . Hemingway” and repudiation of “his intellectual links with and debt to earlier black writers” (26).

Indeed, in dramatic contrast to Ellison’s statements, another major black writer has harshly criticized Hemingway. In 1992 the author who today commands respect the likes of which Ellison once enjoyed inquired into the ideological conditions that formed the American literary canon, the assembling of a national literature. In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) Toni Morrison works out the pioneering, influential theory of the “Africanist presence” in American literature:

> Just as the formation of the nation necessitated coded language and purposeful restriction to deal with the racial disingenuousness and moral frailty at its heart, so too did the literature, whose founding characteristics extend into the twentieth century, reproduce the necessity for codes and restriction. Through significant and underscored omissions, startling contradictions, heavily nuanced conflicts, through the way writers peopled their work with the signs and bodies of this presence—one can see that a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness. (6)

On the final page of her brief study, Morrison states that the exclusionary scholarship done on canonical American writers like Hemingway assists racist ideology by sidestepping the traces of blackness in all American literary texts: “All of us, readers and writers, are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes” (91). Sounding curiously like Ellison’s initial, censorious estimation of Hemingway’s place in American letters, spelled out in “Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity” (yet not citing Ellison’s essay), *Playing in the Dark* clearly demonstrates that Morrison contests Ellison’s revised opinion of the white author.

Indeed, in terms of canon formation, the question of Ellison’s ideal literary ancestor presents a fundamental difficulty for present-day African American literary studies. The idea that Ellison’s creative impetus may be located in Hemingway’s modernism challenges the conviction that African American literature principally derives from the African oral tradition. The aim of Houston Baker’s influential thesis in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1989) is to demonstrate that the momentous contribution of the renaissance lay in the act of articulating an alternative to high or mainstream modernism. Baker’s theory that black literary modernism
developed independently from a majority modernism (or modernisms) is an essential component of the collective view, embodied in Henry Louis Gates’s contention for an African American literary canon, that black literary arts issue from an ancestry different from that of western, textually oriented writing. In the essay “Canon-Formation, Literary History, and the Afro-American Tradition: From the Seen to the Told,” also published in 1989, Gates communicates his investment in emphasizing “the formal relationship that obtains among texts in the black tradition—relations of revision, echo, call and response, antiphony, what have you—to stress the vernacular roots of the tradition” (38).

To be sure, the critical dismissal of Ellison for identifying his creative stimulus in Hemingway’s writing contradicts a widespread view of the author of *Invisible Man* as the first black writer to fashion fiction that expresses and performs the “complexity,” a favorite word of Ellison’s, of African American culture. *Invisible Man* is widely regarded as the first novel that surpassingly samples jazz and blues, oral and folk forms—the kind of project that is associated with Morrison and championed by Baker and Gates. In fact, the most salient representation of the challenge Ellison poses resides in a document that stands as the signifier of an African American literary canon. Gates and Nellie McKay’s *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (2004) verifies the contradiction that survives in Ellison studies. One aim of the anthology is to authenticate Gates’s theory of an African American literary canon. As the preface to the second edition says, “While anthologies of African American literature had been published at least since 1845, ours would be the first Norton Anthology, and Norton . . . had become synonymous to our generation with canon formation” (xxix). African American vernacular speech is essential to the formation of a black canon: “Taken together, they [the anthology’s selected writers] form a literary tradition in which African American authors collectively affirm that . . . to testify eloquently in aesthetic forms is never far removed from the language of music and the rhythmic resonance of the spoken word” (xxxiii). To establish that African American literature originates in the “vernacular tradition,” Gates’s Norton anthology opens with a range of spirituals, gospel music, work songs, blues, jazz, and rap alongside sermons and folk narratives, and then proceeds to literary efforts like *Invisible Man*, in an effort to demonstrate that Ellison’s writing and really all of the anthology’s collection owes its deepest debt to the vernacular tradition.

A look at the segment of the anthology given over to Ellison shows that his work embodies the idea, if not the ideal, of an African American
canon, if in contradictory ways.\footnote{Recognizing the historical significance of “The World and the Jug,” the editors reprint the essay, primarily as a means for establishing Ellison’s break with transracial radical politics, exemplified by Wright’s social realist writings. The head note describes \textit{Invisible Man}, moreover, as a novel that exhibits a “brilliant use of intertextual and cultural nuance and maneuver” (1537), that is to say, black \textit{intertextuality}, the borrowing and adapting of black oral culture—a kind of literary riffing and sampling. Gates et al. aver that Ellison’s novel is seminal for the concept of an African American literary canon: “\textit{Invisible Man} defined the historic moment of mid-twentieth-century America and focused a reconsideration of the powers of fiction. As fresh today as it was in 1952, it eschews the liabilities of pathos and opens before its readership, particularly its African American readers, a new and different order of inquiry” (1537). \textit{Invisible Man} plays a pivotal role in Gates’s notion of an African American canon, an ethnic national literature whose basis lies in a black cultural tradition. Ellison’s novel does so not only because it employs black speech and folk forms to celebrate collective African American identity but also, somewhat paradoxically, because its form and style radically depart from prior black texts. In fact, much of \textit{The Norton Anthology of African American Literature} may be construed as a tour de force accumulated in order to recognize the achievement of \textit{Invisible Man}, as Ellison’s text, in Bakhtinian terms, is recognized as the African American novel that most fruitfully assembles black folk forms, the most imaginative and spectacular assemblage of the black vernacular in literary form. In this way, Ellison both contributes to the heritage of an American national literature while reinventing and thereby confronting the fundamental principles of the American novel, two literary achievements that act in concert.

