“De Understadin to Go ‘Long wid It”: W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Black Diaspora in the Americas

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Abstract

"De Understandin' to Go 'Long wid It": W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Black Diaspora in the Americas

This dissertation challenges the accepted premise of an already existing understanding of black belonging and black *entre nous* speaking and sounding between black peoples in the diaspora. Black speaking (and, later, writing) has always had to contend with white interlocutors and their desires regarding the sounds produced by the enslaved and their descendants. In between what white captors, slave owners, and white nation-builders in the Americas identified as black speaking and sounding, is what black peoples struggle to speak to each other about their experiences in the West, but more importantly about their humanity. I argue that despite the major political and ideological gains of the various New World freedom struggles, black people remain *in-credible* speaking and writing subjects. As in-credible subjects, they continue to be heard and read through the prism of what Houston A. Baker identified as the "minstrel mask" even as they try to articulate a vision for black diasporic belonging.

I focus on the writing and thinking of two such black visionaries, W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston, in order to explore the continuing effects of the legacy of enslavement as well as question the need for *entre nous* black spaces in the twenty-first century. In pairing Du Bois with Hurston, I consider the difficulties of *entre nous* speaking along generational lines, gender differences, and regional affiliations. Though their writing and speaking differed, as scholars and artists they resisted the demands of the minstrel mask to produce a body of work that subverted dominant culture's devaluation of black folk responses to ongoing racial terror and

dehumanization. Hurston and Du Bois did this while trying to conceptualize what a black “us” in the United States and in the black diaspora in the Americas entailed and what, if anything, exists between the “us.”

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My first big questions about race, freedom, struggle, disappointment, and the possibility of following my dreams began taking shape with my parents, Yvon Joseph Cantave and Liliane Luc Cantave. My love of black people's stories began with them, my first teachers. There was so much I did not understand and so much that I wanted to know about us, their choices, our connections to Haiti, and how exactly we landed in my beloved Sunset Park community in Brooklyn, NY. Their courage in the face of the unknown inspired me to be just as courageous, despite my fears. My older brothers and sisters continued to model this courage and determination in their choices. This made me want to be just as strong for my younger brothers and my nieces and nephews. I would not be the woman I am without my family's love and support. With all of you, I was never alone no matter how far I traveled.

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Introduction

"De Understandin' to Go 'Long Wid It": W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Black Diaspora in the Americas

In Zora Neale Hurston's most acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), her heroine, Janie, returns from burying her husband and also from witnessing the awesome destructive power of a hurricane. The reader does not know that Hurston takes her title from a devastating natural event until the end of the novel. The hurricane represents the sudden and powerful upheavals that black people's lives have always been subject to beginning with their capture and transport to the Americas. In a text largely about circumscribed individual or group choices, responses to the racial laws and customs of the United States while in black and gendered bodies, God takes on definite, recognizable form in the sudden force of a hurricane formed out at sea, moving furiously inland. Though Hurston draws readers into this spectacle of power, the sounds of the hurricane and the responses to those sounds, though equally important, exist in the margins of the text. She leaves most of the sounds of black people responding to awe inspiring terror amongst themselves off the page to focus on Janie's decision to submit to her third husband's wishes by remaining in the hurricane's path.

Those who stayed were no match for the hurricane's power or the racism and sexism encountered during and after the devastating effects of the hurricane. The significance of that

spectacle will continue to be felt in the institutional racism of white officials policing access to safe spaces and ordering black people to do the cleanup and perform the work of segregating the dead for burial. In addition, after killing a rabid Teacake in self-defense, Janie endures the misogyny of black male friends who exclude her, and her type of resistance, from the rest of the grieving black community. The sounds left off the page or forced onto the margins provides a space for readers adept at reading omissions to hear black female and male negotiations with powerlessness and recalls the traumatic moment of formulating, as a black captive, an understanding of *entre nous* in the Americas. *Entre nous* in *Their Eyes*, though posited as a given, is contested throughout Janie's search for a relationship that allows her inside desires to mesh with her outside performance of desire. I read in Hurston's text, and in the spectacle of the hurricane, how the black "I" that emerges must also fight for a way to connect to a "we," an "us" out of and beyond trauma. Hurston foregoes reproducing, in total, the sound of identifying and needing in the most traumatic moments the *entre* and the *nous*. Black cultural production form the earliest sounds and silences have been attempting to address the *entre* and the *nous* and, ultimately, what is *entre nous*.

In this dissertation I examine the "sound and soundings" black people used to speak to each other, while mediating whiteness, to begin the complex task of becoming a diasporic black people in the Americas.[1] In many ways, the hurricane itself simultaneously recalls both the global violence of and the resistance to the ruptures that come to signify the African Diaspora in the Americas and what Paul Gilroy famously termed the black Atlantic in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Hurston's "hurricane," the powerlessness of humans— especially black people—against it, and most of her "speakerly" style[2] do not figure

in Gilroy's textual style in the way that W.E.B. Du Bois's language does. Addressing aspects of black powerlessness and the ensuing erasure of blacks in modernity in the post Civil Rights era needed the cachet of W.E.B. Du Bois's most salient theoretical formulation and not his later recognition of the need for "self-segregation."[3] This self-segregation" or "separatism" understood and practiced *entre nous*, between us, would conceivably guard against the unpredictability of white racial terror and/or white exclusionary practices,[4] which were forces that by 1934 Du Bois felt black people in the United States could not control.

Natural and unnatural forces continue to disproportionately affect people of African descent in ways that defy the best intellectual or rational explanations—much like racism and what racism allows for. As a New World signifier that functions alternately as judgment, punishment, and cleansing agent, Hurston's hurricane keeps this countervailing sign of the Americas always in view, always threatening to uproot and reveal yet another layer of what enslavement, capitalism, and colonization tethered together in a geographical space where black people and blackness did not previously exist. The black "sound[s] and soundings" that "joins" black speakers and makes their cultural productions possible contains this threat of violence and upheaval as well as the willingness of black subjects to stand and resist total erasure and defeat.[5] In *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison says, "In the beginning was the sound." The primal sound that the black women know to make, to return to, drives Beloved out of 124 Bluestone Road and back to her limbo realm. Embedded in the power of the black iteration of the earliest black arrivals to the colonies is unspeakable loss but also a desire to reconfigure what the Middle Passage severed using the sounds of the languages at hand to live. Those earliest sounds had to also mourn the dead, now incapable of achieving any just resolution in

this world, and hopefully lead those violated spirits to peace. Sethe's community can come together to send her dead daughter's ghost back to the other world but coming together to heal the quotidian wounds of the postslavery black community, *entre nous*, seems nearly impossible.

Entre nous, as I use it in the following four chapters becomes one more way to record the struggle with the discord; the disjunct of being a black diasporic subject and always in translation. The French spelling of *entre nous*, as oppose to the Haitian Creole spelling, *antre-nou* keeps the Western foreignness, the difference ever present especially as I use it to speak of the recognition and intimacy that should (naturally) exist between blacks but that they must struggle for in racially oppressive spaces. Using the French spelling instead of the Haitian Creole phonetic spelling of *entre nous* also recalls the reaction of Secretary General William Jennings Bryan, under President Woodrow Wilson who, after hearing French-speaking Haitians, remarked in shock, "Imagine!, Niggers speaking French!" Just as black people transformed English, they also transformed French. Bryan heard the language of philosophy and intellectual sophistication coming from an unlikely source. What language did he "imagine" that the inhabitants of a former colony of France would speak? As an English speaker, he could not identity or apply the French minstrel equivalent to the Haitians he heard. Enslaving nations in the Americas have spent centuries reimagining and constructing the limits of black speaking and sounding. Black people in the Atlantic have spent just as long resisting these impositions on their speaking and sounding.

The ability to recalibrate the sounds of terror, fear, and submission into layers of texture and meaning is what I explore using the writings of Du Bois and Hurston. Both figures, despite their gender, class, and generational differences turned to black sounds and soundings to tell their stories. Both figures present different generational and gendered responses to what they identify as the black sounds and soundings and their significance in the post Reconstruction era. Piecing together an understanding of the black diaspora in the Americas, the gendered differences of black men's and women's dreams, in and out of captivity, is a complex process. Reading the signs and sounds of black defiance to white imperatives can often reveal uncomfortable patriarchal attitudes within the most celebratory literary moments. For example, Hurston's most famous heroine, Janie, submits to Teacake's misreading of the force of the hurricane and his ability to protect her. The fictional black women that Du Bois heralded as the backbone of the black community had no real counterpart in his immediate circle. Thus "looking for the [Morrisonian] join" after surviving the terror of enslavement, or *entre nous* spaces, remains difficult for the black diaspora in the Americas because of the many other differences within the black diaspora. Du Bois felt that this aspect of coming together as a black people was largely the work of and the challenge for those of African descent in the U.S. in particular.[6] Much of his work in *The Crisis*, his studies at Atlanta University, and his novels attempted to create what he believed were the right social, educational, and political conditions for a twentieth century black understanding of *entre nous* to be possible in the U.S. and elsewhere in the diaspora. In Hurston's community, *entre nous* was a given and always flawed.

In *"De Understandin' to Go 'Long Wid It": W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and the Black Diaspora in the Americas*," I focus on W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston—two figures known for their imagery as well as their "soundings"[7]—to read what "joins" people of African descent together after five hundred years in the Americas. The United States, with its long political engagement with blackness, serves as my theoretical center. I trace the resistance to totalizing effects of African dehumanization in the Americas to a genealogy of sound that continues to provide "the join" for people of African descent, high and low. These soundings also provided the beginning spaces for black *entre nous* speaking. Despite the shared inheritances, *entre nous* speaking, from the earliest black Atlantic moment to the present, retains the built-in tension of those Africans/Americans coming, going, or staying. In choosing to pair Du Bois with Hurston I consider the difficulties of *entre nous* speaking along generational lines, gender differences, and regional affiliations. The disjunction that arises from Du Bois's title "father of black intelligentsia" and Hurston's "daughter of the South" allows me to consider the black people that make up the masses, the folk, caught in between these seemingly opposing figures and their figuration. In tracing their shared black soundings, what Africans of different "nations" and language groups heard and needed to make sense of in the Babel effect of never ending slave ships, plantations, and the racial structuring of colonial life, produced the words used to speak the unspeakable. The resistance to dehumanization in the Americas can be found in the genealogy of sounds that *join* people of African descent in spaces, high and low, in speaking *entre nous*.[8]

W.E.B. Du Bois's academic and artistic sensibility helped to linguistically frame and define the twentieth century as a century about race even when his political ideas fell out of

favor and Hurston's "word pictures" and soundscapes—after languishing in literary obscurity for decades —have gone on to influence a generation of black writers. One of her more famous literary images occurs in the first page of *Their Eyes,* with the narrator directing readers to the ships at sea and the finality that those ships can signify for black "watchers." "The ships at a distance," used to describe (black) men's dreams, also provides a gender-based duality in the experience of diaspora. Hurston suggests that black women turn the signification of the sea, the ship, and the horizon inward. Her exploration of outward and inward movement and the potential misreading of staying or leaving, being pushed or trapped by natural and unnatural forces make her text, and her attempts to theorize intraracial black life, central to the black diaspora canon in the Americas. A large part of the black diaspora literary canon, given the cacophony of languages and their sounds, centers on how to hear, read, and speak the soundings, the responses, of the early involuntary (and later voluntary) migrating black subjects. Those responses became the basis for their cultural creations. Their soundings, often stripped of their context, became the source of popular music, popular culture, and popular theater.

Of the particular experience of blacks in the United States Houston A. Baker, Jr. says "To be a *Negro*, the mask mandates . . . one must meld with minstrelsy's contours. . . . Such a concurrence casts one headlong into the realm of nonsense. The minstrel mask is a government object in a ritual of *non-sense*" (Baker 20-21). In *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987), Baker begins an inquiry into the black sounds produced in between and below the roar of "the minstrel mask." Baker located black modernism in these sounding differences that other blacks had to listen for and what he says black scholars should so easily dismiss. They too

needed to master "the uncanny ability to manipulate bizarre phonic legacies. For he or she had the task of transforming the mask and its sounds into negotiable discursive currency. In effect, the task was the production of a manual of black speaking, a book of speaking *back and black*" (Baker 24). Thus even the most erudite black people trained to speak in white spaces still contended with their white audiences hearing "*non-sense*" because of what I call their always already *in-credibility* as black speakers and actors. The black critique of the Harlem Renaissance as a failure by some black scholars is to not understand the power of the minstrel mask that covers them, as identified by Baker, or their in-credibility as speakers even in a post Civil-Rights era. The sounding difference he offers for reading (and hearing) "Afro-American modernism" is what I use to read and hear the *entre nous* sounds of the black Atlantic "hushed to a low register beneath [their] clamorous workings of the minstrel tradition" and other linguistic and cultural impositions of the dominant white culture (Baker 27).[9]

I argue that the enduring power of the postslavery and postcolonial nation over the descendants of the enslaved continues to require spaces for speaking between us, *entre nous* while in twenty-first-century freedom. These spaces are crucial for understanding aspects of black identity formation in the Americas. White culture's sense of blackness and what constituted the black idiom always had to be dealt with, even in the simplest black verbal exchanges. In between Baker's *mastery of form* and the *deformation* of form, and the interplay between the two for success in white-dominated spaces, is the *entre nous*, between us, black responses to the often terrifying power of whiteness and its aesthetic. Black interior complexity often gets lost in the watered-down black soundings for white consumption and globalization. What black subjects might feel compelled to leave behind if suddenly propelled by an outside

governing force or because of the dominant culture's desire for a particular black performance or sounding, always threatens to engulf black subjectivity and become the black *real*. *Entre nous*, even as I write about its centrality to black Atlantic identities, is a fiction, a myth that dominant culture feared and blacks could not let on existed. The anxiety and trauma surrounding most of black people's migrations and being of African descent in the United States can be traced back to the slave beginnings of the black Atlantic and the making of the African diaspora in the Americas.

In *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (2007), Stephanie Smallwood says, "[T]he Atlantic economy brings an essential element of the African diaspora into focus—the inexorable one-way trajectory of African dispersal via the transatlantic slave trade and its implications for African life in the Americas" (6). In the records of slave planters in Barbados and Jamaica, white slave owners noted how the enslaved born in the Americas "contemptuously" called newly arrived Africans "salt-water Negroes" (7). In a passage that I will quote in its entirety because of its importance to my own lines of black Atlantic inquiry, Smallwood goes on to say:

> The "saltwater" defined the relentless rhythm of the slave ships. But its pejorative connotation also hinted at what was problematic about the perennial appearance of newcomers in immigrant communities seeking stability and coherence. One could never completely escape the saltwater, for even once an African captive's own middle passage had ended, the communities where that slave's life played out in the colonial Americas continued to be molded by the rhythm of ships returning to deposit still more bodies. Through their own terminology, the descendants of saltwater slaves articulated their awareness of the problem of enforced emigration. In speaking of "saltwater" origins, they gave a name to the interchange between the slave ship and the slave community, between the new African migrants continually arriving to take their place alongside the survivors and the new American-born children who were putting

> down tentative roots in the new communities, between the ongoing experience of forced migration and its collective memory. In place of networks that link the origins and departures, and transform the emigrant into an immigrant, for the African captives in the Atlantic system reverberated the traumatic echo of commodification: the return of the slave ship, the arrival of new exiles into American slavery, the renewed imprint of the saltwater on the African diaspora. . . . 'Saltwater [Negroes]': this fragment of the slave's language put a name to the crooked lines (social, cultural, epistemological) that shaped their Atlantic world. (Smallwood 7-8)

"Fragment[s] of the slave's language" is what twenty-first-century people of African descent in the black Atlantic continue to rely on to "put a name to the crooked lines . . . that shaped their Atlantic world" (Smallwood 8). Caribbean Canadian and Jamaican American writers M. Nourbese Philip; Dionne Brand, and Michelle Cliff have also written considerably about these "crooked lines," "the slave's terminology," and the layers of trauma in black New World identities. Smallwood's research on the journey from "Africa to the American Diaspora" highlights the difficulties still faced by black Atlantic subjects in achieving and maintaining "stability and coherence" as a people with a shared history of enslavement. Black cultural producers and the people who interrogate that production also share a long history of trying to make the inherited languages of enslavement speak multiple aspects of their lived realities. By examining two seminal figures like Du Bois and Hurston, and the writers and scholarship that follow them in the post Civil Rights era, I return to the haunting complexity of the "slave's language" and their "reverberati[ons]" many generations later.

"*De Understandin' to Go 'Long Wid It"* comes from Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and foregrounds a way of resolving the contradictions posed by the inherited "slave's language" and the need to demonstrate mastery of the dominant language. Hurston's emphasis

on rendering an accurate sounding of black Southern speech in moments of unchecked intimacy in writing was groundbreaking. Her insistence on both the tonal and visual differences of a thriving black language, not as minstrelsy but as serious literature, embraced the legacy of sounds and soundings that contributed to the making of black peoples and black communities. Black scholars like Smallwood, Baker, and Gilroy and writers like Morrison, Philip, and Cliff continue the work of exploring the importance of black peoples' developing "their own terminology" for their experiences in whiteness in an "Atlantic system that [not only] reverberated the traumatic echo of [African] commodification" (7). That echoing reverberation led to complex, multifaceted ways of speaking and resisting psychic annihilation. The various articulations of "the descendants of saltwater slaves" occurred in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch whether or not the European originators of these languages recognized them as English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, or Dutch. Black soundings often defied or altered the known or accepted vocabulary and most of all the grammatical structure of European languages. Thus, part of the understanding needed to further meaningful black Atlantic exchange *entre nous*—will require a renewed effort to give equal weight to the rhythms and the meaning of the terms of non-English speakers who also "cannot escape their saltwater origins."[10] Each physical space in the black Atlantic holds and maintains a piece of the black diaspora's narrative history, the stories that black people still have to decipher and speak.

Smallwood's use of the term enslaved Africans used to describe in shorthand the unprecedented upheaval caused by the world-wide practice of African enslavement returns to the ways that black people made English and other European languages speak their needs even while reflecting their alienness. Du Bois and Hurston and the writers and scholars that come

after them, attempt to make use of this layered understanding of black people's journeys—their coming, going, and staying. "Saltwater Africans" evocatively captures the disruption of being African and of the Americas at a time of inexplicable terror, violence, and loss. The term also contains, like these Haitian Creole terms *kongo* and *bosal*, more frequently used on French plantations and colonies, the attempt to distance the one doing the naming from the newly arrived and thus reject the reinscription of their own enslavement.[11] This twoness of identification and distance, rejection and recognition of African vulnerability in new spaces will come to define a large part of the intraracial struggles of blacks in the Atlantic world as well as help to condition their responses to the Metropole. The agents of the European motherland in their outposts in the Americas were charged with keeping the saltwater Africans, the *bosals*, the *kongos*, and the Creoles from entering and signifying in the New Pisgah as free subjects.

Black words and sounds mattered to enslaved Africans and gave them a way to frame their experiences but those experiences that made them credible and human to each other fought an internal guerrilla-style war with their legal status as chattel. Thus New World blacks began (again) as in-credible subjects in white people's realty. Black people's continuing in-credibility, as speaking subjects and later as subjects who can represent the national whole, begins with these competing white empires' wholesale dehumanization of Africans. The black people they became, in the process, still carry the markers of dehumanization and thus still struggle for the type of face-value credibility given to their white peers. The need for the cheapest, most expedient form of labor in order to build European outposts in the New World, quickly established the color-coded practices, laws, and institutions that cast most Africans in the New World as slaves, unless manumitted, and many Africans on the continent, as potential

slaves. The legacy of black in-credibility leads me to also consider the limits of cosmopolitanism as a response to the effects of white supremacy. The very cosmopolitan Du Bois, devoted his life to documenting the lives of black people living "behind the veil" and its effects on their psyches. He would continue a black tradition of giving voice to the violent disjunction embedded in being an African in the Americas and hoping for a solution.

