

GENDERS, RACES, AND
RELIGIOUS CULTURES IN
MODERN AMERICAN
POETRY, 1908-1934

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2001



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

p 1-5, 17-19, notes on 175-76, 178

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CHAPTER ONE

Entitled new: a social philology of modern American poetry

It's a very long and difficult job . . . to see how, in the very detail of composition, a certain social structure, a certain history, discloses itself. This is not doing any kind of violence to that composition. It's precisely finding ways in which forms and formations, in very complex ways, interact and interrelate.

Raymond Williams (1989), *The Politics of Modernism*, 185

This book situates itself within modernist studies, trying one way of relating modernism to modernities.¹ Propelled by the scintillating critical practices from feminist, ethnic, and other materialist critics and poetic communities, my reading of poetry within modernist studies probes works of art by people struggling with formations entitled new – New Woman, New Black, New Jew.² Part of the "newness" of modernity lies in its representation of the urgencies and contradictions of these modern subjectivities. By a method I call social philology, I propose a reactivation of close reading to examine in poetry the textual traces and discursive manifestations of a variety of ideological assumptions, subject positions, and social concepts concerning gender, race, and religious culture. It is the purpose of this book to offer reading strategies that can mediate between the historical terrain and the intimate poetic textures of a work.

Certainly the materials and themes of poems involve discursive elements (allusions, diction, tropes) and depict issues traceable to particular social subjects. But this book will also propose that modern poets construct cultural narratives and articulate social debates around emblems and idioms of subjectivity, within the texture and using the resources of poetry – line break, stanza break and other segmentivities, caesurae, visual image and semantic image, etymology, phonemes, lateral associations, crypt words, puns – including translingual puns, its own particular genres, the diegesis with its actors and pronouns, and the whole text with its speaker or persona.

Within modernity, some people entitle themselves "New," articulating entitlement, the right of claim to full personhood, full citizenship, and some control of their deeds. These "new" social subjectivities engage with various projects of emancipation and possibility, hoping that in modernity there can be a "qualitative transcendence," a time "better than what has gone before" (Osborne 1995, 11, 10). "New entitlements" are formations compounded of social claims for change in the legal, political and economic status of a given group that, while incomplete in the time frame this book concerns (about 1908–34), were nonetheless motivating and transformative, with many cultural implications.³ New Woman, New Black, New Jew constitute emergent formations and diverse sites of conflict and affirmation in the modernizing projects of modernity. The subject locations entitled "new" sum up a considerable amount of social desire, political debate, and intellectual ferment, contributing, for instance, to passionate politics of rectification in the suffrage or the anti-lynching campaigns. These new subjectivities are also spoken in and through literature.

The formations entitled new do not begin simultaneously: New Woman is talked of before "New Negro" and is reemergent during the teens and twenties; New Jew, a person modernizing Judaism through nineteenth century Enlightenment thinking (Haskalah), is still active in the immigrant populations in the U.S. and Britain. These liberatory discourses put clear pressure on the manifests of a United States democracy: the New Black in emerging from slavery and serfdom, the New Woman with claims for suffrage and for sexual and professional independence, and the New Jew, provoking, as did other immigrant populations, many anxieties about difference and the issue of suffrage and containment of access to the United States. The formations New Woman, New Black, New Jew also engage with, debate, and help give shape to discourses of maleness/masculinity/manhood, homosexuality, virility, whiteness and "souls of white folk" (in Du Bois' phrase), pre-Enlightenment Jew, and Christian/Gentile; these formations also emphatically occur in modern poetry and are often part of the entitlement of poets (Du Bois 1920, 29).

One might take some closely fitted dates in the 1890s to be symbolic indicators of these entitlements and their debates.⁴ The crisis about sexuality and gender, about forms of masculinity in debate was focused in 1895, as the Oscar Wilde trial both opened and endangered debate about sexual fluidity; the so-called "invention of heterosexuality" in relation to the newly articulated homosexuality has been wittily dated, by