The consequence of Baker’s study of the Harlem Renaissance and \textit{The Norton Anthology of African American Literature} is the now accepted critical methodology of African American literature, the notion that literary texts by black authors originate from a black folk and vernacular tradition. What this by-product does not acknowledge is the extent to which Hemingway’s stimulus was crucial to Ellison’s reexamination of the African American literary tradition and his reinvention of the American novel. The question of Hemingway’s import for Himes, Ellison, and Murray indeed might end as an interesting if curious cross reference if not for the fact that so many authors of African heritage comment on the vital importance of Hemingway’s art. A number of black writers both during and after the Harlem Renaissance have read Hemingway not only for his insights into the American scene but also for his experiments with aes-}
thetic form, especially the short story and the short story cycle, and his reshaping of the American language. On October 27, 1925, Gwendolyn Bennett wrote New Negro Renaissance insider Harold Jackson that she met an “Alan Hemingway, the author” in Paris. Six weeks later she wrote to Jackson again to say that she made a mistake about Hemingway’s first name—it’s Ernest instead of Alan and he’s the author of In Our Times [sic], that book of short stories that has received such favorable comment in the States. When I wrote you of him last I did not know him so well that’s why I got his name mixed up. He is a charming fellow—big and blustery with an out-doors quality about him coupled with a boyishness that makes him just right. I have a beautifully autographed copy of his book. (Bennett 1925)

In his memoir, A Long Way From Home (1937), no less than the radical black nationalist Claude McKay identifies Hemingway’s writing as a key inspiration (249–52). Indeed, McKay along with such authors as Langston Hughes and Wallace Thurman rejected the cult of personality that was already attaching itself to Hemingway by the late 1920s and responded to him as a writer who wrote with clarity and honesty—that is to say, with a critical vision—about American life. It is clear that a paramount reason Harlem Renaissance and later black authors responded to Hemingway is because they recognized a feature of Hemingway’s writing that has been insufficiently analyzed, if noticed at all, and Hemingway’s stimulus takes on a material presence in renaissance texts. To take an example from the closing of the Harlem Renaissance phase, Thurman’s Infants of Spring (1932) has both Ray and Stephen agree that “Hemingway exemplified the spirit of the twenties in America more vividly than any other contemporary American novelist” (35). Perhaps Thurman was thinking of Hemingway’s disillusionment with “our time,” a theme central to Infants of Spring. Certainly Hemingway’s satire on the Left Bank literati in The Sun Also Rises (1926) has its relevance to Thurman’s send-up of the denizens of “Niggerati Manner,” as both groups spend more time partying and boozing than writing. But Thurman was also thinking about Hemingway’s use of the Great War and its aftermath as a metaphor for modernity, for its “immense panorama of futility and anarchy” (Eliot 1975, 177).

As Michael Reynolds observes, Hemingway saw early in his writing career that “violence was the temper of his times” (Reynolds 1999, 123). In accordance with this observation, during the 1920s and early 1930s, Hemingway’s importance for black authors lay in his intense focus on
violence in American society. Violence and warfare were themes that African American writers knew something about, as one may see in texts of the interwar period and after. Toomer’s *New York Call* articles about World War I (“Ghouls”) and the race riots of Washington DC (“Reflections”) foreshadowed the bleeding rat (“Reapers”) and lynching in *Cane* (1923): Tom Burwell in “Blood-Burning Moon”; the male/female corpse in “Portrait in Georgia”; and Sam Raymon and Mame Lamkins in “Kabnis” (Scruggs 1995, 117–21; Toomer 1923, 34, 27, 88, 90). Violence that erupts out of nowhere occurs in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929), Jessie Fau-set’s *Plum Bun* (1929), and McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928), to name only a few texts.

