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Wilson Park, Homewood, and Early Hebrew Verse

An Africana Perspective on the Albright Tradition

> *The predicament of the Black intellectual need not be grim and dismal. Despite the pervasive racism of American society and anti-intellectualism of the Black Community, critical space and insurgent activity can be expanded. This expansion will occur more readily when Black intellectuals take a more candid look at themselves, the historical and social forces that shape them, and the limited though significant resources from whence they come.*
>
> —Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (with bell hooks)

Interest in the examination of Israel's earliest verse and its cultural setting can be said to have reached a particular zenith in the last half of the twentieth century with the work of scholars inheriting the intellectual mantle from the late William F. Albright and two of his major pupils, the late Frank Moore Cross Jr. and the late David Noel Freedman. Within this tradition, issues such as sequence dating; orthography; prosodic conventions; divine names, titles, and epithets; periodization; historical reconstruction; and theology were of primary

importance. Among those continuing to labor in this metaphorical vineyard, the current author included, their efforts remain foundational. However, outside of this circle of researchers, opinion has been divided as to the legitimacy and enduring value of the study of early Hebrew verse. Among the more significant shortcomings cited are the impact of Albright's religious beliefs on his interpretation and dating of the poems and the question of whether extant linguistic data can be used to distinguish between truly archaic and archaizing texts in the Hebrew Bible.[1]

My own fascination with early Hebrew poetry and subsequent grafting onto the Albright lineage are odd and paradoxical, especially given that the "Oriental Seminary" where the groundwork for this research was laid is on the campus of Johns Hopkins University, a five-minute drive from the less-than-tony neighborhood of Baltimore in which I spent my youth. Our home, 507 East Cold Spring Lane, was just on "the other side" of York Road, what some considered the dividing line between the fringe of ritzy Guilford—at one time racially restricted—and our working-class enclave of Wilson Park. Both Wilson Park and Guilford were a stone's throw away from Johns Hopkins's Homewood campus.[2] While Albright and his students labored over sequence dating, paleography, orthography, and prosody, many of the people I knew pondered why it was that Hopkins remained such a foreboding place, even for the gifted children of the "talented tenth."[3]

Several of Albright's students would later become either my teachers (such as Cross and William Moran) or my senior mentors at a distance (Freedman). They trained there before I was conceived and when I was a child. Their Baltimore and mine were not remotely the same. Their Hopkins was, for me, terra incognita. Its world-renowned medical school and hospital were themselves held by many to be exploitative forces in the city's poorer neighborhoods.[4] Even as a high school senior, I neither dreamed of attending nor thought of applying to be a student there. Like many of the state and private colleges and universities in Maryland, it was not perceived to be a welcoming place for African American students and had precious few Black faculty members.[5]

That I should have any interest whatsoever in, let alone an abiding passion for, a stream of research whose headwaters can be traced to such an environment is for me a source of endless wonderment. It developed, of course, long after Albright's passing and during my own years of graduate study at Harvard (1984–1990). It troubles me to look critically at my relationship to it. To raise discomfiting questions about it is likely to strike some as disloyal. However, given what Cornel West has said, in the epigraph to this chapter,

about the values informing the work of the insurgent Black intellectual, a mantle I don with some degree of trepidation, it seems vital. It is perhaps better to think of mine as an "indecent" theological intervention aimed at discovering a deeper connection between early Israel and Wilson Park: a linkage that helped shape my academic vocation and make me a mediator between the Albright tradition and my neighbors on Cold Spring Lane and the other largely segregated streets on which I walked as child and young adult.[6] It is an agenda that resonates with the at-times-countercultural and antiauthoritarian spirit that imbues early Hebrew poetry itself.