Jonathan Katz (1995), to 1892. Women's modernity within modernism, their social struggles and intellectual debates were focused by the term "New Woman," coined in 1894 by Ouida from a phrase by British novelist Sarah Grand, a descriptor for a variety of emancipatory reforms in the female condition: higher education, living wages, changes in marriage law, access to the professions, woman suffrage, and sometimes birth control (Fitzsimmons and Gardner 1991, vii; Tickner 1992, 3).⁵ Indeed, by 1913, "the New Woman has been in poetry and drama and fiction for close to sixty years," and could be seen, fondly – or not – as the "Old 'New Woman'" (Kenton 1913, 154). Social and ideological struggles about elements of New Woman subjectivity and gender ideologies of masculinity as refracted in poetry are the subject of two of my chapters.⁶

A cluster of "incipit" dates in the 1890s marks the formation of a black modernity. One point of origin for a New Black stance within modernity and modernism was the militant campaign against lynching begun by Ida B. Wells in 1892. The debate over citizenship for Americans of African descent was focused by the Supreme Court decision of 1896, *Plessy versus Ferguson*, designating a legal second-class quasi-citizenship for those defined (no matter their visible color) as black; this decision gave forceful mandate to discrimination and racial segregation for at least another half century. Given this "dismantled Reconstruction," "the 'newness' of the New Negro, then, stemmed largely from an aggressive claim to political inclusion, economic and cultural participation, and fundamental equality" (Sanders 1996, xi). As Du Bois proposed in introducing the 1925 anthology *The New Negro* (Locke 1988), the "new" formation involved changes of consciousness and incentives to cultural production interdependent with social struggle and political agency. The "New Negro" was, as Houston Baker argues (1987, 15), a formation well underway in Booker T. Washington's 1895 Atlanta address, making the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s the culmination of political, social and cultural debates about the status of blacks in the U.S.

This black entitlement evoked a complex of responses. A Wallace Stevens letter of 1918 shows identification with black troops leaving for World War I; he resists and consciously comments upon the patronizing attitudes of most white observers (Stevens 1966 [May 1, 1918], 209). And yet two years later, he remarks sourly of the sight of his hometown Reading, "It was much like returning from the wars and finding one's best beloved remarried to a coon" (ibid. [May 16, 1920], 219). This text indicates the difficulty Euro-Americans had in consistently acknowledging the "New Black" as social citizen. Sociologist Charles S. Johnson

remembers the postwar period as the "reassertion with vigor of the old and shaken racial theories" from the "gaudy racial philosophy" of the time immediately post-Reconstruction, allegations of the inferiority of "the Negro and other darker peoples," restrictions of immigration, "race riots, dark foreboding prophecies of the over-running of the white race by the dark and unenlightened hordes from Asia and Africa, in Lothrop Stoddard's [1920] *Rising Tide of Color*" (C. Johnson, in Lewis, 1994, 211, 207, 211). My two chapters involving the New Black subjectivity will discuss the poetic marks of insurgent African-American political and cultural presence in relation to Euro-American uses of racialized discourses.

African-American modernity was faced with a suppurating pseudo-science about race differences affecting at least blacks and Jews, but also Irish, Slavs, and Italians. In both Britain and the United States, immigration in the 1890s of Jews displaced by the pogroms in Russia sharpened debates about "mongrel races." The year 1892 focused a general Gilded Age anti-Semitism because of a public health crisis in New York caused by highly contagious diseases attributed to Jewish immigrants (Markel 1997, 146-47). The New Jew, an enlightenment figure of Jewish modernity, was caught among assimilation, secularization, and a variety of Sinitized and mongrelizing discourses. For example, Ezra Pound, in a 1920 letter to William Carlos Williams, mentions "mixed race, Semitic goo," intermingling mongrel and Jew as part of a discussion of race, poetry, and his proclaimed transnationality (Pound 1996, 38). My chapter called "Wondering Jews" discusses mongrelization, and notes the aggressive claims for order and Christian civilization that capped modernism in the late 20s and early 30s.