Black writers between the wars also admired Hemingway’s honesty and courage and, more specifically, his insights into the American scene. The radically disposed Hughes of the 1930s praised Hemingway’s position on the Spanish Civil War for not faking “about life like that.” Hughes admired Hemingway, especially his Second Congress of American Writers (elsewhere referred to as “American Writers Congress”) speech at Carnegie Hall in 1937 when Hemingway denounced fascism in Spain “as a lie told by bullies.” Hughes said all the men adored Hemingway because of that speech, which included the observation that “a writer who will not lie cannot live and work under fascism” (Rampersad 1986, 348). In 1938, during the Spanish Civil War, while Hughes was serving as a war correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American* and Hemingway was writing for the North American Newspaper Alliance, Hughes had the opportunity to meet the object of his adulation in Madrid (Hughes 1993, 363–64). Most intriguing is a 1937 photograph of Hughes and Hemingway, with Hughes’s friend the Cuban revolutionary poet Nicolás Guillén and a Soviet journalist, Mikhail Koltsov, taken in Madrid during the war and published in the *Afro-American*. Hughes stands to the side, as Hemingway, in comradely brotherhood, drapes his arms around the shoulders of Guillén and Koltsov. Though it may appear that Hughes wishes to remain remote from Hemingway, in fact he effectively idolized the author. Hughes had earlier expressed his admiration for Hemingway by rewriting his brilliant short story “Soldier’s Home” from *In Our Time* (1925). In Hemingway’s story, Krebs feels a sense of dislocation when he returns from the Great War to his small town in Oklahoma. The town is still clutching to its past and its threadbare discourses, especially Christianity, and Krebs has radically transformed due to the war and modernity (Hemingway 1925, 69–77). In Hughes’s story “Home,” in his short story collection *The Ways of White Folks* (1934), Roy comes back from Europe to his
Missouri small town, and, lost in memory of his rich European experiences, he commits an indiscretion that results in his being lynched (Hughes 1962b, 33–49). Both stories deal with a return from Europe, Krebs from the war, and Roy from a Europe of culture to the war at home. Both men cannot adjust to “home,” though the consequences for Roy are deadly, while Krebs can move to Kansas City. For evidence of Hughes’s continued enthusiasm for the celebrated white modernist’s style, one need look no further than the succinct 1945 story “Saratoga Rain,” a compact narrative whose title invokes Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” (1925). The story’s last lines typify its Hemingway imprint:

The room was pleasantly dark and warm, the house safe, and, though neither of them will ever be angels with wings, at the moment they have each other.

“I like you,” Ben said.

“I love you,” she whispered. (169)

A year after Hemingway’s death in 1961, Hughes wrote a tribute in the Mark Twain Journal (Rampersad 1988, 352). Hughes praised Hemingway’s dialogue for its ability both to drive “his tales forward as if the characters were alive” and its power to convey “the immediacy of Hemingway’s reality” (Hughes 1962a). Although Hughes’s tales about Jesse B. Simple seem to be as far from Hemingway’s influence as one may imagine, they convey in fact the “immediacy” of the black experience through dialogue to the black masses, reflecting a blend of the black vernacular tradition and the revolution in style that Hemingway led. In this way, Hughes may draw from a “tradition” while being simultaneously modern, two aesthetic goals of the Black Renaissance. In general terms, Hemingway revolutionized the short story in American literature.

During the postwar period, black authors continued to look to Hemingway for inspiration. Ellison’s comment about Richard Wright apropos Hemingway in “The World and the Jug” may be a bit paradoxical, as Wright also reaches for his Hemingway on the bookshelf. In Pagan Spain (1957), his late-1950s travel book, Wright credits Hemingway with describing the “technical side” of the bullfight but not “the emotional” (150). In his analysis of the bullfight, Wright then contemplates a line from Hemingway’s Death in the Afternoon. Hemingway observes that though killing is a “Christian sin,” it is a “pagan virtue” (Wright 1957, 137). Wright perceives the bullfight in terms of the continuing legacy of paganism in Spanish culture, giving a Freudian reading of the dramatic
action in the bullring. Not only does it represent the repressed sexuality of Franco’s fascist society; the bull also becomes the embodiment of our dark fears about human existence. Finally, he describes the “mutilation” of the bull, especially the removal of his testicles, as an expression of mob violence—the same violence that Wright had perceived in “pagan” Mississippi (Wright 1957, 152, 155–56). By the 1950s Wright, Ellison, and James Baldwin all would draw from Hemingway, availing themselves of the white author’s innovative style as a departure point for their deviation from established African American literary modes. Although Hemingway admired the bullfight because it transformed barbarous conflict into a “tragic” enactment, he never took a simple perspective upon the subject. True, war’s grotesque and meaningless carnage (“A Natural History of the Dead”) is juxtaposed with the bullfighter who shows his contempt for death by “holding of his purity of line through the maximum of exposure” (Hemingway 1932, 137; Hemingway 1926, 172). However, look beneath the surface of the bullfight and often you get a “populace . . . out of control,” like the angry villagers of Ronda, Spain, who forget their Republican ideals during the Civil War and throw the fascists into the gorge in For Whom the Bell Tolls (Hemingway 1932, 24, 103–130). This cruel act is foreshadowed by Robert Jordan’s memory when he was seven years old of seeing a “Negro” hanged from a lamp post and then burned by the people of his community in the United States (Hemingway 1932, 116–17). Barbarity, it seems, is transcultural, just as Hemingway’s influence on black writers would take many forms. It would also seem that during the late 1950s Wright simultaneously wishes to make use of and surpass Hemingway in his psychoanalytic approach to the meaning of the bullfight.

Indeed, no real understanding of our topic is possible without an awareness of the deep material consequence Hemingway’s writing had on that of black authors even after the interwar period. What did black authors respond to in Hemingway, or, rather, what was in Hemingway’s writing that they found germane to their own experience? War would remain a major subject for Hemingway, both literally and figuratively. He argued that though it was difficult “to write truly” about war, the “experience of war” was “a great advantage . . . to a writer” (Hemingway 1935, 70). He implied that it gave the writer a perspective upon civilization, specifically its fragility. One striking image in Hemingway is that of “paper . . . scattered about the dead,” as though the written word, so important to civilization, is reduced to debris in war. So too the skin color of dead soldiers changes from white “to yellow, to yellow-green, to black, as though the racial categories that cause war become nonexistent because
of it (Hemingway 1932, 137). Over and above Invisible’s grandfather reiterating Harry’s line from “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”—that “our life is a war,” that he has been “a spy in the enemy’s country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction” (16)—it is worth noting how often the theme of war occurs in African American literature and how often Hemingway is connected with that theme.