To be able to see and name the veil and its effects as Du Bois did also meant seeing and identifying the saltwater qualities still present in the black masses long after the end of formal, legal enslavement. Thus, the basis of the folk qualities, their sounding and speaking, came from what caused anxiety and shame in New World blacks: their saltwater origins in an Atlantic world defined by European power. The saltwater used to both disparage and reestablish a connection to Africa after centuries in the Americas, vacillates between a calcifying sense of tragic loss as diaspora blacks and addressing what black resistance created out of dire circumstances. This vacillation between loss and resistance, despair and resilience has always required a particular type of voicing, sounding that turned the endless moans and wails into the shared anonymous beginning of all spiritual blues singing. Though sung in various creoles and patois, with and without African drumming (depending on access), many New World Africans reacted to their enforced in-credibility as human subjects with blues laments that made their pain, suffering, and moments of fleeting hope real because other black, captive voices would hear them and respond. Black in-credibility, as a way of framing the struggle for black subjectivity, comes out of my theories about black creoles and patois and the significance attached to words like *kwè* or *croire* in French. Most Haitian speakers of Creole dispense with the French *incroyable* in everyday speaking and go to the root *croire*, meaning to believe. The

weightiness of the Creole word, when expressed as either "*Ou kwè*?" (You think? / Do you believe it?) or "*Kwè'm*" (Believe me), that fails to translate on the written page led me to insert a pause in the form of a hyphen in thinking about being incredible. Hurston knew all about sounds and gestures that did not make it onto the written page, as well as their significance to the meaning of the story being told.

Hurston, more than many of her contemporaries, documented, in scholarly and artistic form, the struggles of those within the diaspora to access a place and a space to be black without being consumed by negating qualifiers—a byproduct of white domination—and without negating the importance of a black interiority, not always open to public consumption. How do black artists and/or scholars negotiate what to tell and what not to tell especially if using terms and images largely created by the popular (and legally based) beliefs of the larger, more powerful culture?[12] Hurston learned how to listen for the different cues and to control for black in-credibility in her narrative telling. The "lies" were larger than life and the silences, omissions harder to detect as strategy, were part of an unacknowledged black tradition. Thus Hurston played with white disbelief in a black interiority that might serve black purposes only. Their collective disbelief in black inner lives, not wholly connected to desiring whiteness, made comic fodder out of a devalued, misunderstood, and feared black interiority. The fascination with and the production of black minstrelsy is a product of black in-credibility in white-controlled, white-dominated spaces. To manage the needed divide between inside and outside, Hurston (and others) relied on a *trompe l'oeil* telling: the false inside left outside specifically for white majority consumption. *Trompe l'oeil* was what she and others needed to do and say in

order to live in or get through the physical and ideological whiteness imposed onto the United States and the Americas as a whole.

Because of Hurston's training as an anthropologist and Du Bois's extensive sociological papers, I use them to center my analysis of black identity formation, the role that U.S. blacks play in shaping current ideas about the black Atlantic, and the ongoing struggle for black places to be whole. I titled the first two chapters devoted to Du Bois: "W.E.B. Du Bois, Cosmopolitanism, and 'What to Do with the Folk?'"[13] and "Becoming 'a Lord of Sound': W.E.B. Du Bois and Making the Case for Black Humanity in the West."[14] The last two are on Hurston: "'De Inside Meanin' of Words': Zora Neale Hurston on Reading, Writing, and Speaking in Black and White"[15] and "'De Understandin' to Go 'Long wid It': Reclaiming the Reclaimed Hurston." I examine how both figures worked through the sounds that white people wanted to hear and read along with the ones a black identified people needed to hear and read. With the globalization of black popular culture, black people in the U.S. and in the black diaspora are still negotiated their *entre nous* speaking through white people's distortions, fears, and desires.

Regarding black representation, Houston Baker says of one of Du Bois's ideological foes, Booker T. Washington, "The sage of Tuskegee understood that there were mnemonic *sounds*, nonsense syllables, so defining of 'the Negro' in American life that they were inescapable if one was earnestly to address 'the Negro question'" (*Modernism* 41). In employing these sounds, did they become the real? Do Blacks in the diaspora meeting up in the United States remember where what the white nation wants and needs black people to be ends and where our own soundings begin? For these reasons, the language(s) that came out of the sounds and soundings

of black people when writing and speaking *entre nous* in the post enslavement and post Civil Rights era in the "tight place" of racism and racial terror is important to consider.[16] My two seminal figures introduced terms and narrative frames that served the purposes of a post Civil Rights people, writing and speaking themselves into a literary tradition. I put Hurston and Du Bois in conversation with the writers, artists, and academics that follow them in order to consider how hearing the various sounds of the black diaspora as a shared experience might ease the tension inherent in being a diaspora.

Hurston was reclaimed, re-imagined, and re-birthed for new generations of writers and scholars, black and white. She pushed the boundaries and thus broke new ground in black speaking and not speaking in writing, as well as what speaking stances she would not compromise in a world she knew she could not access in traditional (white) ways. I contrast her approach with that of W.E.B. Du Bois and his early intellectually-coordinated assault on white America. In part, his German and Eastern European influences, as well as his New England temperament, assured that a *trompe l'oeil* telling of the Hurston kind would not be his mode of mediating between (a black) inside and (a white) outside. Hazel V. Carby says in *Race Men: The W.E.B Du Bois Lectures* (1998), "It was Du Bois's ambition to fashion a book [*Souls*] that could create and make tangible the 'soul' of a race in space and time, and he utilizes his own body to enable that soul to be imagined" (21). Carby goes on to quote Cornel West's description of how Du Bois's "Victorian three-piece suit—with a clock and a chain in the vest—worn by [him] not only represented the age that shaped and molded him; it also dignified his sense of intellectual vocation, a sense of rendering service by means of a critical intelligence and moral action" (*Race Men* 21). Carby rightly questions the conflation of "intellectual worth" with the clothing

described, that West emulates, and, by implication, excluded black women. For my purposes, the European three-piece suit—along with the goatee and cane—was an inadvertent *trompe l'oeil* for the very reasons that West cites. To be an impeccably dressed black man then and now—to be styling—disrupts white expectations. Both Carby and West circle around the disjunction of those cloths on his black body and Du Bois's attempts to turn an example of *trompe l'oeil* for whites into the accepted reality. In this instance, the clothes not only make the man, they make the human being who insists on being seen in traditionally white spaces.

Du Bois believed in the early part of his career that if he and others demonstrated and documented the abilities of blacks to whites, then intelligence and reason would win out over base, unreasonable racism. But racism could not be reasoned away, much like the "Victorian three-piece suit" did not confer respect and intelligence alone, but rather made him an object of curiosity. Hurston, because she was a Southern transplant and a young(ish) black woman of little means, held no such illusions about the nature of racism, what fueled that racism, and how her self-fashionings would be read.[17] Unlike Hurston, Du Bois did not always live in black spaces fully or willingly. As a New Englander, from Great Barrington, Massachusetts, he was always looking outside of himself at a world ideologically defined and constructed by whites and whiteness. At the turn of the twentieth century, the clothes, the schooling, and the crisp diction, in Du Bois's calculation, provided the strongest protection available against what white people saw and heard when the groups came in actual contact. In *Dark Water: Voices from within the Veil* (1920), he says:

> Quickly they turned and looked into the red blackness of the South and in their hearts were fear and hate! . . . What did they see? They saw nine and one-half

> millions of human beings. They saw the spawn of slavery, ignorant by law and deviltry, crushed by insult and debauched by systematic and criminal injustice. They saw a people whose helpless women have been raped by thousands and whose men lynched by hundreds in the face of a sneering world. . . . They [also] saw the greatest industrial miracle of modern days,--slaves transforming themselves into freeman and climbing out of perdition by their own efforts, despite the most contemptible opposition God ever saw. . . . (51)

He could not reconcile—with humor, guile, or deflection—what the majority saw and how that not only reflected on him but put him at great physical and psychological risk as an individual. Though lacking the South's rabid racism, the North offered little black psychological retreat, and what his Massachusetts upbringing did not do to his body it did to his psyche. Thus, his starting point and valuation of what constitutes blackness, his perceptions about the "Negro Problem" that he dedicated his life to differed markedly from Hurston's. Her struggles, though, to make a way out of the "no way" of white supremacy often surpassed his. Du Bois's resentment of the veil separating blacks from progress and the inside/outside performance that surviving a white power structure required meant that Du Bois's ego (and manhood) would not consciously condescend to the strategic *trompe l'oeil*, what Hurston left "outside the door of [her] mind for [white people] to play with and handle"(*Mules and Men* 3).

Du Bois refused to engage in multiple truths and false outsides even though his own suited, bearded performance of social and intellectual standing became a form of *trompe l'oeil* that never came off. Du Bois did not or could not imagine switching up his performance of himself in his struggle to properly father a race. Without the switch, the back-and-forth, he lost out on what Michelle Cliff mourns in *The Land of Look Behind* (1985): *entre nous* speaking with other black people and *entre nous* speaking with his first wife, Nina Gomer Du Bois. Cliff says, "I could speak fluently, but I could not reveal" (12). Yet, despite this limitation, Du Bois goes on to

put the soundings of a black people into writing and into the formative beginnings of a black nation of people within a black diaspora. Today, the legacy of both figures continues to inform and influence black writers and scholars still in the process of coming to terms with what is at stake in accessing white institutional spaces and what happens to those blacks who do not. Though not propelled by a hurricane, Du Bois and Hurston's educational and financial survival would keep each figure always moving and always negotiating whiteness. Each possessed a different understanding of and use of their twoness in spaces forever altered by conquest, enslavement, and the "problem" that free black people had become in the Atlantic world.

Though Du Bois and Hurston's post Reconstruction desires for what blackness meant and was supposed to be, often clashed, they shared a similar resistance to integrationist's goals that tended to focus on white proximity or entry into certain white spaces as the formula for ending racism. Du Bois became a pariah and his ideas about black citizenship and nationality, formed in nearly a century of activism and research, went against the prevailing optimism brought on by the Civil Rights movement. Hurston fared an even worse fate by rejecting the premise of integration outright and dying broke and in obscurity in her beloved South. Ashraf Rushdy says in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel* (2004), "To know what the Post-Civil Rights 'black' subject would be, it was essential to recall the complexity of what the first black American subject had been . . ." (102). The arc joining "the first black American subject" and the "Post-Civil Rights 'black' subject" is forever textured and complicated by a "saltwater" African heritage and the otherness of the sounds that remain in black cultural production. These are sounds "molded by the rhythm of ships returning to deposit still more

bodies" (Smallwood 7), later the rhythm of railroad trains and steel drivers, chain gangs or those escaping by starlight.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Pheoby says, "It's hard for me to understand what you mean, de way you tell it. And then again Ah'm hard of understandin' at times" to which Janie responds, "Naw, 'tain't nothin' lak you might think. So 'tain't no use in me telling you somethin' unless Ah give you de understandin' to go 'long wid it" (7). With the above exchange, Janie, Hurston's most famous heroine, decides to "reveal," to speak in a way that will provide not only her best friend, Pheoby, but a community of blacks (and whites) with a context for reading both her journey and the desire for unchecked black, female self-revelation. This type of self-possession was usually unheard of just one full generation out of enslavement especially without code, without deflection—so the novel leads readers to believe. Speaking what black people normally sang in the form of the blues challenges Pheoby to listen to another black woman's story without the anonymity of the group or the black male voice leading the call. The uncertainty that Hurston causes in Pheoby suggests that the control of black call and response form had become decidedly male, even as women's voices, rising in agony, despair, and resistance, provided the basis for such black soundings. They risked acknowledging, telling—not signifying, mutually-shared understanding of their positioning in the community, their shared gender and class locations in what Baker called the "tight place" of the U.S. South, post Reconstruction (32). But true self-possession requires the taking of such risks so that one's individual truth will shed light on the reality of the whole. Janie's insistence on providing the needed *understanding* to her "I" occurs in between the social constraints represented by the dinner that Pheoby is responsible for providing for her husband, Sam, the gossiping neighbors,

and Pheoby's initial hesitation to hearing a story that will take her back into slavery before it can allow her to "grow ten feet taller" in the present. Pheoby tentatively accepts the responsibility of participating and the potential power of voicing *entre nous* black female self-recognition within a U.S. history that tends to minimize the full extent of the racial and gender terror still affecting black individual and group choices.

With two soul-crushing marriages, Janie moves two classes up, from being the child born "without a carriage," to live among the masses or the "black majority" as a member of the black middle class. Houston A. Baker defines the "black majority" as, ". . . those populations of African, African American, Negro, and colored descent in the United States who inhabit the most wretched states, spaces, places of our national geography. . . . I call to mind and keep in the forefront of concern those black men, women, and children who have little hope of bettering their life chances through any simply (perhaps even 'plausibly') available means . . ." (*Betrayal* 7). Baker also includes in his definition of the black majority, ". . . those black families of four who are considered by the census middle class when their annual, pretax income is as modest as fifty thousand dollars" (7). Though the latter group may be considered part of the black majority, their attempts to successfully access the trappings of white middle-class lives often leaves them fighting from being overtaken by and confused with the blacks with "little hope of bettering their life chances." Without the dramatic break of migration, of leaving one social reality for another, of passing, or the promises of the underground economy change, for the majority of blacks, this does not happen. This break with history required the same fortitude of those Africans and their descendants who attempted to escape enslavement by

starlight and later those sharecroppers who headed North in search of jobs and better opportunities.

These forced displacements usually added new stresses to black interiority by altering the overall cohesiveness of families and communities and making what *joins* blacks together as a *folk*, as a geographical collective, harder to maintain. Even in the most "wretched spaces" where black people live out their realities a deep connection to place develops. Those blacks forced to stay, or who choose to stay, as well as those compelled to leave are central to the back-and-forth soundings of the diaspora. Between those staying and leaving black-identified spaces, they ensure that blacks as a group possess and provide creative as well as legal responses to black in-credibility in the West. The *entre nous* speaking that I advocate is a response to black in-credibility. Hurston and Du Bois approached their in-credibility as black subjects differently. Both found in the U.S. South, in the soundings of black people in those spaces, a beginning place for their thinking on the black diaspora. After Michelle Cliff says, "I could speak fluently, but I could not reveal. . . ," she adds, "To describe this journey [into self-revealing speech] I must begin at the very beginning, with origins, and the significance of these origins. How they made me the writer I am" (12). Similarly, "to reveal," resist, and thereby trump "a history of forced [Western] fluency" Hurston (and Du Bois) must begin at the beginning where the sounds are indecipherable, strained, and haunted, not unlike the sounds coming out of Toni Morrison's 124 Bluestone Road.

My first chapter, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Cosmopolitanism, and 'What to Do with the Folk?'," examines Du Bois's ideas about black identity formation and the challenges facing those in the

black world. Unlike, Paul Gilroy's emphasis on travel, specifically to Europe as the mark of self-awareness and difference, I focus on Du Bois's travels within the U.S. and his thinking and theorizing on the black diaspora from a U.S. vantage point. I examine Du Bois's complex relationship to the "folk."[18] How Du Bois felt about the folk in 1923 is not how he felt by the mid-century mark. I do not conflate Du Bois's concerns for the folk who make up the black majority in the U.S. and the black diaspora with that of today's black intelligentsia. W.E.B. Du Bois, with his decision to leave Atlanta University to devote himself full time to the racial activism of the NAACP and editing *The Crisis* magazine, helps to usher in the Harlem Renaissance. His legacy as a "scholar-activist" continues to serve as a model for writers of African descent as they deal with the issues that post Civil Rights blacks will have to also come to terms with as writers, academics, and black cultural producers. I use Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2002), and *Postcolonial Melancholia (The Welleck Library Lectures)* (2006) to explore black cosmopolitan claims to universality given a western history of enslavement, colonization, segregation, and apartheid. Du Bois also represents the challenges as well as the power in having multiple black experiences and perspectives in conversation in the same forum. Du Bois and Hurston frame the many issues facing the academic who is black, the writer and activist who must also make a living, and the difficulties of coming to terms with the paradox that is black freedom in the U.S. and elsewhere in the black diaspora.

In chapter two, "Becoming 'a Lord of Sound': W.E.B. Du Bois and Making the Case for Black Humanity in the West," I read Du Bois's novels, *The Quest for the Silver Fleece* (1911) and the third volume of the *Black Flame Trilogy*, *Worlds of Color* (1961). These texts continue the

type of theorizing about blacks in whiteness that Du Bois began in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In *Souls*, he says:

> I have called my tiny community a world, and so its isolation made it; and yet there was among us but a half-awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at birth, or weddings; from a common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages; and above all, from the sight of the Veil that hung between us and Opportunity. All this caused us to think some thoughts together; but these, when ripe for speech, were spoken in various languages. (257)

The "various languages "of blackness, black-identity formation, and black desire vis-à-vis whiteness continue to leave many U.S. blacks, and others in the Americas, speechless when considering what did and did not happen post enslavement and in the post Civil rights era. His critical analysis of the problem of "Negro people" right after physical freedom proved accurate. I contrast many of the profound and enduring ideas in his earliest work, *The Souls of Black Folk,* with those of his first published novel, *The Quest*, and last published novel, *Worlds of Color*. I also refer to the autobiographies to make my larger points about yearning for political, economic, cultural, and social freedom—and the challenges of black diaspora unity in the Americas especially. Du Bois, using his sociological training does one form of analysis and critique of what happened to black people and why, as well as what did not happen. In many ways the "various languages" being spoken by people of African descent continue to dissemble and lead to the complex reactions similar to, yet different from, those that led African Creoles to name new arrivals, saltwater Africans. As Houston A. Baker writes of Martin Luther King, Jr. in *Betrayal: How Black Intellectuals Have Abandoned the Ideals of the Civil Rights Movement* (2008) Du Bois was not this generation's "black centrist intellectual" lacking a broader vision (xv). That vision began with hearing ordinary black people in the U.S. South and remembering

his own family's origin song. What Du Bois did, he believed to be a part of a noble, grand cause of black economic, educational, and political freedom. "That vision grew to include the oppressed peoples of the world suffering under the yoke of colonialism. Du Bois turned the plight of the American Negro into a metaphor for much of what the colonized world experienced" (Gates 7). The next chapter examines black speaking and writing and asks in whose service, and with what beliefs about the black majority, do post Civil Rights intellectuals speak and write when in predominantly white institutions. But more importantly, I address the unfinished business that remains between black people, *entre nous*. Black sounds and soundings that have become the basis of a global popular culture need to be reconnected to their beginning places for the descendants of the enslaved stuck in inner cities, barrios, and cramped mountainside villages. I turn from the grand nationalist, Pan Africanist debates Du Bois made famous to consider the intraracial lives of black Atlantic people using Hurston's emphasis on black vernacular culture.