Modern poetics process many elements of these "new" social insurgencies involving race, gender, nationhood (and nativism), religious culture, and class. Poetry is the repository and expression of subjectivity, a site where the materials of social subjectivity are absorbed and articulated, where pronouns, personae, speaking positions are produced. Poetry does not necessarily construct a seamless subjectivity, consistent between the inside speakers and the poet's artifact (the enounced and the enunciations), but a subjectivity whose very articulation in language reveals organized multiplicities, contradictions, and projections.⁷ Many modern poets were fascinated with these newly entitled subjectivities; some modern poets hold these positions, some appropriate them, some struggle with them in parody and resistance, others claim them, but also critique them, and still others want to work in a contradictory site of

engagement and resistance. This book is not about a postulated fit between persons and identity. Indeed, a productive tension within the "New" social subjects between embodying group identity and enacting an individualist separation, between allegiance and resistance to category marks the work of many writers discussed here. One sees this tension in Loy's interpretations of both the New Woman and the New Jew position, in Cullen's negotiation with New Black. Other writers claiming some relationship to galvanic "New" subjectivities produced irruptive and grotesque identificatory works: Lindsay's "The Congo," Eliot's "Sweeney Agonistes," and Pound's "Yiddischer Charleston Band."

The productive and critical consolidation of a period and field of study called "modernism" during the 1940s through the 1970s or 80s was made, and was maintained as virtually gender and race exclusive (Elliott and Wallace 1994, 2, 9). This book stands with many others to demolish that inadequate paradigm. It became increasingly clear through such feminist studies as the pioneering work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar and work on individual authors – Jane Marcus on Woolf, Susan Stanford Friedman on H.D., Carolyn Burke on Loy, that "modernism's stories of its own genesis" were deeply flawed by significant exclusions of women writers, and of such issues and figures as the New Woman (Ardis 1990, 2). For example, Gilbert and Gubar argue that modernism can be reconfigured around the "woman question" and around a variety of responses – they emphasize the intemperate and misogynist – to the newly emergent authority of the woman writer (Gilbert and Gubar 1988, 1989, 1994).⁸

Before the gynocriticism of the 1970s and 80s, we knew so little about women writers and how social differences could manifest in cultural products that much work was needed to bring women writers up to judicious and informed scrutiny. A parallel point can be made about the resurgence of cultural studies concerning ethnicity and African-American writers. As Griselda Pollock has argued, there is no linear progress out of early forms of feminist analysis, but rather a "synchronic configuration" of feminist critical practices (Pollock 1993, 100; see also Friedman 1998, 31). Gynocriticism is not an outdated or surpassed move in its goals of formal, biographical and textual recovery, nor in its goals of exploring female agency in texts and in their creation, but its critical assumptions and thus its findings have now to resist, or use with greater self-scrutiny, the gender binarism on which it was originally built. So too the tendencies in such criticism toward identificatory readings mirroring

Presumably, but temporarily, the subjectivity of the enunciation was once some part of the poem's author, but in the actual processes of repeated reading, the author is not crucial. Easthope follows Jakobson and Benveniste in extending that privilege of enunciation to the reader/addressee, that is, to whomever produces that work by reading it in the present, a present that is always alive, potential, and shifting. This privileging of the reader is of special interest to Easthope, as it indicates his commitment to the specificity and historicity of reception. However, it comes at a cost, the relative loss to this theory of the social subject as author, the loss of the first creator of the signifieds. There is agency within discourse and ideology, within a social space acting to make any particular poem as such; there is, I mean, agency that produces in the first place what used to be called the "speaker" or "persona" of the poem and here would have (antiseptically) to be called the subjectivity of the enunciation. And there is a third space – the subjectivity of the agent making the work, itself not necessarily coterminous with the subjectivity of the enunciation. Further, as Lawrence Venuti has argued in his closely reasoned elucidation of the mechanisms and politics of "symptomatic reading," any materialist reading necessitates a theory of subjectivity that does not hold the author to being "determined" but also "determining" in relation to material conditions and the medium (1989, 4-7).

But Easthope is rather disinterested in individuals as authors. He is emphatic on the rejection of "the unnecessary and impossible search for a transcendental subject – the 'real man' 'behind' the text" (Easthope 1987, 122); this is presented as an attack on the humanist privileging of "presence" in Easthope's "Poetry and the politics of reading" (1982, 140-41). Yet not all (authorial) subjectivities producing texts aspire to unified, ahistorical, universalizing subjectivity; they just, let us say, aspire to some positions that function validly, that have necessity. Hence, while hardly claiming "real" anyone as its findings, this book will not deemphasize agency so forcefully as *Poetry as Discourse* does by its concerted attack on biographical impressionism and by its post-Foucauldian burial of individual authorship.³¹ First, for me, discourses and thematic statements are not freefloating atmospheres (unattached to situation), but are tools, sometimes quickly, and even contradictorily, grabbed by persons, whether in the spirit of intellectual system or of bricolage. I maintain interest in agency and authorial choice: the "career of that struggle" constructs authorship as ongoing struggle with the social materials forming authors and their production, and forming reception and dis-