Perhaps it shouldn’t be unexpected that black modernist period prose authors like Wright, Baldwin, and Ellison acknowledged Hemingway as a fundamental inspiration—but Hemingway’s writing has had a profound effect on black authors after the 1960s and continues today. Fellow literary Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott venerates Hemingway, and this may seem remarkable not only because the Caribbean bard’s black diaspora world appears to be so remote from the white modernist’s, but just as strikingly because Walcott is a celebrated poet and dramatist, not recognized as a prose fiction writer. In 1973 Walcott stated, “I think the person who did the most for free verse in America is Hemingway” (Walcott 1996, 32). Such is an intriguing comment, to say the least, coming from the author of “What the Twilight Said: An Overture” (1970), published in a collection of plays that included Dream on Monkey Mountain. In this influential essay on the subject of establishing a postcolonial drama while founding the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, a Caribbean transnational theater, Walcott speaks of a determination to create “a language that went beyond mimicry . . . one which finally settled on its own mode of inflection” (Walcott 1970, 17). Reading Islands in the Stream (1970) some years later, Walcott’s “On Hemingway,” published in 1990 and subsequently included in the 1999 essay collection What the Twilight Says, embraces the major prose stylist, who spent most of the latter period of his life in Cuba, as a comrade Caribbean writer. And for the past decade Walcott has repeatedly shown his passion for and debt to Hemingway’s writing at various public readings and lectures, perhaps most prominently his appearance at the New York Public Library in December 2010. Answering an audience member’s question about the technical aspects of Hemingway’s writing that have appealed to and inspired him “in a poetic way,” Walcott’s response fittingly bears a resemblance to one of his own free verse poems. Walcott speaks of “the mystery” of Hemingway’s prose, the way it creates “an aura of an echo, something incantatory, almost sacred, . . . a vibration, . . . close to prayer, . . . a ritual, . . . a veneration that creates that echo that is in Hemingway’s style.”

Yet given all this, considering Hemingway’s public reputation as machista, it is even more startling to find his shadow lurking in the back-
ground of writings by black women authors of postmodern fiction. A case in point is Gayl Jones, who cites Hemingway twice in two interviews as an influence on her fiction (Rowell 1982, 52; Tate 1983a, 94). Nowhere is Hemingway’s presence more apparent than in her novel Corregidora (1975) in which the sexual warfare between Ursa and Mutt is reflected in a cryptic dialogue that exhibits the stimulus of Hemingway’s minimalist style. In this novel, Jones uses Faulkner to delineate a historical past (the ruthless slave owner Corregidora is modeled on Thomas Sutpen), but she uses Hemingway’s dialogue to illustrate how that past continues to exist in the present. For instance, Great Gram remembers Corregidora referring to herself as his “Little gold piece,” an image that is repeated in the present when Ursa’s paranoid husband Mutt tells his wife that he is going to expose her on stage for the whore she is: “Piece of ass for sale. I’ve got a piece of ass for sale” (Jones 1986, 10, 159). Exploiting Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory is indeed one of Jones’s most effective aesthetic techniques. Hemingway argued in Death in the Afternoon that a writer could “omit things . . . if the writer is writing truly enough.” Those silent omissions are compared to an iceberg’s “dignity” which “is due to only one-eighth of it being above water” (192). As readers of the author know, Hemingway’s theory is best illustrated in his use of dialogue. In Hemingway’s “The Killers,” for instance, Max the gangster from the city repeatedly calls Nick “bright boy,” a pattern that parallels George’s use of the word “nigger” when referring to Sam, the cook (Hemingway 1987, 217). George is asking the gangsters to see that he is “white” like them, that they should for that reason direct their hostility elsewhere. But in calling Nick “bright boy,” Max is letting both George and Nick know that he considers them both rural hicks beneath his contempt.

Appropriately, Jones returns to the Harlem Renaissance to inquire into the nexus between war, violence, and the blues. In an article on Cane, Jones refers to Toomer’s use of “incremental repetition,” and credits a blues tradition for giving Toomer this literary technique. But clearly Hemingway is also responsible for her recognizing this device in Cane and her own use of it in Corregidora. (Jones 1991, 73). One example is the sentence “I’ll give you my fist to fuck” (Jones 1986, 47). It is first used by Cat to Jeffrey, and then repeated by Ursa to Tadpole’s teenage lover Vivian (87), as if the cycle of violence suggested by those words has entrapped people in a terrible history. The connecting link between sex and violence spreads out to include both heterosexual and homosexual desire, but the “incremental repetition” of the words “fuck” and “fist” finally expresses a character that turns in on itself, that shuts everything out. Ursa’s mother “was
closed up like a fist” (101); Ursa cannot make love to Tadpole because she feels “a tension in my belly, like a fist drawn up” (75); Ursa’s tunnel song becomes a metaphor for female revenge, tightening “around the train like a fist” (147). The sound of the word “fuck” in the novel, with its final, stopped consonant, is like a punch to the face, and that face then closes up like a fist. The various ways Jones repeats that word to express human hostility, especially sexual warfare, echoes Hemingway’s use of repetition to express human isolation and existential angst in “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” (“nada”) or the “incremental” use of the phrase “to go out” in “The Killers” which means one thing to Mrs. Hirsch and another to the Swede (Hemingway 1987, 298, 221).