The third chapter, "'De Inside Meanin' of Words': Zora Neale Hurston on Reading, Writing, and Speaking in Black and White," explores the demands of whiteness on blackness by focusing on Hurston's rise, fall, and rise again as well as her celebrated entry into the American literary canon. I am interested in examining Hurston's legacy as a black woman researcher and writer who did not feel compelled to make excuses for the black masses or distance herself from her belief in black people's fundamental humanity. Despite Du Bois's work on behalf of the masses, at times he also blamed the black poor for not doing enough to conform to mainstream ideals. Hurston's approach to black in-credibility in the Americas paved the way for many late twentieth century writers and thinkers. The low notes, in addition to the high notes,

of Hurston's career highlight the difficulties of depending on the market and the difficulties of not only doing the work you love, but getting credit for it. How Hurston negotiated white institutional spaces and the significance of her first reclamation will be the subject of the third chapter. This chapter also reconsiders the role of the black researcher, academic, writer and the ways they tell on black people and how that telling, done for a primarily a white audience negotiates the possibility of a white power structure establishing the terms of black verity. Hurston's awareness of the white gaze and her ability to use the dominant culture's desire for a particular type of black speaking subject enabled Hurston to garner the kind of white critical attention that few black women writers of her generation can lay claim to. In the second half of chapter three, Barbara Johnson's important essays on Hurston and her questions about race and reading allow me to continue to examine black in-credibility as subjects. I use Hurston's essay, "How it Feels to be Colored Me," excepts from *Mules and Men*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Barbara Johnson's essay, "Threshold's of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston," as well as black vernacular references to develop this chapter on blackness and negotiating whiteness. This chapter leads to a fourth, also on Hurston, where I attempt to reclaim Hurston (again), not just for academics and writers but for the black masses she championed and the black diaspora she envisioned in her travels to Haiti, Jamaica, the Bahamas, and South America.

I argue in my fourth chapter, "*De Understandin' to Go 'Long Wid It*: Reclaiming the Reclaimed Zora Neale Hurston," that Hurston refused to conform to the Harlem literati's definition of blackness. In essence, she did not want to prove herself to white culture, as she saw it, or play her part and make nice for northern blacks who needed her southern

authenticity even as they disparaged her "darkie routine." For northern, striving blacks, Hurston was the epitome of what was left of the saltwater African, the *kongo*, and the *bosal*. Because of the saltwater origins of the black people in the South, they were the source of New Negro creativity. They were what U.S. blacks would build their modernist aspirations on and the language that they would use also came from the southern experience. Besides Hurston, there was no other strictly Southern Harlem Renaissance writer. The characterization of the South as a place devoid of substance, made her especially defensive and rightly so. She felt that *her* black people did not need cultural uplifting or cleaning up. Though she resented the portrayals of the South's racism without an examination of the racism in the North, even Hurston would admit that blacks, at all levels, needed opportunities. The South made certain types of black movement nearly impossible. Hurston resisted, sometimes obstinately, the suggestion that those opportunities can only come by mixing with white people and at the expense of all-black towns or schools. Often, to do the work she wanted to do meant accessing white institutions and securing white patronage. She resolved this seeming contradiction by making white access and patronage a means and not the end desire. Hurston did not manipulate situations simply to get closer to white people and white culture like she thought some other black artists and scholars did. As she progressed in her work, she could not be certain other black artist shared her perspective about what was important.

Hurston, with her solidly located U.S. black identity, did not feel threatened by or ashamed of black differences—especially those coming from the American diaspora. For my purposes this aspect of Hurston's work and life forms the crux of her understanding of the challenges facing the then-forming black diaspora. I return to *Tell My Horse* (1938), to examine

more closely Hurston's desires for black people in the hemisphere, how she understood her performance of blackness in white spaces, and what other blacks failed to understand about her. In Haiti and Jamaica, Hurston is an American abroad reacting in troubling ways to the (black) differences in the people and the culture. *Tell My Horse* may be her most challenging volume and one that definitely became a victim of the pressures of her white publishers and the demands of a white readership. To reclaim the reclaimed Hurston for the black diaspora, I examine the possibility that she made use of the black in-credibility of Caribbean blacks and the power inherent in her U.S. citizenship to (mis)represent Jamaicans and Haitians. Like Du Bois, Hurston also had geopolitical lapses when assessing blacks in the Caribbean, even as she took particular interest in the cultural and social exchanges that occurred between and across black borders in a newly forming black diaspora consciousness. Hurston's movement away from a place where she took herself for granted (as a self) signaled both crisis and opportunity.

Throughout her life, the black South's stories, rites, and passions would ground her in ways that Du Bois might have envied had he not been shamed by her brazenness, by her ability to flaunt the social demand for Western "fluency." Hurston's rediscovery and rethinking coincides, in the post Civil Rights era, with " the (re)birth of legal black access not only to worlds of education and business, but also to media and popular culture" as more and more talented tenth blacks speak and write about poor blacks for the dominant culture (*Betrayal* 78-79). Both Hurston and Du Bois, in their respective roles, understood the importance of countering either openly and/or with guile the national ceremonial acts that reaffirmed whiteness at the expense of the black majority. The need for the "understanding to go along" with black peoples' stories in the United States—their understanding of their own and the struggle of others in the black

diaspora to *stand in blackness* in the post Civil Rights era—makes Du Bois and Hurston into the allies they were not during their lifetimes.

Chapter One

W.E.B. Du Bois, Cosmopolitanism, and "What to Do with the Folk?"[19]

So far as the American world of science and letters was concerned, we never "belonged"; we remained unrecognized in learned societies and academic groups. We rated merely as Negroes studying Negroes, and after all, what had Negroes to do with America or science? W.E.B. Du Bois

I wanted them to know that the African connection was more complex and tortuous than they had ever imagined, that the U.S. monopoly on both blackness and racism was itself a racist plot. Michel-Rolph Trouillot

This chapter, "W.E.B Du Bois, Cosmopolitanism, and "What to Do with the Folk?" begins with the complex life, research, and activism of W.E.B. Du Bois. I examine Du Bois's attempts to place the U.S. black experience in a global continuum and the limits of cosmopolitanism when confronted with blackness and U.S. blackness in particular. Four years before his death in Ghana, Du Bois told his audience in Peking, China, "In my own country for nearly a century I have been nothing but a NIGGER."[20] Du Bois spent a lifetime studying and writing "the socially constructed reality"[21] of the folk. His findings, even at their most personal, challenged the educated and the worldly to move beyond race and racism—only to find that shift, for many white people and most white institutions, nearly impossible. To his chagrin, anger, and regret the cosmopolitan Du Bois remained "a NIGGER" to his white countrymen and -women and somewhat misunderstood by the black people he championed. Implicit within his self-assessment, at finding himself after "nearly a century" of productive, radical social science work

"nothing but a [nigger]" is the sting of his *in-credibility* as a subject regardless of the merits of his personal achievements. The white national power structure of the United States could always reduce this cosmopolitan intellectual to fit their image of the lowest form of humanity. The racial epitaphs used to describe the descendantsdescendants of the enslaved, the majority of black folk in the U.S., did not differentiate between blacks.

In this chapter I also explore aspects of Du Bois's relationship with the black folk he championed and his inability to fully embrace all of their expressive modes —

their resistant "sound[s] and soundings"[22] against racial terror. Black people's need to do what Paul Gilroy said Du Bois needed to do in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993): "convey [and express] the intensity of feeling that . . . [the] racialised experience demanded" of them on their own intraracial terms often distressed Du Bois (115). I argue that this inability did not detract from Du Bois's overall commitment to everyday black people but emphasized the difficulties of redressing the physical and psychological effects of racism on black communities, en masse, post enslavement. My reading of W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston, their work and experiences in the United States as Black Atlantic figures, has led me to identify and develop the notion of black people's *in-credibility* as Western subjects. Black in-credibility is what makes black *entre nous*, between us, spaces both necessary and sometimes fraught with imploding rage. Black in-credibility frames and shapes most, if not all, black-speaking and autobiographical telling and forces certain black speech acts to collapse in upon itself. This then leaves behind the trauma of "unspeakable things unspoken."[23] Du Bois spent his working life trying to make the black body credible in its claims to Western

subjectivity in tellings that balanced the spectacle of the unspeakable with scientific, intellectual, and artistic rigor.

Du Bois's complicated brand of telling often left him wrestling with how best to confront the racial, political, social, and economic impositions that the modern Western world placed on black people. To that end, he would join the plight of the world's workers with that of the American Negro. For him, intellectually, blacks in the United States provided the ultimate sign of stolen labor and later the sign of the labor movement's racial limitations. Becoming conscious of the "souls of white folk"[24] in relation to his body and that of his "people" meant coming to terms with how the white world came to define itself as white and free at the expense of Africans and their descendants. Africanness, dark skin, and eventually one drop of black blood, in the U.S. came to signify the practice of enslavement and the black face and body became the mark of those who *could be* or were once enslaved. Philosophical or ideological slavery and the brutal fact of African slavery rarely, if ever, occupied the same thought space in the development of Western humanism. The Hegelian master/slave dialectic, its theoretical suppositions, ran up against literal enslavement and levels of human alienation yet to be reconciled in the modern world.

In the United States, those descended from enslaved Africans could not, even if they wanted to, escape their blackness—unless they were able to pass and live the lie that visual whiteness conferred and black denial afforded. At the start of the twentieth century, Du Bois could only hope, even as he took on the job of black propagandist, that reason, science, and a truly cosmopolitan ethos would trump race and racism. In the mean time, the cosmopolitan,

urbane Du Bois remained weighed down by the white world's power over black and colored peoples of the world. In his world, the least accomplished of whites, unschooled beneficiaries of the humanism of the day, had to be given due deference by someone like him or risk losing his life. With the passing of a century since Du Bois made his most prophetic proclamation, "The Problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men," race relations have changed considerably (221). By the twenty-first century, people of color had gained access to white institutions that Du Bois could not. But many black identified people with access to these spaces formerly defined as white-only often needed to stay in these university spaces where blackness is, on one level, understood and read, intellectually, as human and equal.

In these spaces, academic, cultural, and political, the active resistance to the black masses, and the integration limits they signify, becomes, for some, depersonalized scholarship or art about the masses that avoids addressing the folk and their "clamoring" for justice still.[25] Blacks charged with telling (on) and theorizing black experiences to largely white audiences in white spaces sometimes do so by simultaneously representing difference and disavowing that difference. The disavowal of the effects of racism on those races, in this case, black can be found in dismissive phrases like "identity politics." To be black and dismissive of racial categories, to resist "identity politics" is a marker of sophistication and the ability to produce objective scholarship or art. To be affected by the legacy of disenfranchisement, still, to be moved to anger or tears by *sound[s] soundings*[26] that recall the unspeakable, diminishes the potential for scholarly or artistic *avant-garde* usefulness. Speaking of and wanting *entre nous* black spaces in the post Civil Rights era goes counter to the prevailing racial discourse. But like

Du Bois in an earlier century, post Civil Rights black academics, writers, and artists have to choose on which note or register their stand in blackness will hinge on. How then to speak of the epistemological break that the survivors of enslavement occupy in Western modernity? How to speak the quotidian effects of a continuing racism that requires the oppressed to always already compensate for their body's disruptive power in white fictions of universalism?

With the song he inherited from a captured ancestor longing for a lost African home, Du Bois, embodied this struggle of New World black people while wearing his best European suits, carrying a walking stick, and sporting a goatee. In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* Paul Gilroy says:

> Though fully accomplished in the niceties of sociological research and theorizing, Du Bois deployed these tools selectively and intermittently. The genre of modernist writing he inaugurated in *The Souls of Black Folk* and refined in his later work, especially in *Darkwater*, supplements recognizably sociological writing with personal and public history, fiction, autobiography, ethnography, and poetry. These books produce a self-consciously polyphonic form that was born from the intellectual dilemmas that had grown alongside Du Bois's dissatisfaction with all available scholarly languages. This stylistic innovation is not reducible, as one of his biographers has suggested, to an enduring affection for the essay form . . . I prefer to see its combination of tones and modes of interpellation the reader as a deliberate experiment produced from the realisation that none of these different registers of address could, by itself, convey the intensity of feeling that Du Bois believed the writing of black history and the exploration of racialised experience demanded. This distinct blend was also an important influence on the development of black literary modernism. (115)

The "intensity of [black and anti-black] feeling" that Du Bois "addressed" in the West has always required "different registers of address" in order to speak the unspeakable and to create, even in the midst of white terror, *entre nous* black-speaking spaces.[27] The limits of "the available scholarly languages" and the ensuing "intellectual dilemmas," brought on by his in-credible

black body placed Du Bois, though on another level, alongside all the other in-credible people of African decent. His "racialised experience demanded" a linguistic credibility and authenticity that Du Bois, who believed himself to be a first-rate intellectual and artist, chose not to deny. This refusal put him at odds with the standard white academic language and negated the assumed distance of scholar and object of study. For his "polyphonic" choices, Du Bois is often denied his place as a founding father of American sociology.

Du Bois created his "scholarly" and literary language from his understanding of the black *sounding* that shaped the speaking of captivity, unimaginable loss, and resistance. If he was going to tell other black people in the diaspora, and his white readership, what would eventually enable black-identified people to want to identify with and then transcend national borders, the available language would not do. Gilroy says:

> *The Souls of Black Folk* can be shown to be an especially important text because of the way it sensitised blacks to the significance of the vernacular cultures that arose to mediate the enduring effects of terror. The book endorsed the suggestion through its use of black music as a cipher for the ineffable, sublime, pre-discursive elements in black expressive culture. . . .[M]usic has been regularly employed since *The Souls* to provide a symbol for various different conceptions of black commonality. Du Bois's work initiated this strategy. (*Black Atlantic* 119-120).

Du Bois used music and his own fashioning of the black vernacular to explain the "ineffable" and identify in black folk experiences the sounds that will help them become, ultimately, a global black people. In this movement from a provincial, local folk to a global one, Gilroy says Du Bois hoped to create a space for "the cosmopolitan Negro" (Gilroy 36).[28] In the late twentieth century, Du Bois's desires for science, knowledge, and cosmopolitanism to dismantle the power of race and racism as a construct fell to Paul Gilroy or rather he took up the mantle.

Beginning with the identification of the black Atlantic as such, Gilroy has been trying to replace the banality of race politics with a "cosmopolitan solidarity and moral agency, which are today condemned by cheap anti-humanism and vacuous identity politics alike" (xv). What would a world of "cosmopolitan solidarity" even look like when the dominant culture and those aspiring to dominant-culture status believe that black entry, unless highly regulated and even then, "cheapens" or devalues the desired status, position, or geographical space?

To explore the issues that arise for identifiably black people and their cosmopolitan desires, I return to the critical turning point in black Atlantic reading theoretically laid out by Paul Gilroy and the critical and literary work of Toni Morrison, as well as August Wilson's attempt to historically address black speaking and agency decade by decade. Both writers, and others like Gloria Naylor and Michelle Cliff, use the private and popular vernacular dimensions of negotiating the unspeakable and their in-credibility as subjects, to provide the black majority with a psychic complexity that Du Bois touched on in the "polyphonic" *Souls*. This classic text straddled the racist bounds of black in-credibility and crafted a voice from the "lower frequencies"[29] that produced both the potential for black credibility and the resistance to black in-credibility. Becoming credible witnesses and cultural producers who benefit from their own mass cultural production meant minimizing or doing away with what keeps black soundings from potentially crossing over into Western cosmopolitanism: There can be no Vodou, Hodou, Obeah, or even the Dominican Fuku that Junot Diaz threw into the literary fray with his first novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). Deciphering the soundings of Africans, and their descendants in the black Atlantic, has always required engaging with these other ways of

both organizing and understanding the space between freedom and enslavement, whiteness and blackness.

Du Bois would lay much of the early (stylistic) groundwork for the black researchers, writers, and activists who would follow him as well as identify some of the challenges of being a black academic and activist in the U.S. willingly (and unwillingly) wedded to a black American world focus. The racial and social practices that evolved in the U.S., and in the black Atlantic over time, made the American experiment, even at its freest, bittersweet for the descendants of the enslaved and the conquered. In *Hegel*, *Haiti, and Universal History* (2009), Susan Buck-Morss says, "If American history has anything to contribute to the project of universal humanity at *this* historical moment, it is the *idea* (of which reality has notoriously fallen short) that collective, political participation need not be based on custom or ethnicity, religion or race. American imperialism is hardly the origin of this idea. Far more, it is the experience of New World slavery" (x). "[T]his historical moment," though, contains all the previous moments. Since U.S. conceptualizations of itself as a nation began with race and racism, Du Bois could not discard race, though he wanted to, as an organizing, theorizing principle. The "notorious" failure of the white world, its systematic ruthless domination and exploitation of the dark world, led Du Bois to conclude, that"[t]he democracy that the white world seeks to defend does not exist" (169).[30] The enslaved, in the colony that would become Haiti and elsewhere in the Americas, took it upon themselves to redefine freedom, humanity, and equality. With his work, Du Bois attempted to continue the theoretical redefinition of universal humanity.

Because he lived through almost a century of sometimes radical, but often incremental racial change, W.E.B. Du Bois had a chance to witness and record the evolution of a black race within the national confines of a dominant white race. Few white institutions saw the importance of Du Bois's chosen field of study or its relevance to white people. Of his own exceptional efforts, he says, "So far as the American world of science and letters was concerned, we never 'belonged'; we remained unrecognized in learned societies and academic groups. We rated merely as Negroes studying Negroes, and after all, what had Negroes to do with America or science?"(*Du Bois* 228).[31] The "belonging" that should have been possible after nearly a century of work did not materialize. If Du Bois could not achieve this type of "belonging," he did not believe, towards the end of his life, that black could achieve it in the United States without an economic independence and self-segregation. For Du Bois, this aspect of his racial and national twoness, and its mitigation, would initially define his understanding of blackness and the parameters of the black political struggle. His upbringing in the Massachusetts town of Great Barrington played a large role in how Du Bois came to conceptualize the social and scientific ramifications of race.

In *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Towards an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940), Du Bois began his examination of the racial underpinnings of U.S. history starting from the year of his birth, 1868, five years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and just three years after the end of the Civil War. With this particular autobiography, he situates himself as a product of history. With his birth, Du Bois marks the legal beginning of conditional black freedom in the U.S. and continued with the rise of Reconstruction after the passing of the thirteenth amendment in 1865 and its end with the Tilden-Hayes Compromise of 1877. Only

Du Bois does not just stop with his U.S. historical location, he goes on to record the other events happening in the world at the time of his insular upbringing. For instance, he notes, as a sign of colonization that he grew to protest, that Queen Victoria of England became Empress of India in 1876 among other world movements that he hardly noticed as a child but were meaningful in shaping the world he inhabited. In *Dusk* he says, "I was six when Charles Sumner died and the Freedmen's Bank closed; and when I was eight there came the revolution of 1876 in the South, and Victoria of England became Empress of India; but I did not know the meaning of these events until long after" (18). The betrayal of the Tilden-Hayes Compromise, unceremoniously abandoned newly-freed blacks to the southern white leadership who immediately proceeded to "resurrect" the South by putting the freedmen and freedwomen back in their place.

That place, according to the white mind-set, when articulated, was always subordinate to the physical and ideological places identified as white and thus reserved for white people. The restoration of the plantation owners' former powers and the removal of all federal troops all but guaranteed the rise of Jim Crow segregation and the rise of de facto terror organizations, operating like the recently outlawed Ku Klux Klan. Despite, the Force Act of 1870 and the Klan Act in 1871 granting the federal government the power to prosecute Klan members, they continued to flourish in lesser numbers as the White league and the Red Shirts in 1874.[32] These groups even without operating under the formal name of the Ku Klux Klan were very effective in suppressing black voters and helping the conservative democrats regain political power in the South. The first recorded manifestation of the Klan can be traced back to the end of the Civil War and what "losing the Civil War" meant to the South and the Confederacy. It did not

take long for white sensibilities, Southern and Northern, to define the look, feel, and practice of black freedom post 1865 with loosely-organized white vigilante groups powerful enough to operate beyond the reach of the law. The Klan would gain its greatest resurgence with the advent of a new media and entertainment form: the groundbreaking silent film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) based on Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905).