Acknowledging this life experience and using it as a starting point from which to engage these poems also allows me to work within the philological parameters proposed by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and delimit, edit, offer commentary on, provide a historical context for, and curate this corpus of poems in a manner that both calls attention to its implicit difficulties and facilitates a reading of it that is multifaceted and rich.[7] The placing of certain contextually specific Africana concerns front and center, in so doing, promises to yield intentionally "messy editions" of these poems—that is, curated versions that juxtapose them with contemporary poetry, memoir, fiction, and African American music—that stimulate more intense and evocative thinking about their implications for marginalized people of color worldwide.[8] Gumbrecht's advice here is poignant in this regard. He advocates the production of textual editions that open the door to encounters that move beyond simple translational code breaking and toward what he describes as "both joyful and painful oscillation between losing and regaining intellectual control or orientation."[9] For him, the success of such a paradigm for reading is dependent on a philologist's ability to curate texts that elicit discomfort. Of such work and such reading, he says: "For the higher the philological quality of an edition, we can say, the more disorienting, challenging, and complex the reading (and the *Reading*) that it informs will turn out to be."[10] The value of a well-edited text is found, therefore, not in the false comfort derived from an erroneous belief that it has been expertly mastered but in its capacity to generate in the reader an abiding appreciation of its implicit dynamism, the imaginative capacities of the editor, and the artifact's "untamed complexity."[11] Bringing early Hebrew poetry into conversation with Africana life certainly promises to foster such productive disorientation and strengthen the body of research on the former to date.[12]

The study of Hebrew poetry is fraught with linguistic and methodological problems. Early on, the distinguishing markers of poetry, prose, and verse; prosodic conventions; and parallelism were of great interest to students of

Hebrew verse. In recent years, issues even more vexing than the aforementioned have been enumerated, among which are the impact of poetic theory—ancient and modern—on existing definitions of poetry; the selection of literary texts with which to compare the Hebrew Bible's poetic corpus; the theories informing the work of major scholars who have contributed to our understanding of Hebrew poetry; the impact of approaches such as ethnopoetics, sociopoetics, and reflexive ethnography on both the identification and the interpretation of biblical poetry; and the impulses (including social, psychological, and physiological) that are generative of verse and their bearing on our understanding of the genre and its progenitors.

Among the questions raised by prior scholarship within the Albright tradition relating specifically to early Hebrew poetry are the following:

1. Is the poetry, in fact, early? How do we know it is early? What characteristics can be identified to establish its antiquity (content, prosody, orthography, theology, and so on)?
2. What is this poetry's value to the larger enterprise of critical biblical study? Does it help in the source-critical debate? In what ways does it contribute to the agenda of Hermann Gunkel and other form critics? How does the corpus inform our understanding of early Israelite theology?
3. How are the poems to be read— literally, symbolically, impressionistically, or otherwise?
4. How do we assess the quantity and quality of cultural and historical data found in the poems?
5. Are the poems merely scattered compositions from a variety of sources, or did they at any time belong to a single collection?
6. What can be said of the poems' canonical function in light of their current placement (Torah, 6; Prophets, 4; and Writings, 5)?
7. To what extent is comparison of these fifteen poems with other poetic compositions (such as Homeric verse, Sumero-Akkadian myth, Egyptian folklore, and Indo-European epic) useful?
8. What, if anything, does early Hebrew poetry have the ability to tell us about: Israelite origins, basic features of ancient Israelite religion, social life in ancient Syro-Palestine during the thirteenth through tenth centuries BCE?
9. How are these poems related to other embedded narrative poems found in the Hebrew Bible?
10. What can be said of ancient Hebrew prosody? How important is it to our understanding of early Hebrew poetry?

> 11. From an orthographic perspective, do the poems reflect practices earlier than the remaining literature within the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible? Were the poems written in a distinct dialect of Hebrew?
> 12. Have the poems been preserved by later editors in more or less pristine condition?

Although progress has been made in addressing many of the aforementioned questions, there is considerable work yet to be done.

In previous essays, I have explored several of these topics, as well as others, directly or indirectly related to early Hebrew poems. These include their possible use as an artfully constructed repository of cultural realia; the problematic nature of traditional paradigms for understanding Israel's origins; how the most ancient stratum of these poems might be read in light of a theological focus on the poor and disenfranchised; the deployment of post-Katrina blues poems as interlocutors with these poems; the light shed on them by African American bric-a-brac; and the role of conscious collection and curatorial efforts in their assemblage in the Hebrew Bible.[13] These exploratory forays have allowed me to test interpretive models both traditional and experimental. Through them, I have come to a deeper appreciation of the poems' idiosyncrasies and the windows they open onto the ancient world in which they were composed.