semination, as well as a struggle with the materials of the text, including the semiotic materials semiconsciously emerging (DuPlessis 1986).³² Indeed, "dead author" or "author function" claims seem to be made precisely to ignore the social and material relations of literary production, the issues of dissemination and reception that are foregrounded by feminist, ethnic and other materialist social criticism. The "dead author" claim is a way for the critic to avoid noticing or commenting on those relationships of dissemination that still make certain texts, like Orwell's famous pigs, more hegemonic than others. In any event, writing is made by the engagements and choices of people who, with various motivations, conscious and unconscious, create speaking figures and subject positions, who propose in their work (to echo Fredric Jameson's extension of Marianne Moore) imaginary solutions to real and invented conflicts, doing so precisely by concerted choices, mixes, articulations, and appropriations of words, syntaxes, and discourses.

An example of a reading based on these principles might look at Countee Cullen's "Incident" from his first book *Color* (1925). The poem is a three-quatrain ballad about the trauma of racial naming for a child.³³ The title word means event, but an event contingent upon or related to another, one small or minor occurrence which implicates or precipitates a public crisis. The word is used precisely to link personal and political meaning; the personal meaning is the blanking out, or blocking out, from memory of any other thing that happened one summer in Baltimore, once the decisive rupture of happiness has occurred by the ferocity of the white gaze. The political trauma is blanking or blocking because of blacking. Because it means "something contingent upon or related to something else," the title also links the subjects of the enounced (two boys) and the narrated incident inside the poem with the subjectivity of enunciation, creating only a "minor" poem.

The poem presents the blow of social learning of one's place in a racial/racist order, a moment discussed in many autobiographical and fictional materials – by Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson – as a turning point for black children. This moment is usually unmarked in white writing. Cullen's central quatrain proposes the equality of the children in size, demeanor, and in age, indeed, in every way but one. The stanza, as is well known, contains a notable insult, as it moves from smile, to rude tongue gesture layering "poke" as thrust and "poke" as a blow struck, finally to a name calling that interpellates both children into the racial system of the U.S., to the despair of the one and the satisfaction of the other. When the word

"nigger" is spoken, it is carefully quoted from the white child; it is not in free indirect discourse. Cullen has engineered a pause before the decisive word, to call our attention to its being spoken (it is capitalized), to freeze-frame it. This moment of racialization is a sociopolitical equivalent of oedipalization, for it creates two unequal racial castes from polyvalent children, as oedipalization creates two gender castes. The space issues of the central quatrain further represent this social inequality: each child owns one of the first two lines, but in the second two lines of the quatrain, the black child then only possesses a hemistich, while the white child takes up a line and a half. This stanza emphasizes the narrated event (the enounced), and the other subjectivity of the enounced ("I") has been fixed by the derogatory word of the white child (Easthope 1983, 42). But the poem, as an enunciation (speech event created by Cullen), struggles against this derogatory term, by offering a different speaking subject, one in retrospective control of the narrated event. Cullen does so by proposing, in the texture of the poem as enunciation, a suggestive confrontation of the overt, low word "nigger" and the more muted, elegant one, "whit."

The word "whit" examined by a social philology is the point at which cross both lateral metonymic associations and a vertical semantic coring to make a sedimented argument against the subjectivity ascribed to the African-American child. The word means a particle or iota: one child is not a bit bigger than the other — they are equals in size. The word is a variant of "wight," which means a person or human creature. Hence the buried narrative or crypt narrative that etymology offers in *whit/wight* is the affirmation of the full personhood and equality of both children denied by the incident. Additionally, "wight" means "valor" or bravery, a meaning that evokes the ethical evaluations of courage/cowardice at play here, especially insofar as valor for the black child may involve (unspoken, unnarrated) repression of the urge to fight or answer back, leading perhaps to an anger or pain so intense as to create a trauma of memory. Hence this incident is all that the speaker remembers of this sojourn.