Du Bois viewed the demise of Reconstruction as an opportunity for national transformation that white fear and ignorance doomed. Where race and black-identified people, in particular, were concerned knowledge and education did nothing to abate the intensity and violence of racism. In the United States, blackness would not be allowed to fade to white. Calls for a certain amount of respect and fellow human recognition—at least for the more able black people—often led to the "ridicule" and contempt reserved for uppity blacks acting out of place and beyond their station. Manning Marable, author of *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (1987), says in "Reconstructing the Radical Du Bois" for a new generation:

> For scholars such as early Du Bois biographer Francis L. Broderick, their greatest dilemma was primarily due to the fact that Du Bois failed to conform or fit into the arbitrary categories they had constructed to analyze patterns of African-American social thought and culture. To minimize Du Bois's legacy, they questioned the value and even the legitimacy of the bulk of his scholarship; they ridiculed Du Bois's various political and tactical shifts and oscillations, between reformist integrationism, Black nationalism; and they criticized his austere personality as cold, aloof, and isolated from genuine human interaction and social contacts. [33] (7)

Du Bois's "legacy," despite the recent outpouring of Du Boisian scholarship, still suffers from the inability to neatly "fit the bulk of his" work in "the arbitrary categories . . . constructed to analyze" black scholarship and "thought" (7). In many ways, Du Bois's detractors rejected his brand of cosmopolitanism and his intellectual attempt to make the plight of the black masses

stand in for the whole. Because of his self-referencing in his texts and his reworking of the "available scholarly languages" (Gilroy 115), he also embodied the riffs/rifts that the white nation and its people put between men and women like Du Bois and the black masses. The slippage that occurs between the shame of black in-credibility and the always already credibility of whites and whiteness is always at work in all black/white interactions. His attempts to make the black body more credible and read as scientifically similar to whites differed from those citing visible proximity to whiteness which sometimes creates moments like Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896.

This challenge to racism, led to "separate but equal" officially becoming the law of the land, two decades after the demise of Reconstruction. Homer Plessy was a very fair-skinned man from New Orleans who could pass. The U.S. "one drop rule" made no legal provisions for the very light or visibly mixed black people to be treated differently from the darker, visibly black people. In other countries in the Americas, mixed-raced categories did exist, and helped to shape the degrees of African racial identification in New World nations. The political and cultural recognition of racial mixness provided enslavers a basis to allow the enslaved some form of controlled access. The 1896 decision at the fin de siècle in the United States, legally instituted "separate but equal" and reinforced, for another century, the primacy of the "one drop rule" in U.S. racial identity formation.[34] Du Bois's voice in, remembering the early days of freedom, *Dusk of Dawn* carries the weight and gravity of this history that holds him intellectually and socially captive. As a black academic his work is never just work, but a part of the historical record that his body has to always address in one way or another. The language and tone of Du Bois's most influential works were often labeled too didactic, too fiery, or

passionate. In *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935), a study volume close to his heart, Du Bois often breaks out of the required objective accounting of history to show himself as one of the "sufferers."[35]

Manning Marable, paraphrasing Gerald Early in his review of David Levering Lewis's biography, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (2000), says:

> To Early, 'Lewis's fine biography' was also valuable because it presented Du Bois as 'something of a cautionary tale.' Du Bois was undoubtedly brilliant, yet he was forced to pursue a life of leading the struggle against racism, a fateful decision that ultimately 'distorted Du Bois's aims and hopes, to the degree that the premise of the liberal education he received—that he was entitled to pursue any interest he wanted—was defeated.' Du Bois should have been permitted to remove himself from the racial ramparts, far from the maddening crowd, into the dark and dusty corners of a library where his racial identity could be forgotten. [36] (19)

Early's assumption disregards the historical reality that Du Bois faced at the beginning of his career. Black Studies, as we know it, did not exist. Jim Crow segregation became the law of the land and the belief in black inferiority "forced" Du Bois to choose "a life of leading the struggle against racism" on many levels (19). Du Bois chose to make a systematic study of U.S. blacks and when the studies were not enough to fight racial violence and exclusion, he became an activist. The world that might have "permitted him" to just be a scholar, like his white counterparts, did not exist. No white institution would hire him as a professor and Du Bois did not want to "forget" his racial identity or his connection to the disenfranchised black masses. To cultural critics like Gerald Early, his righteous indignation and the tone that he developed in his voice to fight racial terror, lessened his credibility as an academic. This in-credibility, developed during centuries of legal enslavement and racial subjugation, would not alter

psychically, economically, or socially with corporeal freedom. This awareness led Du Bois to take the stands that he did—at great risks to himself. Thus the formal instituting of "separate but equal," a palimpsest of many historical moments that Du Bois recounts in *Dusk of Dawn*, frames the start of his academic career and his credibility in the white world as a scholar, activist, and visionary. Black in-credibility as Du Bois experienced it, along with the other men of his generation like Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey, feminized them and they rallied against this unspoken feminization with individual attempts to define black manhood, nationhood, and black power.

Black men's reaction to their lack of power and their subordinate relationship to white men further compounded the extent of the peculiar praxis of black in-credibility for black men. Du Bois did not know or want to admit to it, but his in-credibility, and its emasculating effects, would follow him for the rest of his active life. Du Bois's mannerism, style, and intellectual demands in writing and in speeches were the signs of his in-credibility. These signs, to Du Bois's dismay and anger, proved ineffective in quelling the irrational bloodlust of the lynch mob and, to a lesser extent, acted as a barrier to his own black *entre nous* (between us) discourse. The late-nineteenth-century Victorian propriety that Du Bois advocated does not make him a Victorian. Such a designation fails to take into account his inability to reconcile the demands of blackness and whiteness in and on his body with the modern state's de facto use of lynching as a terror tactic. Lynching was used to preserved white purity and reinforced white unity by ritualizing the killing of black individuals at the hands of a white mob as a punishment and warning to black communities. For Du Bois, the lynching of Sam Hose right before his first Atlanta University departure represented his failure in his current position, as professor and

intellectual, to affect immediate change for the many black "sufferers" of the nation. His scientific studies, his appeal to a common humanity was undercut by the daytime display of Hose's knuckles in a grocery store window. The "cool, calm, detached scientist" needed to make way for the activist. (Levering Lewis 226). Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis said that brazen display of black dehumanization altered Du Bois's beliefs and led him to change his tactics. That white people *could do it*, plan and execute a murder as a community, a family, as public servants, and fight for souvenir body parts broke something in Du Bois psychologically that Toni Morrison would later give full voice to in *Beloved* (1987) and in her framing of the unspeakable.

Beloved, as an *seminal* black literary text, stands in blackness long enough to force readers to attend to the dictates of black in-credibility as well as the power and the limits of *entre nous* speaking and gathering. With *Beloved*, Morrison broke through the silence embedded in black soundings to produce an array of familiar yet new Hurstonian "word pictures" and images about enslavement and its ongoing psychological effects. Sam Hose's knuckles, the sight of them in a white man's storefront finds new life and meaning in the literary world that Morrison bequeathed the nation and the black Atlantic. Morrison helped a new generation tune in clearly to the Ellisonian "lower frequencies" and their corresponding "word pictures." In these "lower frequencies," Frederick Douglass's Aunt Hester and Harriet Jacobs, as herself, became one with Sethe and, to a lesser degree, the self-willed mute, Denver. At every step of recounting of what happened to the women of 124 Bluestone Road, the black community and individual black choices are scrutinized alongside that of white people and what their credibility makes possible. As a writer invested in black speaking and sounding on the

page, Morrison repositioned what the U.S. as a nation thought they knew about enslavement and reconnected a generation of readers with knowledge of how the sounds that traced back to enslavement continue to be experienced by their descendants. The task of telling the stories, how to tell them, and measuring what will be heard and understood by blacks, by whites, by other people of color remains a daunting one for most twenty-first-century black scholars.

Du Bois's research started with the slave trade followed by the inner city lives of Philadelphia blacks. Black Reconstruction called for what Bill Strickland identifies as "a new [written] history of America" in his essay "Du Bois's Revenge."[37] In the essays that comprise *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois more than hints at the resistance to the rewriting of the existing narrative of (white) American success and the intellectual as well as the racial resistance to him as a black-identified man. Gilroy says:

> The significance and functionality of racial terror thus becomes a central preoccupation in Du Bois's indictments and affirmations of modernity. . . . Du Bois's sense of the importance of ritual brutality in structuring modern, civilised life in the South was developed both through his arguments for its continuity with patterns of brutality established during slavery and in his fragmentary commentaries on the genocide of Native Americans." (*Black Atlantic* 118-119)

Modernity could not be separated from "ritual brutality" and the threat of "racial terror" that followed Du Bois throughout most of his life. The Jim Crow section of the train was replicated in the Jim Crow treatment he received from white institutions that reduced him to his parts and reinforced his in-credibility as an academic. Du Bois's racial and human reduction left him, as a social scientist, grappling with how to "interpret the social relations of racial subordination and to legitimat[ize] [his] strategies for its overcoming" (*Black Atlantic* 115). Du Bois's own *Souls* is a precursor, of sorts, to *Beloved* in many ways. *Souls'* publication in 1903, like *Beloved*'s in 1987,

addressed the space between ongoing "racial terror" and the demands of "civilised life" while breaking new ground "in word and sound" in telling black people in the West something about themselves that "existed in the part of the memory that does not form words" but sounds (Naylor 4).[38]

The researcher in Du Bois knew what it meant to locate a people's core in *sound* in a white world that prized writing and academically and racially disparaged the vernacular sounds and soundings identified with slave speak and slave sounds. No matter where he traveled or what he aspired to do as an intellectual those sounds of "the minstrel mask"[39] came with him, always affecting his credibility in white spaces. His own personal styling and affectation to counter in-credibility made some blacks like E. Franklin Frazier question his allegiance to the black majority.[40] Thus the stark differences in the credibility of blacks and whites permeated all facets of Du Bois's life and led him out and beyond the U.S. to investigate other possibilities for U.S. blacks in the world. The credibility that a German Ph.D. might have given him was not lost on Du Bois or white people in the U.S. and Germany. He settled for a Harvard Ph.D.—the first one given to a person of African descent. Du Bois would also be forced to settle for, not the jobs he imagined that someone of his educational attainment merited, but the jobs reserved for blacks in a nation and hemisphere defined by Native conquest, black enslavement, and segregation.

In the years, between 1885 and 1895—the years of his formal education at Fisk, Harvard College, and in Berlin--Du Bois says, he might have accepted what his training and New England upbringing prepared him to believe "except for the race question" and its direct application to

him (*Dusk* 25). What he observed black people suffering and his own feelings of discrimination made intellectual and dispassionate distance impossible (*Dusk* 25). Looking back at his formative years, he says of his growing social and political awareness, "At first, however, my criticism was confined to the relation of my people to the world movement in itself. What the white world was doing, its goals and ideals, I had not doubted were quite right. What was wrong was that I and people like me and thousands of others who might have my ability and aspiration, were refused permission to be a part of this world" (*Dusk* 27). Du Bois also says, "My attention from the first was focused on democracy and the democratic development and upon the problem of the admission of my people into the freedom of democracy" (*Dusk* 28). His views about entering that democracy in the U.S. would change dramatically. By the time Du Bois wrote *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Towards an Autobiography of a Race Concept* in 1940, he can admit that simply wanting to belong, to have access to what whiteness signified, and in the nation proper as blacks, was not enough without questioning and critiquing "[w]hat the white world was doing" (27).

Despite the "illogical trends," contradictory forces, facts and tendencies" of the race concept, it defined all aspects of Du Bois's life and led him to, initially, fight to exclusion instead of asking what being included meant. Almost like his fictional character in *The Black Flame Trilogy* (1957-61), Manuel Mansart, Du Bois concludes that black goals and ideals needed to encompass the world and black people in the West needed to take their place in the world as active members. The U.S. system, and its dependence on race and racism, is broken with a center that will not hold both whites and blacks. In writing *Dusk*, *The Black Flame Trilogy*—which also provides a history of race relations—as well as *The Autobiography*, Du Bois argues

against black people entering a broken system as if their presence alone or the acceptance of their exceptionalism will change the "illogical" and "contradictory" demands of that system. Du Bois presages the metaphor of "entering a burning house" used by Malcolm X to describe the unfolding Civil Rights agenda. Many intellectuals never make the leap that Du Bois made in doubting the entire American enterprise and connecting the U.S. black experience to a world of oppression and labor strife not always restricted to color. Though intellectually necessary, doing either, especially the latter, came with very real risks for U.S. blacks like Du Bois. Though race, as Du Bois knew, was a concept, one with particularly cruel outcomes for black people in a white nation or a global context defined by white superiority, it remained a tangible mode of identification and belonging even for those most maligned by it. The calls from Paul Gilroy to do away with the fascism of race in his texts after *The Black Atlantic*, like *Between Camps: Nation, Culture and the Allure of Race* (2000) and *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2004)[41] risk losing the power and nuance of staying black as the way to resist white hegemony. Du Bois traced the source of black resistance in the U.S. national space back to the South.

Envisioning the Future life of a Cosmopolitan Negro from the U.S. South

When Du Bois left Great Barrington, Massachusetts, to go south for the first time in his life, he transformed culturally into a "Negro" from the staid, subdued "American" of a darker hue that left New England. That trip south brought him to Fisk University and striving young black people who, though faced with the debilitating effects of institutional racism and economic disenfranchisement, seemed ready to take on the challenges of the day. Gilroy

quotes Du Bois saying, in *The Autobiography*, that "he wanted to be a part of that" (*Black Atlantic* 108). Given Du Bois's circumspect personality, his upbringing in the North, and the silence and shame surrounding an older half-brother, Idelbert, and an absent father, his reaction to this select group of black people was understandable. He says, "Into this world I leapt with enthusiasm. A new loyalty and allegiance replaced my Americanism: hence-forward I was a Negro" (108). This Negro world, though housed in the eye of the racial storm, was not all battle all the time. Not only did Du Bois find a heretofore unknown black cultural expression, he also found, according to his most current biographer, David Levering Lewis, sexual self-expression. In The *Black Atlantic* Gilroy says:

> Compared to the South, where Du Bois was to discover and internalize a new way of being black, his northern birthplace was seen by some commentators on his life as an inauthentic and insufficiently black location because of its remoteness from the institution of slavery. The problems of racialised ontology and identity—the tension between being and becoming black—are therefore deeply inscribed in Du Bois's own life. He was open about the ways he had to learn the codes, rhythms, and styles of racialised living for himself when he left the protected but nonetheless segregated environment in which he had grown up and took his place at Fisk University, the Jubilee Singers' alma mater, in Nashville, Tennessee. It was at Fisk that Du Bois encountered the music which was to play such an important role in his analysis of black culture. . . . He incorporated these learning experiences into his work and used the insights they provided into the social construction of black identity as a means to open up the constitution of racial identities. Some of the more openly and consistently autobiographical writings make clear that Du Bois had self-consciously reconstructed his sense of self and his understanding of community amidst the racially-affirmative culture of Fisk University . . . (116)

Paul Gilroy's analysis of Du Bois during this period in his life falls in line with my own perceptions of Du Bois but with a difference. Though Du Bois did have to make some

adjustments when he arrived in the South he found himself in the company of black intellectual peers and in a black social milieu that rivaled the exclusionary white ones.

Contrary to what Gilroy says, Du Bois always "lived a racialized life," one so circumscribed that it taught him how to foresee and avoid most potentially racist situations and thereby developing his "second sight," his double consciousness. To "fit" in his narrow New England life as a black person worthy of white compassion and assistance, his life needed to be narrowly defined. That narrow definition also included, as mentioned earlier, erasing his older brother from the narratives he learned to tell about himself. Du Bois was a seasoned practitioner of "withholdings," what Barbara Johnson[42] says Zora Neale Hurston does in her essay, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928) and in her first folklore collection *Mules and Men* (1935). Withholding personal information when in potentially unsafe white spaces and coming to rely on *entre nous* black spaces became the hallmark of black in-credibility. Before arriving in the South, Du Bois did not suffer the violence and danger traditionally associated with the South, but neither did he experience much black *entre nous* intimacy in the North. It is the racialized North that gives Du Bois, though unable to articulate it then, his prized and despised double vision, along with the understanding that he has always lived within the veil and has always been aware of himself as a black person living on the margins of the white community. In all that Du Bois could control, he did so by making sure his behavior and intelligence were always beyond reproach.

Though a racially-subdued New England town, Great Barrington required exceptional self-conduct from Du Bois because he did not want to give them the fodder that might feed their

stereotypes. Long the only black student in his New England classes, he did not respond well to other black students within this New England space who did not actively work to academically outperform the white students. One such black student, who briefly joined Du Bois in his New England isolation, shamed him (*Dusk* 20). His representing the race—to whites—did not make *entre nous* black outreach and support to less-able blacks, or those who reacted differently or adversely to white demands on blacks, possible. The hyperawareness of the white policing gaze, even in its most benign form, tended to warp social relations among blacks by normalizing black isolation. "[T]he protected but nonetheless segregated environment in which he had grown up" discouraged black solidarity and a black life not preoccupied with the white gaze controlling for black exceptionalism. Far from what Gilroy suggests, the black world of the South offered Du Bois a space to experience black multiplicity, intimacy, continuity, and community. Even with the constant threat of physical racial violence, the South offered communal possibilities and a context for a dynamic blackness to emerge. In the South, Du Bois found a people, a living history, a cultural source that helped to anchor his allegiance and his commitment to black people as a people.

The South became a space of racial extremes that Du Bois returned to in many of his published works. The extent to which southern whites *needed* to exclude and debase blacks did shock him, but the extent to which black people (of a certain class) were able to form their own vibrant communities within "the lion's mouth"[43] also surprised him. Du Bois spent most of his formal educational years and the first ten years of his academic career reconciling the northern whites of his youth with the southern variety encountered during his Fisk, Wilberforce, and Atlanta University years and later with the Europeans he encountered in his travels. In his

attempts to theorize who whites were as a whole when it came to why full freedom eluded black people in the U.S., he feared finding little to no ideological difference in their general assessment of people of African descent. For this reason, Du Bois held on to the image of the white northern schoolteacher who went to the South to teach newly-freed blacks. He immortalized the courageousness of these New England white women in his first novel, *The Quest for the Silver Fleece* (1911), in the character of Miss Smith, a white, dedicated spinster. I will return to this novel in the second chapter and pair it with Du Bois's final novel, *Worlds of Color* (1961).

The Quest and *Worlds of Color* return to many of the seminal issues that occupied Du Bois's work as an academic and activist. From 1911 to 1961 the U.S. black world expanded to include Du Bois's international focus with black and brown people at the center of world events. Both novels stress the importance of travel, of leaving and returning, and the struggles of staying. The clashes of recent immigrant groups and internal black communities, which existed to a lesser extent in Du Bois's during the Harlem Renaissance, stem from how these different groups of African descent attempt to configure inner city spaces. [44] The recent arrivals and those who came earlier resist the recognition of the in-credibility of black arrival: Is this part of the city home or a gateway community acting as a stepping-stone to somewhere else, and what would better mean? Better is always predicated on what the host black community in those black spaces is not and the new inhabitants judged some of those people as being unable to maneuver successfully in the existing world. The latest black arrivals can then define the host black community as those not smart enough or driven enough to make it out of the ghetto or the countryside. Recognition of black in-credibility and the potentially debilitating effects to the

self and to the (black) other is imperative. In going south "Du Bois had self-consciously reconstructed his sense of self and his understanding of community" and this willingness to transition and possibly become some thing else remains the challenge of all blacks migrating to the United States (*Black Atlantic* 116). Du Bois upon arriving south became "a Negro."