The current volume seeks to build on this existing body of work by offering critical and creative interventions that bring early Hebrew poetry into contact with selected literary, artistic, and other artifacts from the Africana world, thereby shedding additional light on the poems and the approaches used to read them in such a milieu. It is also hoped that this approach will advance the aims of that body of work assembled in *The Africana Bible* (2010) and will define in greater detail the parameters of that developing subfield known as Africana biblical studies.[14] I will incorporate a convention already at home in some traditions of ethnographic writing that blurs the boundary between traditional modes of scholarly writing and art, while at the same time making clear the social location from which my own research comes. A close reading of the work of many pioneering figures in biblical and cognate research reveals that such reflexive elements have never been absent from writing in biblical studies and cognate fields.[15] One often finds hints about authorial identity and setting, and the impact that these have on methodology and conclusions, in prefatory notes, parenthetical remarks, footnotes, endnotes, and, on occasion, biographies.

It would not be inaccurate to say that my first formal interest in Hebrew poetry as a topic of inquiry began in a smoke-filled office at General

Theological Seminary.[16] It was in this sanctuary that I, along with several other MDiv and STM students, learned three things: the "art" of rhetorical criticism and its impact on hermeneutics and historical-critical work; the relationship of rhetorical criticism to Hermann Gunkel's larger interest in both the history and the social location of ancient Israel's literary *Gattungen*; and the interplay between established form and individual "markers of genius" in the production of ancient and modern texts. It was there that I also gained an appreciation of the subtle conventions and rich textures of Hebrew verse, as well as the importance of charting significant features of poetic artifice and exploring their semantic implications.[17]

Equally true is the fact that the stage was set for this exploration of ancient biblical poetry many years earlier while I was learning to negotiate the strange racial boundaries that circumscribed the lives of Black youth in Baltimore from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s. Ours was, and is, a city of neighborhoods. Many of them have been and remain racially or ethnically distinct. Some witnessed major demographic transitions during the 1960s. Wilson Park was one such neighborhood. Ours was one of the first Black families to move onto the 500 block of East Cold Spring Lane. Within a decade, no White families remained. Flight to the outlying suburbs was in full swing. Ours gradually became a safe and stable block of Black middle-class homeowners who shared many of the same values and looked out for one another's homes and children. Tragically, the same was not true in all quarters of Wilson Park. As in many other areas of the city, drugs, theft, and random violence became increasingly prevalent. Today, the neighborhood, like many other largely African American neighborhoods in the city, is deteriorating. The same is true, by and large, of the other Black neighborhood where I spent most of my youth: West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester.

We spent a good deal of time in that part of the city. My parents grew up there: one on Mount Street, the other on Westwood Avenue. I knew its main and side streets more intimately than those at home. We called our regular trek from Cold Spring Lane to my grandparents' homes or to church "going into town." Interestingly enough, that trip almost always took us through Guilford and directly by the Johns Hopkins campus. We'd drive down Charles Street by the Episcopal Cathedral of the Incarnation and the university's east gate. Nestled in the middle of campus, obscured from our view by the Eisenhower Library, was Gilman Hall, home of the "Oriental Seminary" and Albright's Baltimore school of ancient Near Eastern studies. I had no inkling that anyone or anything affiliated with Hopkins would have an impact on my future. At times, I would wonder why it seemed that only a handful or so of local African Americans had

any formal affiliation with the school, as students, staff, faculty, or physicians who had privileges at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. I'd often look at the faces traversing the campus and wonder, as we passed by on those drives, if I'd see any that looked like me. That was a rare occurrence in those days.