Horizontally, "whit" also irresistibly suggests both "white" and "wit." Though the white child is no *whit* bigger (and no bigger in "wit" — another connotive slide), his social power gives him a bigger impact. To describe *white* as socially bigger than its obnoxious rhyme word, although no *whit/wit* personally or morally larger is indeed a compressed political allegory tamped into the word choice, the rhyme choice, and the finality of the quatrains. The negative word, offering a subject place for

African-Americans, was, incidentally, common enough in white writing in this period, including in works by Carl Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, Mina Loy, Carl Sandburg, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, and many others; its dangerous impact on African-Americans is registered in a poem countering the epithet with brave black heroes — Frank Horne's "Nigger: A Chant for Children." In this reading of Cullen's "whit," I hunted shadow words "behind" the statement, coring down into etymologies, pursuing metonymic associations, sound shifts, and denotive auras, reading visual suggestions, and identifying the narratives and metaphors buried in the texture of a work that allowed for a simple, belittled subjectivity of the enounced and a fierce, proud, judgmental subjectivity of the enunciation. These readings of the signifier (by association, etymology, syntax, connotation, denotation, segmental position) in relation to the discursive and political field is some of what I mean by social philology. It is allegorically appropriate that my poetics of the detail has been exemplified by a word — "whit" — that means particle or iota, and has involved allusion to a very derogatory word — indicating that words and their "social evaluations" are no small matter.

A second example of a reading based on a social philology draws on Gertrude Stein's "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (written in 1908–10 or 1911; published in 1922), a work of resounding poetic prose repetitions.³⁴ "She was gay there, not gayer and gayer, just gay there, that is to say she was not gayer by using the things she found there that were gay things, she was gay there, always she was gay there" (Stein 1993, 255; Stein 1962, 564). The much repeated word "gay," with its condensed, implosive meanings brought under the scrutiny of a social philology, suggests three directions, three discourses, three possibilities, and the open pathways between them; all involve seeking pleasure and all are sexually suggestive. These meanings are not sortable and remain in permanent slippage across the work, by conscious manipulation on Stein's part.

The first meaning of "gay" is mirthful, charming, brilliant, showy, joyous; this is also the meaning of the word *gai* in French, a language on which Stein repeatedly draws for everything from verbal nuances to translinguistic puns. Women become "gay" as they enter social space and leave the dour family house, a site emphatically "not gay." Department stores attract them, shopping and the urbane pleasures of city life are enticing. As women, they are supposed to be gay: not too serious about "cultivating" their talents, but consciously cultivating their decorative flair, their consumerist bent, their personal pleasure.

the staff psychiatrists. It was a song and "a dance which Pound does, with gesture, movement, words" (Olson 1991, 66). A real vaudeville routine, showing, as with Eliot's "Sweeney Agonistes," that Pound identified with the verve of the groups he also berated and sometimes despised. He wants that compound energy, the energy of mixing black, Jew, female, sexuality, and anti-Christian blasphemy. He performs that mix, trying to assimilate it and come out as superior to it all in one economic gesture.

Here we can also take this piece, confrontative in tone and untranslatable in texture, as a mini-gesamtheit of all the entitlements we have examined as active and vibrant in the period of early modernist poetry. It is a signature piece because it sums up the ambiguities and passions involved in the questions of entitlement to modernism, the relations between modernism and social modernity, and, within modernism, the construction of and confrontation with subjectivities entitled new. This book has been committed to exploring, by the invention of a social philosophy, how ideas, discourses, and debates about New Woman, New Black, and New Jew are exposed not only in poetry but as poetry, in any poem's most intimate details of texture.