Becoming a "Negro" in the passage the Gilroy cites from Du Bois's *Autobiography* coalesced around hearing and accepting the sounds and soundings of the South as a marker of his beginning as a black subject in the U.S. and in the Americas. I will continue to explore the cultural and political significance of black soundings, utterances that, as Toni Morrison says in *Beloved*, existed before words and how what existed before connects U.S. blacks to other people of African descent in the diaspora. The tracing and identification of inherited soundings from Frederick Douglass to Du Bois or Harriet Jacobs to Hurston, though in decidedly gendered ways, highlights "the tension of being and becoming black" within the United States. From these beginnings then, a certain amount of adaptation to blackness is always required of all black people moving from one physical space to another—and the exchange of sounds and soundings between the blacks encountered and those arriving to the U.S. facilitates that adaption in ways that words, alone, cannot. Gilroy says, "[Du Bois] was open about the way he had to learn the codes, rhythms, and styles of [a particular] racialised living" and he "self-consciously reconstructed his sense of self and his understanding of community amidst the racially affirmative culture" of the black South (*Black Atlantic* 116). The South *gave* Du Bois his intellectual and emotional complexity vis-à-vis black people. The sounds heard in his writing captured the tonal and visual ache of identification; they gave voice to the otherness, the difference still discernable in the black cultural production.

This connection to the history-laden sounds of black people rooted Du Bois's activism in justice for the people who produced those sounds. In many ways, this deep sense of injustice made him unfit for cosmopolitanism as practiced by the West. Du Bois could not stand outside of it—theorizing. Though his body and mannerism told black people who heard and saw him something else, he was intellectually and emotionally one with them and he shared that long history of racial trauma with them. Du Bois took what he decided was the best that the South had to offer and combined it with his Calvinist upbringing in New England to construct his defense of himself and his people. He needed southern blacks to become the man we know today, the man this chapter and the next is attempting to "measure."[45] The soundings Du Bois heard in the South led him to connect an ancestor's song passed down through generations with a living embodiment or an existing source. This acknowledged recognition of (African) similarity, not difference, as well as his willingness to adapt his understanding of blackness beyond geographical location, represents a considerable part of Du Bois's legacy. But the power of the U.S. black culture in the black diaspora cannot be understated. U.S. blacks and their soundings have always represented a combination of modernity and resistance and the chance for self-realization in black terms (or on the terms of the oppressed) in the West. They were also able to balance the crises from without, white domination with righteous indignation, style, and moral certainty.

The moral certainty central to black people's struggles for justice is rarely attributed, in public, to the African spirit practices and beliefs that the enslaved turned to—except in passing in the U.S. Yet, African spirituality, handed down in words later generations could not define, empowers black soundings, black performance, and black resistance. This world Gilroy and Du

Bois's cosmopolitanism has little to say about and do with. The African worldview responding to and mediating the sounds of displacement, enslavement, segregation, and loss countered the world offered by whites in ways that parallel but do not make a people cosmopolitan. The Vodou, Hodou, Obeah, and Fuku that people in the West practice or consciously make room for, in one form or another negates almost all black claims to cosmopolitanism. The specificity of, say, Haitian Vodou, the need to reenact various rituals, for consecrated space, if not outright sacred space, and for reaffirming historical blood ties in life and in death—all byproducts of enslavement—cannot be separated from the transcendent power of black diaspora sounds. The fixed dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and conjure reinforces the lines dividing access into white worldliness and those without. The tension between white worldliness and the spirit world of blacks comes from the constant reenactment of black people's metaphysical adaption of the profane and the sacred. And the profane is the white world.

Vodou and Hodou require people of African descent to be in their black bodies acting as conduits between the past, present, and future. The first sentence of Junot Diaz novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* captures the uncosmopolitan nature of what happened to form what is now the black Atlantic. He says, "They say [Fuku] came first from Africa, carried the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon drawn into creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles" (1). Whether Diaz, Edwidge Danticat, or Toni Morrison, all writers of African descent return to the violent break that continues to signify those identifying as black or as Afro Latino as other worldly. As immigrants from the island of Hispaniola, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Danticat and Diaz, like Morrison, have to

reconcile the African spirit and its manifestation in the New world with bodies that uneasily wear their history and their layers of difference. Their stories explore what blacks still have to do to their bodies for white people in order to participate on the margins or as acknowledged tokens of people inside and outside the dominant social milieu of this country even as they negotiate conflicting demands of the spirit. This understanding of the world, because of its Africanness and its blackness, most black intellectuals reject or ignore because of its extreme *entre nous* sensibility and because it simply does not conform to white worldliness and instead lends credence to black in-credibility. Yet the black body does what it does in the white (and non-white) imagination and all black participants moving in white spaces must account for their black bodies in a myriad of ways that they often do not speak, do not acknowledge as an integral part of their dress.

No black island nation space offers something better in the way of negotiating whiteness. The black diaspora in the Americas comes into play in the U.S. because of the confluence of blacks from elsewhere addressing the various edicts that the standard bearers of white America place on black bodies wishing to circulate in whiteness. What black roles will Haitians play in relation to Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and all of them in relation to U.S. blacks? What they all share and what makes their different soundings recognizable is African spirit and black spirit interpretations that when put together in the U.S., under the aegis of blackness, could regain the moral high ground lost to this generation's desire for only "the money, the clothes, and the cars."[46] They also share an enduring in-credibility as subjects, as human beings who have a right to fair housing, a good education, and access to decent jobs. The changing-same of racism and racial terror makes the material even more attractive to the dispossessed. Race continues to

define black people's access to socially, economically, and politically balanced lives. Almost, but not quite like Du Bois before him, Gilroy advocated forcefully for this place "beyond race" in not just national politics but in global politics in *Between Camps.* But his views in 2000 were conditioned on U.S. blacks never being granted full U.S. national access. By the time 9/11 happened, and before the election of the first black president, the impossible became a macabre reality that he touched on in the 2004 edition. Suddenly, the U.S., not fifty years in its post Civil Rights era, is post racial.[47]

Gilroy says:

> My discussion of black popular culture in the US should not be read as if I am indicting African Americans for being 'essentialist'. That was not part of my argument and though I have been living in the US, their attachment to racial identity is, as they have sometimes reminded me, their own affair. I am prepared however, to consider what is now at stake in their being and becoming *Americans*. I would like to wish the very best of luck to any of them who aspire to that variety of patriotic belonging or who want to secure their place within the nurturing bosom of the post 9-11 US national community. Their historic decision will have important effects beyond their shores. It risks reducing the debate over racial politics to a family quarrel and a family romance. The outcome of these deliberations is even more urgent now than it was when *Between Camps* was written. (*Between Camps* xiii)

Gilroy recoils against the possibility of U.S. race relations defining race relations globally yet when pushed by world events his anxiety acknowledges the importance of U.S. blacks staying black and different from "*Americans*." U.S. blackness has always set the pace for world blackness and black freedom, especially after the revolution that created Haiti. What does it mean for people of African descent the world over if U.S. blacks cease to signify as truly oppositional? Before 9-11 those identified as black always already did something else to concepts like fascism, communism, and socialism. The universal humanism that Gilroy wants

U.S. blacks to swap their desire for national belonging for, according to Du Bois, already exists in identifying as black. Again, blacks in the West, particularly in the United States, continue to alter what certain theoretical and political ideologies mean simply because of their black bodies and their in-credibility as speaking subjects in a world often not predisposed to choosing or identifying with blacks. Blackness of the kind that remains oppositional to whiteness is scattered and its moral strength greatly diminished as the West continues its global marketing and commodification of black sounds and soundings—disconnected from its source. Within a world economy, defined by the legacy of enslavement and European colonization, blacks continue to trade on, especially in the Americas, their bodies and what their bodies produce—namely the vernacular and sacred arts that provided the sounding of what the official European narratives failed to express.

Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003) recounts Abbey Lincoln's "free jazz" narrative that underscores the importance of spirit in black cultural production. Towards the end of a long quote, Lincoln says:

> When Bird was around he knew he wasn't playing jazz. He was playing his spirit. And I think that's the problem for a lot of the musicians on the scene now. They think that they're playing jazz. But there's no such thing, really/I'm possessed of my own spirit/This is the music of the African muse/I just want to be of use to my ancestors/It's holy work and it's dangerous not to know that 'cause you could die like an animal down here. (23)

The black sounds shaping world culture began in terror mitigated by rituals that produced spaces of sanity in a globally-enforced brutality against those Africans who would become black. The secularism of today's black sounds still contain elements of black sacred (yet

complicated) responses to New World terror. The sacred and its profaning occur on personal; intimate levels with the body and blood not just of other human beings, but of biological family. Even without the specificity of the U.S. slave experience, "the debate over racial politics [in the Americas can be] reduc[ed] to a family quarrel and a family romance" involving unspeakable traumatic acts (Gilroy xiii). Unlike in the States, Gilroy's twentieth-century reality was shaped in a national space where Englishness not whiteness alone defined true national belonging. As a black British subject, not an Englishman, Gilroy can use phrases like "family quarrel" and "romance" to dismissively describe a fraught historical relationship and his detachment also explains the cool response from U.S. blacks to his impertinence. His lack of a connection to the U.S. ground makes him a character out of Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988) and not Morrison's *Beloved*.

Towards the end of Naylor's novel about Southern sacred ground and rooted practices that could harm as well as heal and the history that informs both, George the northern character, and first-time visitor to the Gullah island of Willow Springs, echoes the disjunction that Gilroy notes above and that Du Bois struggled with at different points in his career. In this exchange between the elderly sisters, Miranda and Abigail, Naylor writes:

> "That boy is from beyond the bridge, Miranda." Abigail's voice is bitter. "We ain't even got his kind of words to tell him what's going on."
>
> "Some things can be known without words."
>
> With or without, how is he gonna fight something he ain't a part of?" (267)

Men like Du Bois are "men," like the character George, who "believed—in the power of themselves" (Naylor 285). He felt that other worldly beliefs, like excessive religiosity, were not

useful tools for a future in dominant white spaces. But jazz singer Abbey Lincoln and Gloria Naylor seem to say suggest otherwise. Northern or western self-containment and power has to join "with all the believing that had gone on before" in order to respond to the (Fuku) forces let loose in the Americas (Naylor 285). For, Du Bois, the "bridges" that future generations of blacks have to crossover needed what the North represented, belief in self, self-containment, and what the South represented: shared, rooted faith in a meaning beyond the self. Naylor also critiques how academics, even homegrown ones, represent black phenomena or black cultural production in their work to the white world. Du Bois's wanted to be a bridge between the North and the South with a definition of *entre nous* speaking that could encompass all the world's oppressed. This makes Du Bois, over a century after the publication of *Souls,* one of the central figures in the current recuperation of race and cosmopolitanism by a new generation of scholars like Tania Friedel and Ifeoma Nwankwo to name a few, trying to determine what, if anything, *entre nous* means when applied to a post racial black diaspora operating out of the United States.[48]

Though coming out of Great Britain, Gilroy could not have written about or named "the Black Atlantic" without the position that U.S. English-speaking blacks occupy in the diaspora. Du Bois, though only making the move from the U.S. North to the South, lays out the challenge that many black immigrants to the U.S. face in one form or another in "reconstructing [their] sense of self and [their] understanding of [the existing black] community" (Gilroy 116) especially when black mind, spirit, and body need to occupy the same space to carry out its "holy work" (Moten 23). Though Du Bois did not necessarily ascribe to Lincoln's particular brand of "holy work," he did live with the danger of being self-possessed, of being aware of the

"African muse" and the need to be "of use to [his] ancestors." The future he wanted to usher in and the black cosmopolitanism he wanted to make possible required these negotiations so that he and others like him did not "die like . . . animal[s]" (Moten 23). An all-black college in southern Tennessee began Du Bois's century-long attempt at such a space.

The "racially affirmative culture" that Du Bois landed in included some of the best and the brightest of the U.S. black community (Gilroy 116). They were well-dressed, well-mannered, smart, and beautiful. These students, some well-moneyed, attempted to balance out the overwhelming poverty of the black majority. The work of this future group of black professionals was cut out for them and it could not be done in isolation. They depended on an established black network for economic opportunities that challenged the existing racial structure from within. Any breaks with this tightly-calibrated network of black movers and shakers and their access to white philanthropists would hurt the financial stability of most of the aspiring intellectuals and activists. Du Bois ran into the Tuskegee Machine during key years in his postgraduate career. Till then, what Du Bois could do for himself, he did. Du Bois ended the nineteenth century being confident, persistent, and undeterred in his objective to study and present the facts of black life using the best social science methods of his day. He successfully appealed for and received a Slater Fund fellowship from ex-President Hayes to study abroad in Berlin. Harvard published his dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America: 1638-1870*, in 1896, the first volume of the university's historical series and in 1899, his sociological study of Philadelphia's Seventh Ward, *The Philadelphia Negro*, was published by the University of Pennsylvania. Du Bois suppressed his anger to look past that institution's racism and disrespect in order to produce work he believed

in. When he attended the first Pan-African Meeting, later conferences known as Pan African Congresses, in London in 1900, the organization elected him secretary. The millennial concept of *Souls*, published in 1903, had been taking shape since leaving Nashville then studying abroad in Germany and culminated with his encounter with Henry Sylvester Williams[49] in London making the call for Africans and people of African descent in the diaspora to unite against imperialism and racism (Levering Lewis 248). The creation and usage of the term Pan-Africanism, and its significance to black intellectuals, represented one major way that people of African descent attempted to make the cosmopolitanism of the West fit black bodies and black concerns across geographical boundaries that Europeans controlled through white supremacy.

In the years that followed the first Pan-African Meeting, he became the voice and face of Pan-Africanism. On the U.S. home front, Du Bois's influence and power grew to include many titles and positions. As the founder and editor of the NAACP's *The Crisis*, he would also help usher in the Harlem Renaissance. In candid language and in principled acts of resistance, Du Bois traced his own growth and impact on a people and a movement in several books of autobiographical essays that he wanted to be instructional and insightful. The autobiographical essays captured his frustration with racism's seeming intractability and the limitations of his various high-minded, cosmopolitan tactics. He says in, *Dusk of Dawn:*

> It [the autobiography] threatened thereupon to become mere autobiography. But in my own experience, autobiographies have had little lure; repeatedly they assume too much or too little: too much dreaming that one's own life has greatly influenced the world; too little in the reticences, repressions and distortions which come because men do not dare to be absolutely frank. My life had its significance and its only deep significance because it was part of a Problem; but that problem was, as I continue to think, the central problem of the greatest of the world's democracies and so the Problem of the future. (*Dusk* xxix-xxx)

The cosmopolitan intellectual that Du Bois prided himself on being did not relish having his significance reduced to an unsolvable "problem" even if that "problem" came to define the limits of white democratic political ideals in practice. As Du Bois's fame (and notoriety) grew, he continued to work for the "freedom of admission to democracy for his people" but he also increasingly thought about what James Baldwin famously called the "price of the ticket." For Du Bois, the price became even more bitter as his understanding of the geography of blackness and oppression expanded. Each of his trips abroad, after first going south to Tennessee led to questions and possibilities that black bourgeois politics and U.S. black isolation could answer or contain Socialism and communism had to make room for U.S. blacks, and their history of enslavement, as central, not marginal, in the fight against capitalism and imperialism.

For his progressive stances, Du Bois paid one price within white America and another with black Americans. Gates says:

> The 'blacker' that his stand against colonialism became, the less 'black,' in a very real sense, his analysis of what he famously called 'The Negro Problem" simultaneously became. The more 'African' Du Bois became, in other words, the more cosmopolitan his analysis of the root causes of anti-black and -brown and -yellow and colonialism became, seeing the status of the American Negro as part and parcel of a larger problem of international economic domination. (Gates xiii)

Du Bois's alienation and dissatisfaction with the pace of racial progress became a call for all oppressed laborers to unite with the global struggle against capitalism and imperialism. But what of the potential "perils of rootless cosmopolitanism as well as the absurdity of America's racial codes" for black people who needed to belong to a people and a place as blacks (*Black Atlantic* 132-133)? Entwined within Western modernity was slavery and a black diaspora relegated to an alienated parallel existence where blacks and their blackness, though ever

present, do not figure within European kinship narratives and within European constructions of modernity. “[T]he absurdity of [the western world’s] 'racial codes' and 'rootless cosmopolitanism'” fed and depended on each other (Gilroy 132-133). The fetishizing of the signs and sounds of the African diaspora and the meta-performance of those signs and sounds by blacks gave them their cosmopolitan value to the West. To include blacks as blacks, not as mixed-raced or “exotic Latin American,”[50] politically challenges the continuing ideological subordination of blacks and the blackness associated with blacks. The (white) center cannot hold post-enslavement blacks and still be white, but a select few can be given fringe access as either hyper blacks or meta blacks.

Black soundings developed in and around their laboring in the fields, in chain gangs, as domestics, and in Pullman cars. None of these jobs gave black people a fair wage. The Pullman porter in Du Bois's writing, and that of his contemporary James Weldon Johnson, continued to signify the disjunction between white and black experiences of modernity:

> The porters worked in ways that both continued patterns of exploitation established during slavery and anticipated the novels forms of debasement and humiliation associated with contemporary service work. They worked in and around the bodies of whites, and this called for special codes and disciplines. In exchange for their wages they were required to sell something more than their labour power to clients whose expectations included the simulation of caring, intimate acts that appear at the very limits of economic rationality. (*Black Atlantic 133*)

The porters become for the gilded age—of the post Civil War and post Reconstruction era, as blacks lived it—the opposite of what the fabled John Henry and his hammer represented to the black community at the start of the machine age. The ballad of John Henry dying with a

hammer in his hand, the price of his victory over the stream drill, also signals the later emergence of the chain gang and the continuing need for coerced labor in a highly consolidated industrialized U.S. economy.[51] It was the little-celebrated Pullman porter, who traveled farther than most blacks on a regular basis with his service work who came to signify stable black male employment, though at a cost to black integrationist desires. The labor standpoint was one that Du Bois could readily embrace to lock arms with a "world of color." Yet to be reduced simply to stolen labor did account for the "it" "left unspoken," the perversion of intimacy under slavery, or provide a greater understanding of the power of black Atlantic sounds and soundings to speak to and move the oppressed as well as entertain.[52]

For Gilroy, and Du Bois a century earlier, science and scholarship do not trump race and the racism directed at black-identified people.[53] In *Dusk*, Du Bois says, "I lived in an environment which I came to call the white world. I was not an American; I was not a man; I was by long education and continual compulsion and daily reminder, a colored man in a white world; and that white world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds"(135). Du Bois learned to use the race language of his day, though he had hoped, in vain, that a rigorous study of race, undertaken by him, might displace the pseudo-science of race. Next, he became an activist combining his social science training to speak to people directly about being "a colored man in a white world." Though social science was his calling and activism his chosen method of resistance, Du Bois wrote with the soul of an artist. This last section of this chapter returns to the novels mentioned earlier and puts Du Bois's own artistic work in conversation with later texts.