If Jones credits a blues tradition for giving her this technique, it is useful to return to Albert Murray’s contention in The Hero and the Blues that Hemingway and the African American blues tradition cannot be separated. Murray says that Hemingway was “a maker of blues ballad extensions” in his fictions (106). What he means is that Hemingway, like the blues singers, saw that there is no cure for the human condition—if you are alive, you suffer. Even if you develop a technique to deal with suffering, there are no guarantees. The great blues singer Robert Johnson invites his woman to “come on / in my kitchen / baby, it’s goin’ to be rainin’ outdoors,” but the rest of the song implies that even his cozy refuge is no safe haven, for either her or him: “Some other man got my woman / lonesome blues got me.” The precarious nature of existence is the theme of Hemingway’s great short story “In Another Country.” The major disciplines his life to deal with his own wound, but he does not take into account his emotional investment in his wife. When she unexpectedly dies, he tells Nick that a man should not marry: “If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose” (Hemingway 1987, 209). Here the “incremental repetition” of the word “lose” emphasizes the fact no one, at any time, can so “place” himself or herself. Human desire, among other things, always places us in positions in which we lose. In an unpublished novel, Hemingway created a brilliant portrait of a black railroad porter who says essentially the same thing. The porter gives a young white boy on his train a lesson in the use of a straight razor in battle and as self-defense. The razor must have “keenness of edge,” and the person wielding it “simplicity of action.” What is also necessary is “security of manipulation,” but, finally, he adds, the razor is a “delusion,” a “nigger” defense against insurmountable odds. “All you get in this life,” he adds, “is a point of view,” going on to note that even Jack Johnson and Marcus
Garvey came to bad ends (Hemingway 1987, 575–76). Hemingway’s portrait begins with a stereotype, the “nigger” with a razor, and ends with the porter describing the artist and his art: point of view, style, and substance. Moreover, the porter reminds us, as Hemingway does in *Death in the Afternoon*, that “all stories, if continued far enough, end in death, and he is no true-story teller who would keep that from you” (Hemingway 1932, 122). The young boy is getting a lesson in life; to be prepared is essential, but everyone, finally, is underprepared.

Yet another working example is the work of Toni Cade Bambara, who said in an interview that as a writer she “start[s] with the recognition that we are at war,” but that “war” encompasses not only racism but male-female relations, capitalism and labor, and finally “the war [that] is being fought over the truth” (Tate 1983b, 17). In her story “Survivor,” published in her short story collection *Gorilla My Love* (1972), Bambara uses Hemingway’s structure in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” to underline the conflicts within Jewel, her pregnant protagonist. Hemingway defines Harry’s life in “Snows” in terms of a present tense in which he is dying of gangrene while his own warfare with memory (described in italics) remind him of how he has traded his talent for a life of ease. Bambara uses the same device of juxtaposing the present with a horrific past (also in italics) in which she has not only betrayed her talent as an actress in film but has been betrayed by her husband who wants her to get an abortion (Bambara 1992, 97–117).

In the face of so many influential black authors citing Hemingway as an inspiration is nonetheless the contention that the white author’s texts typify a literary form of racist ideology, characterized most notably by Morrison’s influential thesis in *Playing in the Dark*. Yet even Morrison exhibits a reliance on Hemingway’s stimulus. In *Beloved* (1987), Baby Suggs tells Sethe that “this ain’t a battle; it’s a rout” (244), referring to slavery as a war in which the odds are overwhelming. To emphasize the Gothic horror of slavery, Morrison rewrites a scene from Hemingway’s short story “A Way You’ll Never Be.” In that story a shell-shocked Nick Adams is haunted by a recurring dream of a yellow house, “with willows all around it,” set by a “canal” (Hemingway, 1987, 310). He does not know why he is so “frightened” by this pastoral memory, but at the end of the story we find out, as Nick has repressed the memory of the German who shot him in that setting (314). So too at the beginning of *Beloved*, Sethe experiences, as she is running through a field of chamomile, an involuntary memory of “the lacy groves” of Sweet Home. Its “shameless beauty” makes “her want to scream,” and she doesn’t know why. She
can remember the “beautiful sycamores” but not her own children who played in those trees (6). It is only at the end of the novel that the terror is explained; the failed escape resulted in Paul A and others being hanged from those trees (198). In Beloved, there is no place of grace, not even Baby Suggs’s “yard,” which Sethe and Baby Suggs both thought was their “clean, well-lighted place,” to use Hemingway’s well-known term. Like Hemingway, Morrison understood that all forms of refuge are subject to invasion. As we state above, Morrison singles out a passage in To Have and Have Not (1937) as an example of Hemingway’s Romantic racialism, his “association of blackness with strangeness, with taboo” (Morrison 1992, 87). Harry Morgan compares making love to a black woman to sleeping with a “nurse shark” (Morrison 1992, 85; Hemingway 1937, 113). But something more is going on here. “Nurse shark” is an oxymoron. The water’s surface may seem serene, but a shark lies beneath it and can shatter that serenity at any moment. The irony of “Sweet Home” in Beloved is that the slaves, under the protection of the benevolent owner Garner, believe that because they are treated like men they are men. When Schoolteacher takes Garner’s place, that pastoral dream suddenly disappears. The slaves did not anticipate their world falling apart with Garner’s death, just as Baby Suggs and Sethe never anticipated Schoolteacher coming into Baby Suggs’s “yard.” The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 becomes the nurse shark that surfaces and makes the waters treacherous.