Notes

1 ENTITLED NEW: A SOCIAL PHILOLOGY OF MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

- 1 Responding to Susan Stanford Friedman's "new modernist studies" and to such invitations as Jerome McGann's "to redraw the map of modernism" (Friedman 1994, in her rubric for a set of MLA panels; McGann 1993, 179). Responding also to Marjorie Perloff's "Modernist studies" overview (in Greenblatt and Gunn, 1992).
- 2 The conjunction of "*news*" has been the subject of an anthology by Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (1991), focusing on 1915, and of a paper by Carla Kaplan, given at the Modern Language Association in December 1992, reading the "New Negro" woman and the "New Woman" in their conflicts and intersections. The word "Negro" was used contemporaneously, as in the anthology *The New Negro*, but unless I am citing from work published when the term "Negro" was in use, I prefer to use Black or African-American, as more respectful today.
- 3 The term formation, as Raymond Williams uses it, refers to subjectivity in its own historical, ideological, and textual dialogue with social materials, subjectivities formed by and forming social stances.
- 4 In another study of modern U.S. poets, Frank Lentricchia proposes a "philosophic modernism" from a generation of Harvard professors (Santayana, Royce, and William James), all flourishing around 1890, and having serious effects on Stevens, Frost, Eliot, and Pound, not to speak, as he doesn't, on Stein (Lentricchia 1994, 1-3).
- 5 As Ray Strachey remarks about Britain: "There were still, in 1918, a score of flagrant injustices and inequalities to be cleared away: there were unequal divorce, unequal inheritance and nationality laws, unequal franchise, unequal guardianship of children, unequal standards of morality, unequal chances of employment, and unequal rates of pay" (1969, 370).
- 6 Ann Ardis (1990) and Carolyn Burke (1985 a and b) have made the important claim that the New Woman is an as yet under-studied component of the formal and intellectual shifts of modernism; DeKoven (1991) and Burke (1996) — have contributed notable studies of fiction and of poetry foregrounding this claim.

7 This formulation is, of course, deeply indebted to Julia Kristeva's postulates about the subject-in-process (Kristeva 1980, 133-35).

8 The point about undoing exclusion has been made with vivacity by a number of critics who initiated a feminist reading of modernist texts, including a major recovery of materials by women. There are noteworthy studies of (mainly Anglo-American) modernism and gender by Shari Benstock (1986, 1991), Svetlana Boyrn (1991), Carolyn Burke (1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1990, 1996), Marianne DeKoven (1991), Jonathan Dollimore (1991), Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1985, 1986, 1990), Bridget Elliot and Jo-Ann Wallace (1994), Betsy Erkkila (1992), Rita Felski (1995), Susan Stanford Friedman (1981, 1990, 1998), Christine Froula (1989, 1996), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1988, 1989, 1994), Barbara Green (1997), Linda Kinnahan (1994), Wayne Koestenbaum (1989), Cassandra Laity (1996), Jane Marcus (1981, 1987, 1989, 1992), Peter Middleton (1992), Jane Miller (1994), Susan Schweik (1991), Bonnie Kime Scott (1990, 1995), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985, 1990), Elaine Showalter (1990, 1993), Susan Rubin Suleiman (1990), and Trudi Tate (1998). Bonnie Kime Scott makes the ringing claim that "modernism at mid-century was perhaps halfway to truth. It was unconsciously gendered masculine" (Scott 1990, 2). With due respect to her halves (male modernism) and other halves (female modernism newly arrayed) to make a whole truth, I want to resist the binary picture of male and female modernism, however apparently irresistible at times. In a more useful metaphor, she sees "a new scope for modernism" by writing the workings of race, class, gender, and (I would add) religious culture into modernism (4, 7).

9 My critical interests are congruent, then, with the general emphasis on getting beyond an articulation of a segregated "female modernism," anti-segregating perspectives that have been articulated in Tate (1998) and particularly in Friedman (1998). I do not divide my consideration of texts into male and female modernism; difference is a multiple vector, not a unitary one. But I do not consider this a post-feminist position. As Myra Jehlen has argued, because of the existence of feminist criticism, "gender has emerged as a problem that is always implicit in any [literary] work" (Jehlen 1990, 263).

10 Bornstein (1991), Bush (1991), Michael Davidson (1997), Drucker (1998), Friedman (1990), Froula (1989), Kappel (1991), McGann (1991, 1993), Brenda Silver (1983 and 1991). Influenced by critics like Jerome McGann, contemporary readers have become more alert to the specific occasions for a poetic text: have scrutinized paratextual material (dedications, epigraphs, looked at the material text as an indicator of bonds to historical occasions, and found revealing the identification of the occasions for which poems were made, instead of disdaining as "technical" any discussion of the physical and prosodic nature of the texts or their editorial constructions (as if poems and their Norton Anthology surround are to be found under cabbage leaves). To these "multifoliate" textual "performances," Charles Bernstein would add the aural performances, thus giving any poem a fundamentally plural existence" (Bernstein 1999, 284).