Du Bois, Race Work, and Using the Novel Form to Speak to a People

As Du Bois's impact grew overseas, as he easily joined the black struggle in the U.S. with Africa, Asia, and the rest of the laboring world, his influence at home with other U.S. blacks waned. He became an intellectual man of the world and a radically impatient older man increasingly unable to acquiesce to U.S. national hypocrisy or share in the optimism of the newly revised and reinvigorated Civil Rights strategies of a younger black generation.[54] In his last published novel, the third installment of *The Black Flame Trilogy, Worlds of Color* (1961), Du Bois says of his main character Manuel Mansart, a man who follows certain aspects of Du Bois's own trajectory, one he conflates with that of the black race in the U.S.:

> Somehow it seemed to [Mansart] that his students as individuals and the *seething dark millions* back of them were melting away from his touch, were getting further and further from his influence. Once they were all his people. He had had his arms about them and was protecting and guarding them. This was no longer true. Other things, the world itself had intruded, had come between him and the Negro people. He had been sucked up into the greater and wider cause—peace, socialism, the meaning of all life. He wanted now to rid himself of the diversions and get back to the Negro problem, to concentrate all his energy and hope there. And yet, if he and his folk were a part of this wider world, how could he or they ever really be separate? (emphasis added). (169)

Du Bois's people, those he claimed on a spatial level or those he thought he had a pejorative understanding of because of the white world they inhabited, were becoming less clear to him as the decades wore on and "the changing same" of race oppression in the U.S. persisted. By the time Du Bois started the trilogy, his students and those millions in back of them did not want to be "protected and guarded" but seen as equal players in their own freedom struggles. Mansart's difference and distance, like Du Bois's, begins with leaving home and the U.S.

mainland for international, European recognition of himself while out of the U.S. context. Furthermore, many of the prime movers of what would become the Civil Rights movement did not suffer or struggle as Du Bois did, with the torment and privilege of the outsider's alienated view of events.

Indeed, "the world and the wider issues" that Du Bois spoke of and the role and place of U.S. blacks in that world since he spoke them modes of black cultural and political resistance have gone global. The question Du Bois uses to end the above quote from his last published novel goes straight to the heart of U.S. blacks' private struggle with blackness at home and abroad and what *entre nous* should be like in practice. This becomes particularly troubling especially when black gains and political practices seem to benefit other groups more than the domestic black population because of "the vigilance" used by the dominant race "to keep them within bounds." Du Bois could and did hold on to the idea of global interconnected blackness, coloredness, and also transcended the need for the specificity of place while the majority of black folks needed to hold onto their specific places. They were not so ready to give in to "self-conscious reconstruction" (*Black Atlantic* 116) at the urgings of a man who rarely, if ever, broke out of reacting to white interpellation and white exclusion long enough to assign "the seething dark millions" a non-destructive agency. The anger of the of blacks refitted for service work after enslavement, even as some succeeded in making somewhat stable lives, was palpable. Du Bois could not always gage that anger nor always appreciate the ways that black folk drew upon black soundings, different from his outward reach, to channel that anger.

The description that Du Bois as Mansart uses to frame the black majority betrays, at the end of his life, his unwillingness to accord to "the seething dark millions" the prized individuation he grants his black student would-be leaders. The "melting away" of these "talented" students, left behind intraracial class divisions, elitism, and alienation made sharper by their cosmopolitanism. Mansart's loss of even a paternalistic connection to the black masses comes at the moment that he begins to recognize the full extent to which blacks are permitted to begrudgingly signify the human condition. Black equality, black access to white parity, as Mansart's grandchildren understood all too well, cheapens or lessens the value of prized titles, spaces, and achievements. Black as an identifying marker, after all the social, educational, and cultural maneuverings, remained the sign of contested human value. But those without the educational gains, social access to the black bourgeoisie, or a relationship to their labor not defined by the epistemology of slavery, were outside of the outside and they understood this better than Du Bois. Though Du Bois created and edited *The Crisis* as the media arm of the NAACP, it was the folk, the arbiters and keepers of black sounds and soundings, who straddled the precarious line between *styling and crisis* in always already in-credible bodies.[55]

If done properly, styling the sounds and images that come out of crisis and knowing how to work the difference could lead to creative access and white consideration. Style required one to make the most of the edge and to be actively aware of the line that tips the signs over to markers of crisis. Full-on reaction to crisis moments, like reacting to a haunting black image from the past that fails to register across race, is not useful for cosmopolitan purposes. Black people, black men especially, can style in ways that challenge and self-consciously flaunt their reduction but they always risk being subsumed and signaling only crisis,

having gone beyond the point of credible return (for a black person) to the dictates of society especially without higher education markers. Du Bois, and Hurston more so, attempted to control, in different ways this black creative and dangerous byproduct of the black Atlantic with differing effects. Hurston embraced black gut-bucket style and its liberating properties and Du Bois focused on "the Problem," the crisis engulfing the black majority in the U.S. For Hurston the style came out of making the most out of beating back the crisis of devastating defeat and thus she would never ask, "What to do with the folk?"

"What to do with the folk" is how Henry Louis Gates, Jr. summed up Du Bois's lifelong dilemma with the unlettered and untutored black masses (179). The portrayal of black soundings and images part of his race work, in spaces often ruthlessly defined and aesthetically shaped by a whiteness that made the blackness of the folk the antithesis of whiteness was part of his race work. Gates' analysis of Du Bois's thought processes, unexpectedly breaks out of professorial speak into the vernacular to both call Du Bois out and simultaneously reveals his own anxiety with poor black folk. Gates relies on a black bourgeois (and a white liberal) understanding of the burden the *folk* put on black people already primed for and, by their class standing, deserving of white regard but, supposedly, held back by a recalcitrant black majority unwilling or unable to intellectualize race—to go meta. What black people locked in "the dark cave" that Du Bois described in *Dusk of Dawn* do instead is get hyperphysical, -violent, and -loud to make a statement, to try to be seen and heard (130). Unlike Gates' black bourgeois appeal, Gilroy's cosmopolitanism attempts to finish what Du Bois desired most but knew would not happen: "a deliberate renunciation of 'race' as the basis for belonging to one another and acting in concert" (*Against Race* 12).

Gilroy's call for jettisoning the idea of "race" because "'race' has marginalized these [oppressed cultural] traditions from official histories of modernity and relegated them to the backwaters of the primitive and the prepolitical," while blacks still experience the effects of being raced black, fails to account for the limits of black freedom in the West (12). Part of black styling resistance comes from making the most of being in the Du Boisian cave. Black freedom has yet to look anything like white freedom. Thus, even those blacks willing to enter the one modernity and breakout of blackness do so at their own expense and, sadly, without disrupting the understood racial hierarchy. For the twenty-first century, Gilroy does his best to go "beyond the color line" by calling for what he identifies as a "'planetary humanism' . . . allied to nonracial, transblack histories . . . from an assertively cosmopolitan point of view" (12). Because of the recognized importance of black oppositional culture, he offers Du Bois's folk a way to still hold on to their "precious forms of solidarity and community" while divesting racial hierarchies of their power(12-13).

The revolutionary uprising in the French colony of St. Domingue, that involved most of slave-holding Europe and a newly-created United States, revealed the limits of Enlightenment thinkers and the narrowness of Hegel's master/slave dialectic with regard to actual black slaves.[56] St. Domingue/Haiti was a colossal failure of humanism in this case. Cosmopolitanism did not win in 1804 or in the two hundred and six years of Haitian freedom. The cosmopolitanism of the Haitian elite also failed to build a nation not mired in colorism and the fear of the dark masses that freed themselves once through revolution and could possibly do it again. In naming the new century as one that will be about the "consolidation of *culture lines* rather than color lines" (*Against Race* 1), Gilroy hoped to be as prescient as Du Bois at the turn of the twentieth

century. Inevitably, this cultural consolidation will not include the black majority and those blacks unable to transition into white spaces. Gilroy's loyalties to cosmopolitanism and "humanity" notwithstanding, he, like other black intellectuals, must also consider Gates's rhetorical question, "What to do with the folk?" They still depend on folk for their meaning and purpose while trading in traditionally white spaces. The folk, with their sounds and soundings, their vernacular modes of expression provide the creative "Jes Grew"[57] energy that enables most black-identified people, intellectual and otherwise, to enter into their potential cosmopolitan forays. The dominating forces of whiteness often usurp black cultural production for the global market, leaving the folk to "keep it (evermore) real" in urban centers or ghettos. They do so by navigating between styling and wearing the effects of full-on crisis. This is yet another manifestation of the twoness and the double consciousness that Du Bois identified in the previous century. In the twenty-first century, more black Atlantic peoples, but those in the U.S. in particular, will be haunted by the loss of private, inside spaces for the personal, shamanistic practice of black culture beyond the demands of a global trade they do not control.

The black worldview that people of African descent created out of racial marginalization and the responses to that worldview differed by gender, class, and region. Du Bois chafed and stewed while a younger Hurston publicly cajoled and dramatically commanded attention. Hurston was mindful to separate the pathology associated with blackness from the culture she laid claim to. Both figures, especially in the North, found black intimacy hampered but for different reasons which centered on what to do with the rawest black soundings as much as what to do with the folk. What to do with the soundings of the folk, and the uneasiness for some with the proximity, of the folk determined the relevance and function of black *entre nous*

spaces. In the story "in-between the past and the present" (Bhabha 24) Toni Morrison tells in *Beloved* that *entre nous* space was "the Clearing" where the narrator tells us "With Baby Suggs' heart in charge, the people let go" (94). Du Bois would not be found in a "Clearing"-like space except as (critical) intellectual observer. Despite Du Bois's strong identification with black people, his "heart [was] not [always] in charge" and black folk did not "let go" the way they did with Marcus Garvey, also a founding member of Pan Africanism. Both Garvey and Du Bois understood that "freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self [in white spaces or black spaces whites entered at will] was another" (*Beloved* 95). Ownership of the "freed [black] self" in the post Reconstruction era and later in the post Civil Rights era remains a major stumbling block for blacks living in a world where they signify as humans who once could be owned by anyone.

For all of Du Bois's writing and speaking, the binary to his cosmopolitanism, which fueled his rage, was being reduced in stature because of his color, his blackness. The great European philosophical traditions, their construction of modernity made little effort theoretical to actively engage with or acknowledge the effects of a dialectic that normalized black human ownership by other humans. Du Bois's cosmopolitanism, though he wanted it to, did not override his blackness or his overall in-credibility as a subject, as human kin. This fact reduced him to the fate of every other black person in the U.S. and in the black diaspora regardless of educational attainment or brilliance. In his elegantly rueful final text, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois,* he says of one of his last visits to Europe in 1958:

> Revolution had shaken the world, and now mankind in this center of Western civilization was trying to rebuild itself into something new. I, on the other hand,

> represented something old which had projected itself into a new America, and clothed in slavery and poverty had begun a modern race problem. I looked therefore upon this world, as I had looked before, as a member of the darker race, which had suffered from the oppression of the European world. (*Autobiography* 6)

If Du Bois was "looking for [any kind of] join," at least on an intellectual or theoretical level in Europe, he did not find it. European (and Euro-American) revolution did not include him and what he represented. The attempts of the West "to rebuild itself into something new" still left this "member of the darker race" where he was before: outside of the world of white men. Black spaces, then, like the Clearing, or the swamp that Du Bois writes about in *The Quest for the Golden Fleece* (1911) and the soundings that acted as "mind reliever[s]"(Levine 213), allowed black people the space to come into self-possession, self-ownership, and black "self-sufficiency" under extremely difficult post slavery conditions.[58] After a lifetime of work, Du Bois finally had to concede that the type of radical "join" that he wanted to prepare descendants of slaves to make with Western Civilization, as equal players, was, to Europeans and Euro Americans, like the St. Domingue Revolution as it happened: unthinkable.

The radicalism that I ascribe to Du Bois goes back to the various ideological and international leaps he was willing to make in the name of black progress. His ability to change, to question what he deemed provincial and damaging among blacks—while arguing for African contributions to civilization in a world dominated by white supremacy—is what Du Bois offers all people of African descent who have to *be* in and *succeed* in white spaces. These spaces often rendered blacks and African modernity as afterthoughts, if at all. As I stated earlier, Du Bois set about determining and defining what constituted black culture, what to keep, and what to let go of. His willingness to make those determinations naturally met with resistance sometimes by

people with the least amount of access and control. In essence, what Homi Bhabha says of Franz Fanon also applies to Du Bois, “Fanon recognizes the crucial importance, for subordinated peoples, of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories. But he is too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend that ‘roots’ be struck in the celebratory romance of the past or by homogenizing the history of the present” (Bhabha 13). The West’s legalization of the enslavement of Africans and their descendantsdescendants, and effectively creating the black Atlantic, calls for a discourse in addition to the one for colonizer and the resistance of the colonized. Du Bois wanted to make the U.S. case a form of meta-narrative for the world condition and as Gates says, “by mid century [the U.S. black experience became] a metonym for a much larger historical pattern of social deviance and social dominance that had long been the central fabric of world order . . . ” (Gates xiv). Instead of this recognition that Du Bois wanted, the West found it easier to appropriate black sounds and soundings, particularly that of U.S. black people, and divesting it of its blackness. Understanding the human negation that followed the global, legal sale of Africans is not located in any desire for the past itself but in the (troubling) Western need for the sounding acts developed by the enslaved for the self-recognition and wholeness that the West fails to provide.

Though Du Bois appreciated some of the black folk ways, the strong link that the masses of black people represented to Africa, he wanted them to let go of aspects of the culture he felt would not serve them on their journey in whiteness. He saw “the dangers of the fixity and fetishism” of certain beliefs and practices—self-fashioned responses to black in-credibility. Only Du Bois did not “mourn” the need for these changes with a people set upon from all sides. Here

I mean “mourn” in the sense that August Wilson uses the term in *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* (1988) about a black family violently divided by the abduction of the patriarch of the family. Seven years' hard labor in Joe Turner’s chain gang does not begin to explain the damage done to the psyche of this black family. In the reunion scene between Herald Loomis and Martha Loomis, she describes how she had to “kill him in her heart” in order to go on with her life and start over again in the current reality of his absence from being pressed into service by Joe Turner’s gang. In “killing” him she also “mourned” him and the fact that the life awaiting her beyond him necessitated this violent act on her part.[59] Du Bois, not a man given to mourning as much as righting and writing black people back into world history and civilization, on the surface, seems to cut and “kill,” without impunity, what cannot be transformed or what gets in the way of black progress in the current Western reality. Du Bois then, and theorists like Gilroy who presently follow his cosmopolitan desires for the death of race as a concept, still cannot reconcile the disjunct that black-identified people, causes.

People of African descent in the Americas have always gone through the changes and adjustments that their multiple migrations called for, but to consciously do what Du Bois did upon entering the South, “reconstructing his own identity” as Gilroy quotes him doing in *The Black Atlantic* for the sake of accessing; understanding the particulars of Southern blackness in order to potentially lead a people, amounts to agreeing to letting something “die” so something else or something of the new place can be added to the existing identity. New World black identities depended on this ability to adapt sometimes several times in a life cycle in the process of surviving migration and staying black despite the outer changes. But accepting identity reconstruction as a subordinate black figure always already outside of the dominant

reality also amounts to risking misrecognition or becoming unrecognizable to those who claim him or her and know where his or her people come from in the Americas. Once geographical migration comes into play, as it does for people of African descent, holding on to national black specificity and passing on the visible markers of island nations in the United States becomes harder to do beyond food, remembered customs and songs. For insistence, blacks living in England, "no matter how English they feel"[60] remain black originally from elsewhere while black immigrants of the first generation to the U.S. fight not to be black Americans. Again, black peoples do, under duress alter the outer configuration, taking on new names, languages, and practices but not always with a consciously-formed political ideology or agenda behind it. Du Bois's radicalism, and progressive ideas surrounding race, gender, capitalism, and world politics, suffered because of his inability to *be* with the people without a narrative or an agenda outlining a project of uplift. This identifiable inability that many blacks granted access share only complicates Du Bois the man and does not detract from his work on behalf of a disenfranchised U.S. black population or his attempts to name and define a black tradition in the U.S. that in Du Bois's handling works its way back to Africa and the world.[61]

Du Bois's efforts in writing the race were of paramount importance but the very act of writing, naming, and attempting to shape the telling of the black tradition(s) required his experimentation with many written forms, trying to come up with the soundings that would do justice to what those in the black diaspora needed to speak about their experiences. Du Bois's own novels did not create the verbal opening or exchange he believed possible with the novel form. The psycho-social outpouring that he imagined literature capable of would come later in the twentieth century led by black women writers looking to, in some cases, Zora Neale

Hurston. Literary production still needed to be respected as an art form even as it (re)introduced black psychological thought and trauma to the national mainstream and the black diaspora as Morrison's *Beloved* did. In one scene that I want to focus on, Paul D finds himself wanting, no needing, to tell Sethe about the particulars of his own experience, his recapture after his aborted attempt to escape, but hesitates. They go back and forth:

> "You want to tell me about *it*?" she asked him.
>
> "I don't know. I never talked about it. Not a soul. Sang it sometimes, but I never told a soul."
>
> "Go ahead. I can hear *it*."
>
> "Maybe. Maybe you can hear *it*. I just ain't sure I can say *it*. Say it right, I mean, because it wasn't the bit—that wasn't ***it***." (Emphasis added 71)

Morrison's return to what people thought they knew about enslavement exposed the maleness of Du Bois's (and Gilroy's) desires for a particular type of cosmopolitanism that shut out Hurston and the revelations to be gleaned from short, less-worldly distances. The "it" that needed to be spoken or "find its speaking"[62] remains for each generation to name. The "it" that remains is the black body and by extension what to do with that body of folk so decidedly marked by the history attached to their black bodies. For some, the money, the clothes, and the cars provide one way to address the "it," the captive black body mocked, as Paul D was, by a rooster he delivered from its shell.

Du Bois knew that blacks could and did sing *it*, as Paul D did, and he wanted the words he used to frame the black experience to match the intensity of the songs he heard. These songs and their sounding gave the U.S. black experience its primary linguistic locus. "Say[ing] it

right" mattered and for this reason many resist saying altogether. What black people do with the space between speaking *it* and singing *it*, what gets done with *it*, determines the extent of black forays into cosmopolitanism. This telling exchange between Paul D and Sethe reiterates the point mentioned earlier about Du Bois's cosmopolitanism and the one advocated and practiced by Gilroy. As blacks hearing and seeing other blacks in telling distress, how they negotiate that space between experiencing *it* and recognizing *it* in others and what the seers and listeners decide to emphasize or omit shapes what will later be termed culturally dissident and oppositional. Their negotiations while in *it*, the trace sounds and images developed to speak *it*, provides Du Boisian cosmopolitanism with its tension and power. How much the decidedly alienated black-speaking subjects can willingly stand in the space between "it" and the "bit" becomes the space of black New World survival, black cultural production, and black (sacred) art. Accessing that space full frontal is madness, but to be unable to devise a way to deal with *it* also leads to madness and "animal death" that Abbey Lincoln spoke of. Because of the intellectual framework Du Bois provided for engaging the world as a black American, U.S. blacks, and their cultural, historical, and economic experiences, can make their nuanced claims to cosmopolitanism and alter the perceived definition. Through the play of "marvelous realism,"[63] Paul D considers the scope and space of being *bit* by recalling a violent anthropomorphized rooster, that would not have survived without his pity and intervention, mocking him—a recaptured slave forced to adjust his tongue around a bit.