It may be that when Baby Suggs tells Sethe that “this ain’t a battle; it’s a rout” (Morrison 1992, 244), Morrison is not invoking Harry in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” but rather the grandfather in Invisible Man (much as in Playing in the Dark she seems to be drawing on Ellison’s “Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity”). Nonetheless, if this is the case, ironically she is implicitly riffing upon Hemingway via Ellison. Yet the instantiation of Hemingway in Morrison’s prose is also visible in her attitude toward the importance of style with respect to content. When Morrison says that her job as a stylist is “to clean up ordinary words and repolish them [and] make parabolic language seem alive again,” is there not a veiled nod to the modernist who revolutionized language by doing the same thing? When she adds that “dialogue done properly can be heard,” can we not conjecture that Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory is lurking somewhere in the background? Once again, we would indicate Morrison’s iteration of Hemingway through Ellison. Consider the nature of a renewed “parabolic language” in relation to character, especially the character of Bugs in Hemingway’s short story “The Battler.” The arc of Bugs’s dialogue keeps shifting, at times polite and obsequious
and at other times sinister and threatening. Is Bugs a loyal friend to Ad and a deferential “darky” to Nick, or is he a predator? He keeps slipping in and out of focus, as do Ellison’s Petie Wheatstraw and Rinehart in *Invisible Man*. Both Hemingway and Ellison imply that an “essentialist” portrait of the African American character is an illusion. Indeed, the mercurial Bugs subverts the occasional notion in the Harlem Renaissance that the African American could be “portrayed.” Hemingway’s Bugs and Ellison’s Petie and Rinehart debunk that idea. The character of Bugs also calls attention to Morrison’s criticism of Hemingway in *Playing in the Dark*. She complains, quoting Kenneth Lynn, that Bugs is one of those “dark mother” figures in Hemingway, the nurse who destroys rather than nurtures (83), similar to, in other words, the black woman as “nurse shark.” But the oxymoron “nurse shark” seems to echo what Hawthorne and Melville do with the idea of the “veil” and the ambiguity of the “white whale.” The “power of blackness” that Melville sees in Hawthorne’s tales does not simply arise from Hawthorne’s sense of “Innate Depravity” or “Original Sin” (Melville 2002, 523). It also comes from the fact that we do not know what lies beneath the surface—of the ocean for Melville, of the human face for Hawthorne. The fact that the narrator in *To Have and Have Not* calls Wesley a “nigger” and Harry calls him Wesley creates a certain mystery about him, an ambiguity of surfaces. Indeed, does not the loaded word “nigger” suggest something of the white man’s feeble attempt to label what he cannot understand, like stigmatizing a Mexican national with a hate epithet? For Hemingway, a Wesley or a Bugs or a Pullman porter are characters who reflect the depth of the iceberg that lies seven-eighths beneath the surface. We see only the surface of the iceberg, but what lies beneath shifts in and out of focus.

One enduring influence that spans generations may be the white author’s Gothic perspective upon not only modern life but the human condition—life’s mutability, its potential for violence, and its unpredictability. In 1944, Malcolm Cowley linked Hemingway with Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, those “haunted and nocturnal writers” of the nineteenth century (Cowley 1990, 317). In “How Bigger Was Born,” Wright specifically echoes Cowley when he places his own novel *Native Son* not in the tradition of the literary naturalists, but within the Gothic tradition of Poe and Hawthorne: “If Poe were alive, he would not have to invent horror, horror would invent him” (Wright 1991b, 540). In terms of this Gothic tradition in American letters, Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues,” Morrison’s *Beloved*, and even *Invisible Man* owe a debt to Hemingway. One of the two epigraphs to *Invisible Man* is from Melville’s terrifying novella *Benito Cereno*: “You
are saved,’ cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained, ‘you are saved: what has cast such a shadow upon you?’” The answer, not given by Ellison, is “the negro,” not simply the literal Negro but the “power of blackness” that lies beneath the surface of the quotidian world (Melville 1967, 306). As Wright would put it in his 1940 lecture “How Bigger Was Born,” eventually included in the Harper Perennial reprint of Native Son, the racial oppression of blacks in the United States cast a “shadow athwart our national life dense and heavy enough to satisfy even the gloomy broodings of a Hawthorne” (Wright 1991b, 540). Wright didn’t have to return to the nineteenth century to locate those “gloomy broodings” in American literature because he had an “ancestor” much closer home.