11 An exception is Cary Nelson's study of populist and formally innovative poetries (1989). DeKoven (1991) has a chapter on poetry, Clarke (1996) on Marsden treats the poetic milieu. Here should be noted those particularly treating modern poetries - Baker (1991), Friedman (1981), Kalaidjian (1993), Laity (1996), Monroe (1987), Perelman (1994), and Perloff (1985, 1986, 1990); see also Altieri (1984), Conte (1991), Damon (1993), Davidson (1989, 1997), Golding (1995), Kalaidjian (1989), Keller (1987, 1997), Lazer (1996), Mackey (1993), Nielsen (1994, 1997), Perelman (1996), Perloff (1990), Quartermain (1992), mainly on poetry after modernism.

12 Golding (1995), Hogue (1995), Kalaidjian (1989), Lyon (1999), Nelson (1989), Nielsen (1997), Marek (1995), Perelman (1996), Perloff (1985, 1986), Quartermain (1992), Rasula (1996).

13 Watten and Bernstein; also Silliman, Perelman, Davidson.

14 Kalaidjian's statement indicates some of the intermingled issues at stake: "Throughout the postwar decades, many critics followed [John Crowe] Ransom in repressing verse writing's *social text* - that is, not merely poetry's inscription of historical events, but equally important, its social transactions with various interpretive communities, conglomerate and small press markets, the academy, and other spheres of cultural production" (Kalaidjian 1989, xii). In a later book, Kalaidjian points to the postwar construction of a dissemination mechanism called "high modernism" that has "largely silenced the century's complex and contentious social context"; he rectifies this with a bravura "reading of the expanded cultural field of American modernism" - social and aesthetic avant-gardes - by including all kinds of texts - literary, polemical, diagnostic, visual (Kalaidjian 1993, 2).

15 I am indebted to Lawrence Venuti for the understanding of what *Lecercle* contributes to this study. In his studies of translation, Venuti extends this consideration of the signifier to archeologies of tone, diction, archaism, colloquialism (Venuti 1998, 95-96).

16 None of the most notable contemporary materialist critics ignores poetry, but the bulk of their readings vastly prefer fiction, narrative, and theorizing. However, Gayatri Spivak has written on Wordsworth, Dante, Yeats, the former in a symptomatic reading of the containment of politics and personal guilt by poetry as an institution, the latter two in a passionate essay demanding a "genealogical investigation" of the figures of females in culturally authoritative texts (Spivak 1987, 26); in addition, she tersely refuses the special status of poetry as transhistorical (115). Said offers remarks on Yeats in his book on imperialism. Eagleton discussed *The Waste Land* in relation to its ideological productiveness (Eagleton 1976). Despite these materialists' restrained critical engagement with poetries, concepts such as Jameson's "the political unconscious" or Said's "contrapuntal reading" as well as Eagleton's "slowing down the frames of . . . reading almost to a standstill so as to catch the complex effects [of poetry] as they happen" have much potential for interpreting poetry (Jameson 1981, Said 1993, Eagleton 1986, 173).

17 Bernstein's use of the term "artifice" here might be glossed by his definition

– very like Lecerle's sense of the "remainder" – in "Artifice of Absorption": "Artifice" is a measure of a poem's / intractability to being read as the sum of its / devices & subject matters." (Bernstein 1992, 9). Some other strong readers of poetry are also moving in this direction. Maria Damon is trying "to bring the estranged twins, cultural studies and poetry, into closer concert . . ." (1997) in a paper given at Rutgers University Conference: Poetry and the Public Sphere (April 1997), itself a conference that began to articulate elements of a cultural poetics. Kathleen Crown, one of the convenors of that conference, has spoken about poetry in the public sphere (Crown 1998). Adorno's essay was first made available in a translation by Bruce Mayo in *Telos* (1974); in my text the page numbers from that translation will follow the page numbers of the translation by Shierry Weber Nicholson (Adorno 1991) that I use.

19 As Watten indicates about the New Historicist readings: "the rise of this school has not been kind to poetry" (Watten 1997, 4); in the anthology *Aesthetics and Ideology* (Levine 1994), the articles on poetry by Susan Wolfson and William Keach suggest that critical tools do exist to offer culturalist readings of poetry.