Du Bois straddled the (out)rage of the space between *it* and the *bit* and specifically what the *bit* obscures.[64] How New World blacks manage the sounding of *it* and their own obscuring of *it* determines their potential for Western cosmopolitan absorption. For example, even the

radical images of *it* in the form of dreadlocks can be absorbed and turned into an exotic cosmopolitan sign of white hipsterism as well as a symbol of submission to whiteness. The rage of *it* without the appropriate spaces of spiritual regeneration and without true access funnels into the violence of being *it* or the violence required not to be *it*. *It* has to become art, music—what someone tells askance; indirectly by telling something else and not what he or she doing the telling continues to live full frontal. Du Bois found a way to tell through a highly crafted interpretation of black soundings what he himself no longer lived at the lowest or most dangerous level by virtue of his education and his ability to move, however circumscribed. His ability to stand outside of inside spaces and observe other blacks struggle with *it* coupled with his willingness to excise what might impede the beginnings of his imagined black cosmopolitanism. The horror of *it* and the *bit* is the horror of the space between contested humanity and calibrating the sounding to avoid animal death and full-on madness. What signifies standing in the *it* of blackness leads to the creation of the art, the images, the music, and the performances that can become global. Most black people, like the ones Morrison and August Wilson wrote about, cannot calibrate the horror to the extent that those who can stand in and out of being *it*, intellectually, in order to access cosmopolitan worldliness.

For Du Bois, and his academic and cultural forbearers, the black majority, the keepers and signifiers of *it*—those without access to the land-grant colleges of the day—existed and continue to exist as a "problem" to be written about, studied, and discussed from a carefully cultivated distance. Usually the black majority does not get a say in formal institutional settings because of the issues outlined in the previous paragraphs.[65] Intellectualizing what one experiences *entre nous* for mass, white consumption, even for the purpose of racial uplift,

requires a calculated deliberateness, and submission is a part of the deliberateness. The famed Harlem Renaissance imagined and named largely by Alain Locke, and those like Du Bois who believed this type of concerted black arts movement would present a critical opposition to white supremacy, took a calculated leap of faith. In *The Big Red Sea*, Langston Hughes expressed how unrealistic the black intelligentsia's hopes for the Harlem Renaissance were. He says,

> They thought the race problem had at last been solved through Art plus Gladys Bentley. They were sure the New Negro would lead a new life from the green pastures of tolerance created by Countee Cullen, Ethel Waters, Claude McKay, Duke Ellington, Bojangles, and Alain Locke. I don't know what made any Negroes think that except that they were mostly intellectuals doing the thinking. The ordinary Negroes hadn't heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn't raised their wages any. (*A Renaissance in Harlem* 22)

Hughes, one of the leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance, sarcastically identifies the schism between those naming and writing about a black movement and those who, because they are in it, lack the artistic or academic license that permits or indulges their standing outside of their own inside. Hughes along with Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, and Bruce Nugent bristled at the way Du Bois's generation wanted them to represent the race. Without the studied distance "the ordinary Negroes" that Hughes mentions do not have these recognizable moments of self-reflexivity. As Hughes knew, hip working class black people existed all around Harlem though they probably were not familiar with the name "Negro Renaissance." People came to Harlem and kept coming to Harlem from the U.S. South and the Caribbean because of the transformative change in body and spirit that Harlem promised. Hughes disparagingly points to the black intellectual and black majority disconnect and the cultivated distance that led to the flattening of the identities of the latter group. Hurston developed her own

inside/outside description to describe the experience of standing outside of the black self as central to the recognition of the alienating process that is academia and engaging whiteness as a self-possessed subject, as an artist, and as an intellectual. With tongue-in-cheek Zora Neale Hurston described this seeing and not seeing one's blackness as "fitting like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it." In the last two chapters I will return to Hurston and her role in defying intellectual conventions of the day by not confining the black South only as a primordial beginning place of a New World black people that they needed to transcend.

The human complexity of the South shaped the type of humanism that Hurston practiced and later made her recovery in the late twentieth century by black and white researchers possible. Hurston embodied both the play and the tragedy of the space between *it* and the *bit* by adding other dimensions to the split between inside and outside speaking. What she presented of the South, Du Bois could not without giving in to madness. The remains of the lynched body of Sam Hose almost tipped over the line. Du Bois's hopes for Negro cosmopolitanism saved him from living full-on with the ravages of *it* and thus he could and did rage at the *bit* holding him back. Hurston, already coming from a southern space, dealt with the same scenes Du Bois witnessed and experienced in his student and professorial stays by relying on an inherited form of resistance that deflected and controlled the telling to "slip the yoke." Though these maneuvers create the dissonance that will influence a world, they do not always lead to cosmopolitanism for ordinary black men and women—not even for Hurston. She had her signifying mule, the fictional Paul D, his signifying rooster, and Gates made the theoretical case for "the signifyin' monkey" in the text of the same name.[66] These types of black transmutations do not make one worldly or cosmopolitan per se, instead they come to read as

too black American and too particular. The need to name and identify where and how blacks fit in the larger scheme of nation and world against the rise of race scientists of his day established his defensive "speaking for" and "writing for" model of black-intellectual speak. Most researchers and academics continue to speak and write as they are positioned: to provide the white world with perhaps their most analytical, yet true to life human connection to "the seething dark millions" standing in blackness. I separate Du Bois's intent from those today asking or being put in the position to consider "What to do with the folk?" as simply an academic exercise. Du Bois assigned himself the task of confronting a white system of oppression experienced by blacks at all levels, despite his elitism. As a black researcher who is a U.S. citizen by way of a father born in Haiti and a mother born and raised in New England, Du Bois provided subsequent generations with his understanding of the black diaspora from the U.S. perspective.

Increasingly, as Du Bois's fictional Mansart noted, "the seething dark millions" that made up the folk included not just U.S. blacks with U.S. southern roots but also the "dark millions" of the Caribbean, South America, and Africa contributing to a distinct U.S. black political ideology. In particular, Caribbean and African black-identified people do not get a separate identity from the internal U.S. blacks. National origin and black ethnic differences follow the pattern established during enslavement. This stripping away of black particularity at the national level became glaringly apparent in the 2010 census that asked those identifying as black to check one of three boxes: Black, African American, and Negro. The stasis that the official inclusion of Negro in the 2010 census suggests belies a century of movement and change in black America. The "seething millions" from other black places added their patois

and creoles to a U.S. black dialect and idiom, together these masses of black folk spoke themselves into being in ways that the black vanguard, the academy, and the governing white institutions of each generation least expected: starting with the blues, then ragtime, jazz, R&B, and culminating in the "def" lyrical styling of Hip Hop.[67] The *folk* that Du Bois described so eloquently and movingly in *Souls* and in *Darkwater* (1920) and to a lesser extent in *Dusk of Dawn* provided the dynamic cultural force to ground Du Bois's understanding of the inside and outside struggle of a black people within a white nation. He identified the impossible tension between the human spirit and brute human reduction signified by the *bit* restricting the tongue and thus human speech and human exchange. This tension created an identifiably black, oppositional sounding and provided the source for a counterculture movement. Though he appreciated their styling in the form of "the sorrow songs" and "the dogged strength [and grit] that kept them from being torn asunder," Du Bois did not speak comfortably *entre nous* while with the folk (Du Bois 215). Du Bois's formidable skill and intellect, his righteous indignation, and his immediate recognition of the South as cultural, historical placeholder for the speaking of *it* led him to view the world, its struggles and possibilities, from a unique vantage point that continues to be prescient.

In the rest of my dissertation, I will develop further the issues surrounding black speaking and writing in the black diaspora as they gather (often contentiously) in the U.S. as Black, African American, and Negro and identify the power and potential of black language, music, and spiritual fusion. The overlap that I see at work in black popular culture and formal black cultural production speaks to and holds the historical traces of New World black experiences. These black experiences and their sounding existed before the written record.

Each generation of black peoples meeting up in the U.S. must identify and define the meaning of these traces in their post Civil Rights reality. The *entre nous* sensibility that I call upon theoretically falters or struggles against the type of *join* that black peoples are looking for. The possibilities offered by cosmopolitanism for blacks less wedded to "identity politics" may render *entre nous*, just us, spaces in whiteness, not only anachronistic but undesirable. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy "warn[ed] that black music cannot be reduced to a fixed dialogue between a thinking racial self and a stable racial community. Apart from anything else, the globalisation of vernacular forms means that our understanding of antiphony will have to change. The calls and responses no longer converge in the tidy patterns of secret, ethnically encoded dialogue. The call is becoming harder to locate" (Gilroy 110). And yet, the dispersal of black soundings, its "Jes Grew" aspects, has always had to rely on the "changing same" for its continued power. The real danger to black antiphony is the unwillingness to hear the call and accept its historical claims. The weight of sounding the unspeakable without understanding the why of the rituals involved or the need to adapt those rituals can take its toll—especially with the pressures of and the desire for unfettered access in an ideologically white world. The "patterns" have never been "tidy" or easy "to locate." The twentieth century made clear that the pattern readers, the locaters of the sound, and the responders no longer exist in one ill-fitting national reality, but all over the black diaspora looking for other "ones."[68] And more often than not, they "converge" in the United States continuing Du Bois's difficult work of defining the black diaspora for a world where "their experience is not accepted as part of our world's portrait of itself as the world" (*Postcolonial Melancholia* 60). Du Bois's self-conscious recognition of himself as black, at a time when he legally had no choice, was a choice and the

meaning of his blackness began with the memory of the sounds of an African woman he never met but whose sounding came to define the black Burghardt family. With her, Du Bois establishes his own credibility as a black subject on his own terms.

Chapter Two

Becoming "a Lord of Sound": W.E.B. Du Bois and Making the Case for Black Humanity in the West[69]

In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like. Toni Morrison

In this chapter, I analyze two of Du Bois's novels, *The Quest for the Golden Fleece* (1911) and *Worlds of Color* (1961), to, in effect, "measure the man" Du Bois and his intent in redirecting and redefining certain aspects of black sounds and soundings. His intent, as I argued in the first chapter, separated him from many of the current black artists, researchers, and public intellectuals. Du Bois chose to continue in the tradition of the earliest black writers, like Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass, by providing the narrative groundwork for black people in the post Reconstruction era. However complicated or distant his manner, he remained committed to addressing the problems of the black majority in a rapidly transforming Western world. Du Bois did this through the pages of *The Crisis*, his lectures, his children's pageants, and in his novels. His race work betrayed an urgency to reshape the black majority and move them, in actions and words, beyond the confines of a history of servitude and exploitation. Du Bois attempted to change the existing black narrative, written mostly by the dominant culture, by providing one he felt reflected the needs of a post Reconstruction black people at the dawn of the twentieth century. To shape this new narrative, what he believed he had to say to black people, Du Bois returned to the magnitude of the violent dispersals and

losses that created New World blacks and their sounding. Out of the black Atlantic, as Paul Gilroy termed it, came these black sounds and other black vernacular arts with a global reach. To reconstruct the black nation within a white one, Du Bois began with a memory of sound. The child who would become a potential leader of a people began his New England life as a black person contemplating the particular sound and feel of his own blackness, the inherent sense of loss, and its effect on his own family. In *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois says:

> With Africa I had only one direct cultural connection and that was the African melody which my great-grandmother Violet used to sing. Where she learned it, I do not know. Perhaps she herself was born in Africa or had it of a mother or father stolen and transported. But at any rate, as I wrote years ago in the 'Souls of Black Folk,' 'coming to the valleys of the Hudson and Housatonic, black, little, and lithe, she shivered and shrank in the harsh north winds, looked longingly at the hills, often crooned a heathen melody to the child between her knees:
>
> Do bana coba, gene me, gene me!
>
> Do bana coba, gene me, gene me!
>
> Ben d' nuli, nuli, nuli, nuli, ben d'le.
>
> The child sang it to his children and they to their children's children, and so two hundred years it has traveled down to us and we sing it to our children, knowing as little as our fathers what its words may mean, but knowing well the meaning of its music. . . .[70] But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. (114-117)

From the Burghardt family lore, a few lines from a song sung by a small African woman gets passed down through the generations. Though a meticulous scholar, Du Bois does not consider who might take issue with the authenticity and the veracity of the oral history that he first records in *Souls,* and again in *Darkwater,* and *Dusk of Dawn*, and mentions in passing in *The Autobiography*. After all, this is a beginning that black people would recognize, identify with, and find credible.

This African foremother never adapted fully to the New World or accepted the transformations, in body and spirit, which the black Atlantic required. Her forcible removal, this time from the Bahamas to the British colony in North America, only magnified her pain and loss and her memory of another place. That memory existed for the Burghardt family in the sound of those remembered lines handed down for generations and that Du Bois presents as a key to his sense of himself as a black subject whose moment of conscious origin is mired in loss and pain. In Amiri Baraka's ground-breaking *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (1963) he says of songs like the one Du Bois's family inherited, "But there was to come a time when there was no black man [or black woman] who understood the African [words] either and those allusions to excess, or whatever the black man [or black woman] wished to keep to himself [or herself], were either in the master's tongue or meaningless, albeit rhythmical, sounds to the slave also" (Harris 24). The sounding of the unknown African words and the words that replaced them contain the meanings and the remembrances that people of African descent struggle with and for.[71] Black people in the Americas began their Middle Passage into enslavement with a certain amount of intelligibility and linguistic noise and clamor that became the cornerstone of black cultural production. Thus Du Bois's ancestor and her song provide him with a direct link to the beginning of the blues and as Baraka says, "the blues could not exist if the African captive had not become an American captive" (Harris 21). Those people who claim black political identities stand within this paradox of being. Aside from a few specific mentions, the African song and the African foremother does not appear in Du Bois's non-autobiographical writings, nor does he make the case for the importance of oral narratives.

Du Bois did not need to do any more with her in order to prove the song did what he attributes to it: the song's importance in the black Burghardt family's construction of themselves as a black people connected to Africa via the Middle Passage. Written, the rhythm of the song in *Dusk*, as well as earlier in *Souls*, seems incongruous, "nonsensical" to most readers without an actual sound to refer to. Du Bois had the sound but admits that none of his family members knew what the words meant. But the early renderings of English by blacks or songs sung by blacks in English might as well be a lost African language because of their initial foreignness. In addition, the resistance of white captors to hearing Africans speaking English (or French) would have always rendered black speaking unintelligible even as they recorded it. Also in these emerging sounds and soundings are the sounds that Du Bois did not write about directly. Readers can infer from the "common history" and the documented "suffer[ing]" of New World blacks that the agonizing screams of that "common disaster" were also seared into the memories. Du Bois movingly recalls the lament; the blues of an "African captive" forced to be an "American captive" and left what came before the lament, the screams of those resisting capture and/or violation, to the imagination. Writing to establish the idea of a black "we" and what is shared between a black "us" at the turn of the twentieth century, Du Bois could omit what Frederick Douglass could not in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845): Aunt Hester's screams and what they signified about *his* enslavement.

As a cornerstone text in African American literature, this foundational scene of black genealogy is returned to over and over again by many different scholars. In his introduction to the Oxford edition of Du Bois's published texts, Henry Louis Gates says that Du Bois took part of the formulation for his often quoted sentence about the problem of the twentieth century

being the problem of the color line from reading Douglass' essay entitled "The Color Line." What Gates reveals is the extent to which Aunt Hester's screams have been with black writers and scholars. Having read Douglass, Gates reveals that Aunt Hester's screams have been with black intellectuals, writers, and activists since the publication of the narrative. Aware of the screams, Du Bois's own originary moment commences with what follows immediate terror and violation. His great-great-grandmother's song, though invoking sadness, loss, and pain also contains the terror signified by Aunt Hester's screams. Their omission is a focal point. The mournful notes of Du Bois's genealogy in song contain the haunting traces of the terror of becoming something else, and the terrorized transforming (however painfully) into survivors. For Du Bois, black renewal, growth, and redemption—at least in his fictional writing—begins with the uplift of black women. Aunt Hester's screams are embedded in the forlorn song his African foremother "crooned." Frederick Douglass begins his narrative, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, by first telling readers what happened to his Aunt Hester in order to locate his understanding of himself as a slave.

In *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), Saidiya Hartman's conclusions about Douglass's dilemma and those similarly positioned remains true for people still required to shock the nation into recognition of black humanity:

> Only more obscene than the brutality unleashed at the whipping post is the demand that this suffering be materialized and evidenced by the display of the tortured body or endless recitations of the ghastly and the terrible. In light of this, how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the benumbing spectacle or contend with the narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response to such displays? This was the challenge

> faced by Douglass and other foes of slavery, and this is the task that I [Hartman] take up here. (4)

My task in the rest of this chapter is a little narrower. Unlike Hartman's outward examination of "how one gives expression to these outrages" to a world committed to African enslavement as a business, I consider the ways that blacks continue to struggle to speak to each other while also negotiating white "indifference," "the benumbing spectacle" that black suffering always threatens to become, and "the prurien[t] . . . responses to" black violation. Just as compelling as Hartman's focus on "the demand that [black] suffering be materialized in the most mundane acts" is the reverberating sounds of those spectacles on black people's intraracial development and the ways they processed being turned into spectacle *entre nous*. What does it means to mediate black speaking through whiteness—even now? Depending on the frequency, the arrangement of the soundings, the pain and terror of coming together as New World black subjects can be heard even in the most uplifting rhythms. The soundings capture aspects of the journey from Africa to here, the Americas. *Entre nous* becomes one more way to record and struggle with the discord, the disjunct of being a black subject of the Americas and always being in translation. The visual brutality enacted on black bodies became commonplace but so too were the sounds of that brutality and violence normalized in what Hartman identifies as the mundane, quotidian acts of everyday life. At times the violators, people who differentiated between white flesh and black flesh, demanded the masking of the screams and soundless fear into song, story, music, and rhythmic movements to correspond with the involuntary jerks and undulations of the body during their confrontations. Producing the desired performance for white captors, or whites who believed Africans to be descended from orangutans, required black people to be vigilant. They needed to separate those performances meant for whites

from those meant for other blacks. The latter interior displays and soundings affirmed that black humanity was necessary for psychic survival and continuance.

A black beginning in harrowing, painful soundings of corporeal violation gave way to a practiced, almost resolute soundlessness of body and mind. The pain and sorrow that Mansart learns to quiet in order to lead, encased the response to the screams that black writing and black critics go back to in Fredrick Douglass's first slave narrative, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Aunt Hester's screams as she is whipped by her owner (for going against his injunction) serves as the primal scene to which not only Douglass but critics have returned time and again. For example, Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* begins by returning to that scene from Frederick Douglass's because of Saidiya Hartman's refusal to participate in Aunt Hester's violation in her own critical text, *Scenes of Subjection*. Moten says, "[T]he subject [that] animates Hartman's work" is Aunt Hester's screams and they mark the moment Douglass comes into "corporeal consciousness" of himself as a slave also subject to such brutality (Moten 2). From Douglass's original account, to Du Bois, Hartman, and Moten, a certain gendered response enters into the reading of and the shaping of Aunt Hester's screams. For all of Hartman's efforts to avoid reproducing Hartman's violation, her readers linger longer on the terrible sounds that must have come from an act too awful to reprint. Thus in Hartman's reading we focus not on Douglass or his coming into consciousness of himself as a slave but on the young woman screaming and pleading for mercy. As a legal non-person, Aunt Hester occupies a central place in defining the extent of her master's power, that of Lloyd's Ned (however limited), and by proxy the power of Ned's master, and even that of Douglass himself.[72] All the white men and women attached to the master entered this ring of power over

this black woman. It was reinforced by his whipping of her and all the sounds accompanying her brutalization.