Little did I know that my relationship with both Guilford and Hopkins would change and become much more complex. In June 1980, I would lay prostrate on the floor of the cathedral, in which Albright's funeral was conducted, before taking my vows for diaconal ordination. Raised in a strongly Baptist family, I'd followed the lead of one of my uncles and converted to Anglicanism. By that time, I'd also decided that I wanted to be a Hebrew Bible scholar. That decision was met with some surprise by several of my African American seminary peers, who at that point knew of very few Blacks in the field.[18]

In 1984, while working as an interim priest in a Detroit parish, I would drive to Ann Arbor and have a delightful conversation with David Noel Freedman about my interest in the study of the ancient Near East. I was completely taken aback by his kindness and openness to my possibly coming to the University of Michigan to work on a PhD with him. I've never forgotten that. Later that year, I would accept an offer to enter Harvard's doctoral program in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC), a decision that would graft me onto the intellectual lineage of Albright and his own teacher, Paul Haupt. Through lectures and unofficial back channels, I became privy to the "lore of the tribe." I heard about the tiffs within its several "clans." I came to know which scholars in the larger field of biblical studies were "insiders" whose opinions could be trusted. I also familiarized myself very quickly with the names of those whose research was considered unimportant, outside the mainstream, suspect, or highly tendentious. I followed closely the return to prominence of the program in ancient Near Eastern studies at Hopkins in the late 1980s and selected, for the focus of my dissertation at Harvard, a topic given to Frank Cross by Albright on one of his doctoral examinations. An expanded version of that project would evolve into my first book. Perhaps most importantly, I rediscovered my love of poetry and developed a passion for the study of early Hebrew poems.

This rekindling of my courtship with poetry came, oddly enough, through three flashes of insight. The first occurred when I read Cross's article on the prosodic structure of the first chapter of the book of Lamentations and realized how heavily his own understanding of the way parallelism worked was influenced by the thought of the linguist and poet Roman Jakobson.[19] I had a series of secondary "aha" moments in a seminar with James Kugel, whose

understanding of Hebrew prosody was informed by his linguistic training and his life experience as a literary editor and practicing poet (Kugel was poetry editor for *Harper's Magazine* from 1972 to 1974). It was at this time that I began to realize that an important strategy for engaging ancient poetry, both biblical and nonbiblical, was to do so as philologist *and* poet. This would involve intentionally making the boundaries between grammatical analysis, scansion, hermeneutics, and poem making more porous. The third and final moment of inspiration came as I discovered kindred intellectual spirits, past and present, who shed light on ancient Hebrew life and literature through the use of comparative mythology and folklore, ethnology, Serbo-Croatian poetry, and Homeric epic. For several of these scholars, early biblical poems held the key to understanding Israel's origins and musings about the divine.

I was also influenced by another set of voices, whose presence I would not be able fully to acknowledge until recently: African American visual artists, poets, and songwriters. They were the *loas* (or spirits) hovering in the background of so much of my work. Prince's "The Ladder," "Hold Me," by Whitney Houston and Teddy Pendergrass, and Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" were my silent partners in conversations with *Gilgamesh*, *Atrahasis*, and the story of "Dawn and Dusk" in Ugaritic lore. Morris Day's song "Daydreaming," and Terence Trent D'Arby's "If You All Get to Heaven" were part of the soundtrack for my comprehensive-exam preparation in Hebrew and Akkadian. I recall not being able to get Billy Paul's song "War of the Gods" out of my head as I made final revisions on my first academic book, *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion* (1996), and prepared to send it to press.[20] Even now, as I ponder the role of figures such as Moses and Balaam in Israel's most ancient verse, scenes from Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men* flash before me,[21] and I hear the refrain, "I'm a man," from Muddy Waters's "Mannish Boy." When I read Judges 5 and think of Deborah and Jael, I hear Koko Taylor's strong voice singing in "Voodoo Woman":

> They call me the voodoo woman
> And I know the reason why
> Lord, if I raise my name
> You know, the sky begin to cry.[22]

The decade of conversations and editorial planning culminating in the publication of *The Africana Bible* assuaged any guilty feelings I might have had about owning these influences. I realized that scholars would do well to acknowledge openly the muses and orishas who inspire them, rather than

concealing them in footnotes, referencing them in memoirs, or disclosing them in cocktail banter at the meetings of professional societies. As for scholars hailing from Africa and the African Diaspora, we must be free unashamedly to name those sources of inspiration that come from our own milieu. This is one of the distinguishing markers of Africana biblical criticism.