20 Arac's essay challenges the lines of inquiry in this anthology, essentially claiming that it is still circumscribed by the ahistorical assumptions of New Criticism.

21 Machin and Norris say the anthology was made "partly to refute the widespread idea that post-structuralism is a species of 'textualist' mystification which ignores – indeed denies – any access through writing to a knowledge of history or the world outside the text." They speak of the ways that poststructuralist theory has "problematised" such access (by its deep readings of narrative tropes of history or rhetorics of politics) but not foreclosed it (Machin and Norris 1987, 18).

22 Wolfson's recent proposal for a renovated close reading of poetry differs from my concern only in its motivation, and its field of study. For me two of the keenest provocations of such a materialist critical practice are the motivation from the interests of social and ethnic groups (based in gender, race, sexualities, and so on), and the motivation from politicized understandings of the literary text from contemporary poet-critics mainly affiliated with language poetics. In contrast, for her critical origins, Wolfson offers a brilliant history of literary formalisms, from Russian Formalism, to New Criticism (with a surprisingly historicist undercarriage) and deManian deconstructive formalism, all in their philosophic ramifications.

23 I take first license for the almost obsolete word "philology" from Leo Spitzer in a discussion of "the etymology of a particular word-family" leading to "evidences of a change of historical climate" (Spitzer 1948, 23). Stephen Nichols has also recently called for a new philology, based within the Victorian work of Erich Auerbach, for *Mimesis* showed "that language could be the key to a sociology of textual study" to understand how a social group conceptualizes itself (Nichols 1996, 67).

24 I am aware that Medvedev/Bakhtin (whose virgule indicates that they may be "one" author, though two people) meant something more general by the term "poetics" – something like the theory of art practices in writing. However, they propose that all genres are susceptible to such analysis, and bringing poetry into this critical arena has special status in their essay.

25 The editorial(izing) gender "correction" of pronouns should never occur without comment, as it is possible that such a corrected phraseology will not be equally applicable to male and female poets. In this case, I think it is.

26 "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson 1987, 71).

27 "Method of this [Arcades] project: literary montage. I need say nothing. Only exhibit (zeigen). I won't filch anything of value or appropriate any ingenious turns of phrase. Only the trivia, the trash – which I don't want to inventory, but simply allow it to come into its own in the only way possible: by putting it to use" ([N 1a, 8] Benjamin "Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress." in Smith 1989, 47).

28 In terms of the poetics of the detail, Marianne DeKoven suggests a fruitful analogy between the New Critical emphasis on the detail and the New Historicist desire to read whole movements and eras allegorically in or out of one document (DeKoven 1991, 190).

29 I have in mind such warnings as Robert von Hallberg's to Walter Benn Michaels, "Literature and history: neat fits," protesting against the exclusion of understanding of form as a way of presenting and representing social ideas, and insisting that historical scholarship not sanitize contradictory representations by poets (von Hallberg 1996, 118–19).

30 It must be said that Adorno's notion of the historical moment is construed as the larger economic tendencies, as anticipations of social progress, and the poem as "a philosophical sundial telling the time of history" (1991 46/1974 65) – ideas that cannot produce specific readings of the bulk of poetry. In addition, I am interested in diverse social determinants, not one.

31 Any romantic (or technical) aura around creators or around what we help to construct as "masterpieces" can impede our understanding of discursive mechanisms; this aura is what Easthope resists by insistence on author-function. At every turn, one must struggle critically against too complicit a view of poetry as a special discourse made by special people, with heightened – because superfluous and/or spiritual – value.

32 Here one might allude to Nancy Miller's penetrating feminist argument against the denial of authorial agency (Miller 1988).

33 I need to invite the reader of this book to find published versions to consult – perhaps the Gerald Early, ed., *My Soul's High Song* (Cullen 1989) or anthologized reprintings of Cullen's important poetry. I have chosen, reluctantly, to discuss Cullen by paraphrase and miniscule fair use citations of individual words. "Incident" (Cullen 1925, 15).

34 Cyrena Pondrom (Stein (1993b) dates the work 1908–10; Ulla Dydo (Stein (1993a) gives it as 1911.