Thus far our case has focused on Hemingway’s impact on black writing. However, the interchange, the intertextual conversation, between Hemingway’s writing and works by black authors is by no means unilateral, and tracing the intertextuality between Hemingway and black writing is key to our thesis. It is crucial that the origins for the interchange between Hemingway and black textuality reach back to the Harlem Renaissance, to the wellsprings of American modernist literary art. An intriguing case in point lies in tracing the similarities between two Boni and Liveright publications of the mid-1920s. As both Jean Toomer and Hemingway formed their texts on hybrid short story cycles, the formal likeness between the 1923 Cane and the 1925 In Our Time poses fascinating questions of literary stimulus. In dramatic contrast to the register of black writers who cite Hemingway’s writing as a momentous influence, in this case the black author’s work preceded the white’s. As Linda Wagner-Martin points out, Sherwood Anderson wrote to Gertrude Stein in 1924, ardently encouraging she read Cane, which means that it is a virtual certainty that Hemingway was acquainted with Toomer’s book (24). Hemingway unquestionably drew on Toomer’s model, but the similarity is not only stylistic. Given the preoccupations of modernist authors during the early to mid-1920s—massive social transformation, war, violence—this should come as no surprise. The theme of violence runs through both Cane and In Our Time. For Toomer the source of violence is racism and the ever-present threat of lynching, while for Hemingway it is the war itself and the infinite horrors that it brings. Yet both sources of angst arise from the same crisis, the kind of preoccupation we find in Bambara: the colliding of culturally formed forces compelled by capitalist and nationalist interests to engage in lethal conflict in the modern world. The creative stimulus was not unidirectional; Toomer’s and Hemingway’s texts carried
on a conversation during the early to mid-1920s, engaging in a kind of literary dialectic at the forming stages of American literary modernism.

Hemingway’s making use of Harlem Renaissance writing is nevertheless not always so transparently traceable. The first best seller by a black author, Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928), for example, with its black war veteran Jake Brown meaningfully reverberating with the white war casualty Jake Barnes, appeared two years after *The Sun Also Rises*. Clearly McKay simultaneously respects and signifies on Hemingway’s popular novel. Yet Hemingway could not have written his roman à clef about Anglo American and British moderns seeking authentically primitive “blood-knowledge,” to use D. H. Lawrence’s term, in pagan Spain without the established presence, the *incidence*, of the Harlem Renaissance. Pre-negritude poems like McKay’s “On a Primitive Canoe,” appearing in *Harlem Shadows* in 1922, played a key role in the deconstruction of the civilized–primitive hierarchy during the modernist period. When Hemingway, Djuna Barnes, and other writers of the “Lost Generation” responded to “high modernist” works like *The Waste Land* (1922) with stories of characters embracing primal meaning as a tonic against modern bourgeois alienation, they proceeded also under the influence of the *low modernism* generated by writers like McKay.

Indeed, more important than the question of Hemingway’s influence on such black authors as Himes, Ellison, Wright, Morrison, and McKay is that of the real and complex intertextuality traceable through the writings of all of these authors. Although diverse, the praises by black writers for Hemingway share an affirmation that the white modernist’s prose rises out of the same insistence of intensely American concerns that their own writings are formed on: the integrity of the human subject faced with social alienation, psychological violence, psychic disillusionment, and personal loss. An understanding of this intertextual exchange ultimately sets in motion an appreciation not just of Hemingway’s presence in Ellison’s and other black authors’ texts, but also a perception of an insistent negritude at the core of Hemingway’s writing. Morrison was right that a black presence haunts Hemingway’s prose. Rather than a kind of textual inhibition, however, this black presence is conversely a guiding manifestation across the swiftly transforming landscape of modern America. We hope to generate a discussion of the way that texts by black and white authors informed one another and in effect created the environment for one and the other to exist. Doing so, we think, would make it possible to appreciate Hemingway’s presence in Ellison’s, Himes’s, Wright’s, and other black authors’ texts, with a chance at beginning to understand what the author
of *Invisible Man* meant when he said that everything Hemingway wrote “was imbued with a spirit beyond the tragic with which I could feel at home, for it was very close to the feeling of the blues.”

II

The aim of this project has been to assemble a collection committed to probing the relationship between the writings of Ernest Hemingway and works by such leading black authors as Baldwin, Ellison, McKay, Morrison, Toomer, and Wright. A good deal of the anthology is devoted to criticism that looks into the question of how Hemingway and black authors joined in a kind of modernist intertextuality, in a conversation and exchange that addressed issues and expressed concerns common to both. The reader will notice that several of the chapters included cover the same texts. As a central concern of this collection is to provide a forum for scholars of various critical interests and intersections—African American literary studies, critical race theory, modernist studies, and so on—to engage in a dialogue about the intertextual relations between Hemingway’s writings and black cultures, a necessary characteristic of this inquiry is an interest in the junctions between key authors and texts. An understanding of the necessity for black intertextual overlapping provides, as well, a comprehension of this collection’s thesis, suggested by its title. The phrase “Black Renaissance” is meant to reflect the momentous advance of black literary arts initiated by the Harlem Renaissance, then sustained through the rest of the interwar and postwar years, into the Black Arts period, through the radical Third World stage, and into the present transnational phase. The literary legacy of the Harlem Renaissance or “New Negro” movement, as it was once called, is undeniably still present. As Harlem Renaissance literary art and Hemingway’s writing emerged during the 1920s, the title *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance*, while acknowledging the possibly controversial assumption of our thesis, means to indicate a shared black modern and postmodern literary genesis, one that until now has not been acutely explored.