So, at this juncture, I can honestly say that Wilson Park, Sandtown-Winchester, and the drive "in town" raise a multiplicity of questions about the Albright–Hopkins tradition of scholarship on early Hebrew poetry, particularly its theological underpinnings, grounded as they are in Albright's fundamental confidence in the historical and cultural trustworthiness of these ancient poems, especially the extent to which they can be said to convey essential truths while maintaining a high degree of historical reliability.[23] Such an assertion helps shore up the footing of odd interdisciplinary endeavors such as biblical studies and biblical archeology, particularly within the confines of the modern research university. However, given that the earliest stratum of these poems was likely produced in the social maelstrom that witnessed the collapse of Syro-Palestinian urban enclaves during the late Bronze and early Iron Ages, one wonders whether the artistic canons in the newly developing and recently displaced social groups where early Hebrew verse flowered would have placed a premium on indirect speech, concealment, double entendre, and word games as survival techniques.

Such modes of communication were standard fare on Willow Avenue, Bruce Street, and the other thoroughfares crisscrossing the enclaves of the comparably dislocated and dispossessed in Baltimore. In such an environment, one noted but read between the lines of texts, both oral and written. History and truth were important, but so was attentiveness to the contingent nature of all supposedly authoritative—and often racialized—narratives. The backstory or subtext of anything and everything might not be found in the distant past or even in a contemporary cultural inversion; the particulars could be hidden in plain sight, set a bit "off center" so that one had to pay close attention to the *margins* in order to see them.

Had there been a closer connection between the world of the "Oriental Seminary" at Johns Hopkins and that of Wilson Park and Sandtown-Winchester, I suspect Albright and at least some of his early students might have accessed oral histories of Black women and men who migrated from North Carolina and Virginia to Maryland in their reading of Exodus 15; or the story of Harriet Tubman to offer a layered assessment of the encounter between Sisera and Jael. In the late 1970s, inheritors of the tradition might have frequented, conducted fieldwork at, and published their findings on oral lore gathered from

one or more of Baltimore's candle shops—Old Grandpa, or Grandma's Candle Shop, an easy walk from Lexington Market—to parse the ambiguous figure of Balaam in light of the materia medica and praxis of African American divination and healing.[24] In so doing, they might have come to realize, as I have, that such places cast light on how communities under duress preserve, conceal, and selectively reveal their most revered traditions in numbers, potions, songs, and *ḥîdôt minnî-qedem* ("ancient riddles"; Ps. 78:2). Perhaps it is this lacuna that fate has left me to fill. To do so means building a spiritual bridge between Guilford, Harvard, and the *communitas Africana*, a bridge that I hope will establish a new and lasting détente between these worlds.

Notes

1. See, for example, Burke O. Long, *Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology, and Interpreting the Bible* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

2. On Baltimore's tortured history of segregated neighborhoods and housing, see Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Dee, 2010).

3. On this concept, see Lawrence R. Rodgers, "The Talented Tenth," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, ed. H. L. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

4. This was at a time long before knowledge of the tragic case of Henrietta Lacks; see Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (New York: Crown, 2010).

5. For a history of African Americans at Johns Hopkins University, see the online gallery "African Americans @ Johns Hopkins University," maintained at http://afam.nts.jhu.edu/about.

6. On "indecent theology," see Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).

7. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 3.

8. On "messy texts," see Denzin, *Interpretive Ethnography*, xvii–xviii, 224–27. A recent work that could well be categorized as a "messy edition" because of the very creative and unusual approach taken to translation and presentation—i.e., through the medium of jazz—is that of the "Song to Inanna" prepared by Cass Dalglish, in *Humming the Blues* (Corvalis, OR: Calyx, 2008).

9. Gumbrecht, *Powers of Philology*, 85.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 7.

12. This can be enhanced by a translation of the poetry that is, at its core, equally provocative. Such will be the approach I take. Here, I follow the lead of the late Simon Parker, who was fully in favor of such experimentation. Simon Parker, "Toward Literary Translations of Ugaritic Poetry," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 22 (1990): 257–70.

13. See, respectively, Hugh R. Page Jr., "Ethnological Criticism: An Apologia and Application," in *Exploring New Paradigms in Biblical and Cognate Studies*, ed. Hugh R. Page Jr. (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996); "Myth, Meta-Narrative, and Historical Reconstruction: Rethinking the Nature of Scholarship on Israelite Origins," in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and the Septuagint Presented to Eugene Ulrich*, ed. Peter W. Flint, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 2006); "Toward the Creation of Transformational Spiritualities: Re-Engaging Israel's Early Poetic Tradition in Light of the

Church's Preferential Option for the Poor," in *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology*, ed. Daniel G. Groody (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); *A Teacher for all Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. Vanderkam*, ed. Eric F. Mason, Samuel I. Thomas, Alison Schofield, and Eugene Ulrich, vol. 1. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, volume 153/1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012): 37–47; "Early Hebrew Poetry and Ancient Pre-Biblical Sources," in *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Hugh R. Page Jr. et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); and "Myth and Social Realia in Ancient Israel: Early Hebrew Poems as Folkloric Assemblage," in *Myth and Scripture: Contemporary Perspectives on Religion, Language, and Imagination*, ed. J. Dexter E. Callender (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

14. Page et al., *Africana Bible.*

15. For example, a great deal can be gleaned about the role that Albright's personal religious faith, proficiency as linguistic autodidact, and doctoral student under the tutelage of Paul Haupt had on his approach to philology and pedagogy from the very illuminating biography written by Leona Glidden Running and David Noel Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright: A 20th Century Genius* (1975; repr., Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1991). The impact that these experiences had on Cross and Freedman can likewise be seen in a variety of published documents (scholarly publications, homilies, etc.), personal correspondence, and oral lore that offer a glimpse into their professional praxis and approaches to teaching. The autobiographies of Samuel Noah Kramer, *In the World of Sumer: An Autobiography* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1988), and Cyrus Herzl Gordon, *A Scholar's Odyssey*, Biblical Scholarship in North America 20 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), offer comparably interesting perspectives on the life and work of these luminaries in ancient Near Eastern studies.

16. This was during the 1982–83 academic year under the tutelage of Richard W. Corney, a student of the late James Muilenburg.

17. I describe this process, other scholarly influences, and their relationship to the praxis of scholarship and ministry in Hugh R. Page Jr., "Performance as Interpretive Metaphor: The Bible as Libretto for Research, Translation, Preaching, and Spirituality in the 21st Century; Prolegomenon," *Memphis Theological Seminary Journal* 41 (2005):13–20.

18. In the 1970s, there had been one African American who was an Episcopalian: Robert A. Bennett. Fortunately, he happened to be a Baltimorean, a priest, and a scholar trained in the Albright tradition at Harvard. He would in due course become a trusted friend and early mentor of mine.

19. Frank Moore Cross, "Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse: The Prosody of Lamentations 1:1-22," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983).

20. Hugh R. Page Jr., *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature*. Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 1996).

21. Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935; repr., New York: HarperPerennial, 1990).

22. Koko Taylor, "Voodoo Woman," *I Got What it Takes*. Alligator Records, compact disc. Originally released 1975.

23. See, in particular, the comments in William F. Albright, "Archeology Confronts Biblical Criticism," *American Scholar* 7, no. 2 (1938): 176–88.

24. Strangely enough, Albright himself seems to have valued and embraced at least one folk-healing practice: that of the mustard plaster (see Running and Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright*, 212–13). One wonders whether he also understood some of the traditions regarding the spiritual properties associated with mustard seeds in African American lore; see, for example, Catherine Yronwode, *Hoodoo Herb and Root Magic: A Materia Magica of African-American Conjure* (Forestville, CA: Lucky Mojo Curio Co., 2002), 137.