Contending that scholars have largely neglected the relationship between Hemingway and the Black Renaissance, creating a literary history of the period that is one-dimensional, Mark Ott’s “A Shared Language of American Modernism: Hemingway and the Black Renaissance” explores the connections between Hemingway and the 1920s black cultural awakening by examining personal relationships, correspondence,
and shared publication venues such as the *New Masses*, the *Little Review*, the *New Republic*, and the *New Yorker*. What emerges is a shared language of affect and acknowledgment that transforms the neglected relationships of a crucial period in American literary history. Joshua Parker’s “Hemingway’s Lost Presence in Baldwin’s Parisian Room: Mapping Black Renaissance Geographies” interrogates the way geography colors plot in the Paris of *The Sun Also Rises*, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), and *A Moveable Feast* (1964). Parker also examines why and how real African Americans became expatriates in France after the Great War, while exploring the tension between Wright’s ideas on exile and Pan-Africanism and Baldwin’s experience of expatriation. Charles Scruggs’s “Looking for a Place to Land: Hemingway’s Ghostly Presence in the Fiction of Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison” discusses Hemingway’s significant and until now all but unexamined impact on three African American writers of the post–Harlem Renaissance period and the interconnections between them. Intensifying the focus on Ellison is Joseph Fruscione’s “Knowing and Recombining: Ellison’s Ways of Understanding Hemingway,” a chapter that explores the ways in which Ellison simultaneously relied on and riffed on the work of the white author. Shifting away from fictional writings, Quentin Miller’s “Free Men in Paris: The Shared Sensibility of James Baldwin and Ernest Hemingway” explores the connections between two nonfiction works by Baldwin and Hemingway, both set in Paris, both wrestling with the struggle for identity at the beginning of an expatriate author’s career, and both employing war imagery to express that struggle: *Notes of a Native Son* and *A Moveable Feast.*

Gary Edward Holcomb’s “Hemingway and McKay, Race and Nation” considers the ways McKay’s *Home to Harlem* samples Hemingway’s novel of *génération perdue* expatriates. Holcomb’s purpose is to divulge for Black Renaissance studies how the black “primitive” author engages with the white modern *citoyen du monde*, Hemingway, as a means for articulating a black modernism. Yet Holcomb also contends that in his pursuit of his own modernist primitivist rhetorics, Hemingway took inspiration from Harlem Renaissance negritude. In this way one may see how the influence was not unilateral, how, indeed, the negritude philosophy that went into creating McKay’s first novel anticipates Hemingway. Adding force to the argument that the Hemingway–Black Renaissance stimulus was not one-sided, Margaret E. Wright-Cleveland’s “*Cane* and *In Our Time*: A Literary Conversation about Race” opens up ways Toomer and Hemingway reshaped the burgeoning modernist short story cycle and argues that the structural connections between the initially published *Cane*
and ensuing *In Our Time* create an intertextual “conversation” about race in America.

The application of critical race theory and colonial/postcolonial theory are the foci of the last pair of chapters. Examining issues relating to whiteness and blackness, Ian Marshall’s “Rereading Hemingway: Rhetorics of Whiteness, Labor, and Identity” investigates several of Hemingway’s short stories in order to show how each exhibit literary whiteness through absence or symbolic representation of racialized others. In granting qualities such as human will and grace under pressure only to white characters, Hemingway’s literary technique exhibits literary whiteness in that it uses romantically assigned capacities denied blacks. And Roger Field’s “‘Across the river and into the trees, I thought’: Hemingway’s Impact on Alex la Guma” looks at a wide range of fiction, travel writing, journalism, and other writing. This final chapter traces the influence of Hemingway on one of Africa’s eminent Marxist authors, who was publicly committed to socialist writing, and explores how Soviet cultural criticism’s tentative acceptance of modernism helped to legitimize La Guma’s use of Hemingway.

Notes

1. Ohio State Penitentiary’s “Easter Monday” disaster and controversy, wherein 322 inmates died, is still regarded as the worst prison fire in US history; see Meyers and Meyers, *Central Ohio’s Historic Prisons*, 23–29.

2. Two decades ago, foremost Ellison scholar O’Meally recognized that, among his literary forbearers, “Ellison most emphatically chooses [Hemingway] as his own” (O’Meally 1997, 246).

3. As Hochman says, Ellison’s earlier essay alleges that “Hemingway had chosen to disregard the social responsibilities and necessities structurally intrinsic to the nineteenth-century American novel, and had done so chiefly in the service of artistic self-cultivation” (Hochman 2008, 13).


5. See the interviews collected in Graham and Singh’s *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*.

6. Up until the addition of two paragraphs in the second edition devoted to Ellison postmortem, the head note in the second edition is essentially the same as that of the first.

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