This terror, rendered unexpectedly both visually and in sound, followed Du Bois throughout his attempts to make a living as a free black intellectual—first in the South, then in the North, and once again in the South. Hartman writes:

> . . . [I]n considering the metamorphosis of the chattel into man catalyzed by the abolition of slavery, I think it is important to consider the failure of Reconstruction not simply as a matter of policy or as evidence of a flagging commitment to black rights, which is undeniably the case, but also in terms of the limits of emancipation, the ambiguous legacy of universalism, the exclusions constitutive of liberalism, and the blameworthiness of the individual. . . . From this vantage point, emancipation appears less the grand event of liberation than a point of transition between modes of servitude and racial subjection. As well, it leads us to question whether the rights of man and citizen are realizable or whether the appellation 'human' can be borne equally by all. (6)

As Hartman writes, emancipation did not free blackened or black-identified people the way they had hoped or imagined.[73] The indisputable fact of black humanity as black people themselves understood it remained contested. Black freedom, liberty and humanity, was not like white freedom. What became apparent to Du Bois, a social scientist who did not believe in the biological basis for race and racism, is that whiteness came to define everything good and desirable. Freedom became synonymous with white people and whiteness. What the law and its application made clear was that there were ways that blacks could be treated that were unacceptable for whites. Failing to reconcile this intractable division in defining humanity, how irrational race-based beliefs determined what was permissible for blacks despite legal mandates, educational, and financial attainment accounted for much of Du Bois's later anger and bitterness. In the face of the ongoing irrationality of racism, one can understand why black

people needed the otherworldly, the mystical, and the spiritual even more than psychoanalysis. The closest Du Bois came to the otherworldly was the sound he traced back to Africa and the music that black people gave to the world despite great suffering.

The connection to Africa beyond skin, hair, and facial features then becomes mythically bound in half-remembered sounds and words. It is often such memories, like the one described by Du Bois, of words, rhythms, and movements that connects U.S. and other New World blacks back to Africa beyond the recorded history of capture, passage, enslavement, and questionable freedom in the West. The significance of his personal, familial remembrance of a contested origin cannot be overstated. The sound of the song that Du Bois remembered at each autobiographical telling, for a social scientist of Du Bois's caliber, remained the most important feature of his African foremother's transmission. But to begin with such a source reinscribes the in-credibility of blacks as speaking subjects in the West. Yet, most people of African descent trace their origins to such voices and their soundings and not the official records. In the oral narratives that give rise to the written narratives, the black grandmother exists as an archetype because she must. In a sense if she did not exist, Du Bois might have had to invent her, out of other "scraps of memories"[74] in order to begin his black Atlantic historiography. Such black stories begin with an ancestor's unceremonious, often violent, "leave taking" and sudden arrival in the Americas. The younger Hurston did not need an African foremother, per se, because she had the black incorporated town of Eatonville and the black (usually male) "big voices" that defined her town and provided the tension and pride found in most of her fictional work. In addition, Hurston, two generations removed from Du Bois, recreated and redefined the iconic fictional black grandmother, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, escaping slavery in

her younger days by going into the southern wilderness with a newborn. Hurston's fictional Nanny, fearing the violence of her mistress, was unable to wait out the end of the Civil War on the plantation of a Confederate officer who insisted on seeing her one last time. Freedom found her subject to the dangers of the wilderness while simultaneously dreaming of constructing a highway through that wilderness, "preaching a sermon on high" and passing the text on to her offspring. The granddaughter inherits the text in the same way that Du Bois inherits his song and its haunting sound. By the time Hurston's fictional text reaches the third generation, she says it not only haunts but stifles black individual choice and the growth that can come from such choices. Hurston's story, as well as Du Bois's familial lore, and the others like them, begin a certain set of cultural and literary conventions of resistance and redemption with which each new generation has to engage in order to figure out what to do with and how to stand in their black identities. The sounding of the words took the place of the drum and the meaning of the soundings beyond the words became what blacks looking for other "ones" aimed for.

These fleeting word-and-blues-tinged sound memories, half-remembered, like Du Bois's, created a black people and a black culture in the U.S. that came to know itself as black, as _people of African descent—even as the actual connections to Africa receded and even as they were forced to undergo many psychological hardships and physical changes. In the interest of hegemonic whiteness, the enslavement of people of African descent in what would become the U.S., the Caribbean, and parts of South America became synonymous with blackness. Whiteness signified freedom and what those who were not free aspired to attain. Simultaneously, those forced to be the binary opposite of whiteness did create a space for

resistance as black human beings with a moral and spiritual agency that came to epitomize, in many ways, the universal human ideal. In “the leavings and detritus of a language [of captivity]” the enslaved placed the seeds of a counterculture (Philip 52). With their musical remembrances and their verbal soundings, and bodily expressions, blacks in the Atlantic renegotiated their alienation and their humanism. The soundings that contained the links to the effects of the transformations wrought on Africans by Europeans started with being transported from Africa to the Americas. M. Nourbese Philip writes, “In the vortex of New World slavery, the African forged new and different words, developed strategies to impress her experience on the language. The formal standard language was subverted, turned upside down, inside out, and even sometimes erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at a time; "rhythms held sway” (49). Africans and their descendantsdescendants in the Atlantic had to learn to make use of the languages of their captors in order to resist and survive. That alien, abusive language had to also be made to speak or sound their individual and collective desires for freedom, justice, and process the unexpected and the unimaginable. For blacks today, the tension in black sounds and soundings that came out of the various “strategies to impress [African] experience[s] on [a European] language remains. The “manner of speaking” and sounding of *it* and the *bit* contains the traces of the effects of African people’s transformations from human to thing and back again. The transformation begins with being marked for capture and transport through “the door of no return” and the treacherous Middle Passage before fully comprehending the meaning of this chain of events. The languages created and refashioned into black speech in the New World, from those world-altering events, recalls, mourns, and reestablishes the links to the “60 million

or more" at the bottom of the ocean that Toni Morrison references in her opening epigraph in *Beloved*. The novel itself memorializes those who survived yet never recovered from the trauma of being in the Atlantic as an African/black person like Du Bois's African foremother. This connection to another place[75] or other places that Du Bois finally heard and saw in the U.S. South—became his African foremother's song in action.

Du Bois would return to the scene of his family's origin repeatedly not only in his autobiographical writings but also in his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911). In that first novel, Du Bois laid bare black people's internal struggle with the African past, as remembered and practiced, and a New World present in the U.S. defined by white institutions and white ideology. *The Quest* ultimately culminates in asking and resolving the question of who do black people have to be to participate as full citizens in the existing system whether they consider it just or unjust. The African connection to Africa remains undeniably important to Du Bois. In *The Quest*, he collapses the African heritage into a battered old cabin in a swamp in Alabama presided over by an old black conjure woman who he calls a witch. From this conflicted and fallen Eden, Du Bois makes clear that black people must transition into the reality of the white nation that surrounds and threatens to engulf the black one. In its fallen state, the swamp ceases to serve black people's needs. Instead, the swamp, as described by Du Bois, primarily serves the dominant culture's needs with its exoticism, and suspends prevailing social mores under the aegis of culture. The neglected swamp, existing on the edges of civilization proper, must be made to yield productive value in line with that of the white community while simultaneously fighting to ensure that the productive value remains within the black community.

The first chapter of *The Quest*, "Dreams," begins with Blessed (Bles) Alwyn, a teenage boy, lost in a swamp filled with wild sounds and positioned on the edge of civilization. Bles has left his home for a chance to be educated during the end of Reconstruction. To get to the school run by an older Northern white teacher, Miss Sarah Smith, who, twelve years ago according to Du Bois, answered the Reconstruction calls of an earlier generation, he leaves behind his parents and everything he has known in order to acquire the Western tools that will enable him to make the most of black freedom in the U.S.[76] Du Bois says, "[His parents] were far away; they would never be as near as once they had been, for he had stepped into the world. . . . [Ah] but the world was a lonely thing, so wide and tall and empty! And so bare, so bitter bare!" (5). Accessing the "world" as people of African descent, then, requires a separation from loved ones and a sudden, almost violent, recognition and acceptance of its alienating effects. Blessed Alwyn, in many ways, echoes Du Bois's own encounter with black music, black soundings, when he journeyed south to a black college, Fisk University, a year after his mother's death. Until he marries and becomes a father, Du Bois trades his remaining familial relations, and the world they lived in, for the education that would allow him to function in the outside world as a potential equal to his white peers. His early separation of family life and intellectual life would affect his relationship with his first wife, Nina Gomer Du Bois, as well as his surviving child, Yolande. They never quite fit into the intellectual, political world of which Du Bois became an entrenched part. But that first violent break from a home space, from a world of meaning gets reenacted over and over again either voluntarily or involuntarily by black-identified people who feel compelled to move in order to access "the world" academically, economically, or socially. In this post-slavery novel, written to reach a broader audience then

his academic work, Du Bois recasts the harrowing night in the wilderness, often a key trope in slave narratives of escape, into one where the wilderness to be traversed becomes a dense, misguided, and malevolent swamp that the conjure woman, Elspeth, and her daughter, Zora, preside over.[77] Bles must resist the conjure aspects of the swamp, only he cannot. Before long he hears the *music* of the swamp and, following the music he comes upon a dancing, singing black girl with a "wildness" in her tune that seduces him. While he feared the night and his proximity to the swamp, Zora seemed to live for the natural world and its unity. Bles, though looking for the white world, stumbles, unexpectedly, onto a black one. Du Bois deliberately sets up a (false) dichotomy between accessing the world of learning, as represented by Bles, and the black one, signified by Zora, that he suggests will hold black people back—if not transformed.

After meeting Zora, Bles becomes enchanted with Zora, the black girl in tune with her seemingly violent surroundings, her sense of place in the swamp, as well as with "the poetry of her motion" (6). Du Bois says, "As she danced she sang. [Bles] heard her voice as before, fluttering like a bird's in the full sweetness of her utter music. It was no tune nor melody, it was just formless, boundless music. The boy forgot himself and all the world besides. All his darkness was sudden light; dazzled he crept forward, bewildered, fascinated, until with one last wild whirl the elf-girl paused" (7). For all of the swamp's potential hazards, the illumination to be found there will not be matched in the outside world he seeks. This particular type of self-recognition and transformation, from personal darkness to light by way of sound, continues to occur in black fallen spaces. What Bles attempts to leave behind in order to prepare for a life of reading, writing, and the rigors of racial uplift, he encounters abruptly. The "formless, boundless music" is what joins him to "the elf-girl" Zora, to the swamp, and what came before.

Du Bois begins his popular novel by addressing the pull that particular black soundings might always have on black-identified people dependent on aural markers of home. With the opening chapter, Du Bois lays out the struggle facing Post Reconstruction blacks. The spiritual recognition to be found in marginalized spaces transformed to a certain extend by blacks cannot lull black people into the complacency of staying or failing to move up and out despite the racism of the outside world. Bles has to get through and past "the other place" that the swamp represents in order to get to his future. For a black country-boy like Bless, that future, Du Bois says, comes always already tinged with loss and the potential for intraracial alienation. The "sweetness of" the "boundless music" that might lead him to forget or opt out of the "the bitter world" he traveled far to engage with must be resisted but simultaneously acknowledged. *The Quest* reveals Du Bois's seemingly conflicting stance on black soundings and their importance in New World black identity formation. For him, twentieth-century blacks needed to know and acknowledge what joined them as blacks, a sounding with unknowable words, and then consciously move beyond the pull of rigid, unchanging ceremonies to the dead and the long gone. Blessed Alwyn, on his way to the education and access that might lead him to universal humanity, and Zora Creswell, the black swamp girl with fixed notions of blackness and whiteness in her parallel world, embody the conflict of all New World subjects.

In this popular text written for black mass consumption, the literal and figurative swamp, has no place in the future of the race and yet it contains the originary sounds that mark those who share a common history and struggle in the post enslavement era. Even as he concedes the knowledge to be gained in black other places, like Zora's swamp, Du Bois demonizes the old (African derived) ways that Elspeth represents. Her life in the swamp is

corrupt, morally bankrupt, and her practices devoid of useful meaning. The battle for "the Way" forward, post Reconstruction, will be fought by her daughter—already acting as a mediating force for a race man in the making. Zora, Du Bois says, can be saved and, moreover, use the heightened awareness learned from her mother and the natural world—once properly applied to a cause and formal training—to lead a people. For those blacks still struggling, after physical emancipation, with what to hold onto and what to let go of, Du Bois decides to *tell* them. He tells them to let go of conjure, the belief in dreams without a direct plan of action, and the connection to a natural world that cannot sustain viable institutions in this (white) world.[78] In many ways, the start of the twenty-first century opens yet another period of revisiting and reconsidering, intellectually and diasporically, what black people are supposed to remember now. What are those re-memberings supposed to signify in the current reconfiguration of U.S. black identities brought on by new generations of diaspora blacks meeting in the United States?

The New World "quest" that his protagonists embark on in the years after Reconstruction offers no easy solutions and no real way around the alienating whiteness they encountered early on. The physical risks that blacks must undertake to participate in the nation proper can lead to an internalized alienation that undoubtedly affects black *entre nous* relationships. When Bles and Zora meet up again, Bles has adjusted to his role at the school and is the driver for the newly-arrived New England white teacher, Miss Taylor, a younger, less committed, and certainly more opportunistic version of the older Miss Smith. Decades earlier, Miss Smith answered the Reconstruction call to educate newly-freed black men and women. With the failure of Reconstruction, she stands alone against the tide of hostile and indifferent

whites like the Creswells and Miss Taylor. Zora "child of the swamp" can take one long, unhesitating look at Miss Taylor and say, "I hates you" and own it (46). As this generation's version of a saltwater African, her untutored and unschooled wildness allows her the type of self-possession that can directly respond to Miss Taylor's racism and indifference with open defiance. Unlike Bles, Zora will never fall under Miss Taylor's spell or mis-read her intentions as true friendship, human fellowship, or respect, and because of this she meets the schoolteacher's thinly masked disgust with her own open disgust. When Bles asks Zora to explain her behavior she tells him, "'You don't understand,'. . . 'You can't never understand. I can see right through people. You can't. You never had a witch for a mammy—did you?'" (46). Bles, of course, answers "No," and she says, "'Well, then, you see I have to take care of you and see things for you'" (46).

Bles's response to Zora's assessment of this particular ability that derives from being self-possessed and not alienated from herself as a black person drives the plot of the novel for the next four hundred pages. Whether he believes in her abilities or values them is not the point—yet. Instead Du Bois's opening chapter suggests that despite the considerable knowledge contained in black folk ways and the "knowledge gained since"[79] found in black insights handed down through the generations, black Atlantic people still have to learn the ways of the white world that they live in and risk the alienation that estranged Manuel Mansart from his own people. Bles says, "[Zora] must learn to read . . . [because] they know things that give them power and wealth and make them rule" (46). When she balks and says, "They just got things,—heavy, dead things," Bles counters with, "Even if white folks don't know everything they know different things from us, and we ought to know what they know" (46). In his

relatively new role as “propagandist,” Du Bois directed this statement to all blacks who still may need to come to terms with the post slavery world as it existed and the difficulties ahead.

If Zora does not plan to leave the literal and figurative black swamp, then she can stay as she is, aware but limited in her mobility To leave, Du Bois says, Zora needs to change her approach, her outlook, and above all risk losing her certainty of her place and possibly the value of her knowledge. This risk, among others, Du Bois—the professor, the architect of large portions of black studies and what Africa should mean to New World blacks—said black people and the Zora’s in particular, *had to take* within a white world. They, black young women (and men) like Zora, would come to white people and white institutions with their own natural defenses, with a sense of their own worth because of their strong connections to a rooted blackness linked to an African past—despite the alienation and the loneliness that might result while learning and wandering in whiteness. Their already reinforced black interiority might be enough to allow them to make it through the journey battered, worn, but intact enough to do the work that the black majority needed. Early on, *The Quest* makes the painful separation of two black people naturally drawn to each other inevitable. For the sake of black progress, it is Zora who must learn to redirect her love for Bles into intraracial nation-building and doing the work of the people.

Du Bois has the free “wild child of the swamp” and the pragmatic, striving son of former slaves risk it all because to live in whiteness means understanding the importance of “heavy, dead things” and how they “give them power and wealth and make them rule” without losing one’s black interiority (35). They risk losing family and friends, their ability to love and choose

each other without the impositions of whiteness, and the unsustainable freedom crafted out of necessity in the allegorical swamp, in order to gain an education and participate in the U.S. as citizens. They do this even as they are barred the access and regard given whites of any nationality or class. Once Zora agrees to learn to read and engage with whiteness, she learns she is not "pure" and is blamed for her violation as a child by the son of the plantation owner. She learns also to see her mother as what she does not want to become. The text also implies that Elspeth encouraged her daughter's defilement by allowing men to come to the cabin to drink and by sending her to the Creswell home to pick up the laundry. The freedom she enjoyed in the swamp and never working the land came from this exchange of services that Elspeth could not or did not stop. Zora's connection to Bles, their recognition of each other from that first encounter in the swamp is severed during the course of her formal education. A proper sense of white shame threatens to rewrite Zora's previous existence and define the one she reluctantly embarked on because of Bles. Both Harry Creswell, her violator, and Miss Taylor, his future wife, use their power, their superiority, to manipulate Bles's behavior towards Zora. The kind of man Bles wants to be in the white world cannot be aligned with a woman known to be unpure. Thus even in the swamp, Zora's freedom was always a conditional one. Despite this initial heartbreaking outcome of leaving their respective home spaces and Bles leaving Zora, they still needed "to know what [the whites] kn[e]w" in order to understand the particular nature of their struggle in whiteness as blacks, with the unique legacy of being units of transferable stock that anyone could, and once did, own.

This understanding coupled with what Du Bois suggests they needed to re-member about their black identities and about their conflicted origins as signified by the swamp, would

prepare a Zora and a Bles for their work on behalf of a people just a few decades out of enslavement. Bles and his striving alone cannot make "a way out of no way."[80] Du Bois's swamp allegory suggests he and the black majority need Zora's spirit and her faith channeled in the direction of uplift. This dedication to racial uplift and work becomes "the way" that Zora searches for throughout the novel in order to put the swamp and Elspeth, this generation's Sycorax,[81] behind her once and for all. Du Bois proposes that blacks repurpose the swamp as his fictional Zora will attempt to do by growing the "silver fleece" and enter the marketplace as owners and producers. The seed that yields the first bales of the "silver fleece" (cotton) comes from an ancient and sacred stock carried over from the other place that Africa comes to signify. Elspeth, of course, is the keeper of the seeds that will yield the magical cotton that Bles and Zora believe will solve the monetary problems keeping Zora from a proper education. Despite the initial hard labor and Zora's determination to get fair value for this superior cotton, the realities of who controls access to the markets and her condition of past ownership, its dialectic, subjects her to the dictates of the Creswell clan. Elspeth's nominal freedom, even in the swamp which helped Zora define her sense of freedom, makes her a sharecropper only and not the owner of her own labor and least of all the land that she cleared and tilled to produce cotton that originated elsewhere. Indeed, Elspeth saved her daughter from this hard knowledge and understanding of herself as the child of former slaves. Zora worked the land because she wanted to in order to please Bles and his plans for her education. In return for not having to labor in the fields, Zora was sent to pick up the laundry at the Creswell house where Harry Creswell sexually violated her and all the black girls who came to the house. The full horror of her abuse will be reflected back to her in Bles's reaction and his abandonment of her.

In the next two chapters this fictional Zora will give way to the flesh and blood Zora Neale Hurston. Unlike her fictional counterpart who conceives of the plan of buying and draining the swamp for cotton production as "the way" out of the confining reach of her past, a past that sends Bles to the capital in shame, Hurston celebrates all that Du Bois's Zora has had to give up in order to become "pure" again and a functioning part of the capitalist culture. Eight years after the publication of *Souls*, Du Bois uses famed double consciousness to different purposes than the psychological anguish it signified for post slavery blacks in his most famous text. In his first novel, the "the warring halves" and black American "twoness" is operationalized in the story of Zora and Bles.[82] Zora sees and understands certain aspects of the white world that they will continuously need to negotiate that Bles does not always grasp in his relationship to white people, especially with the educational and political status he vies for. Throughout the text, Bles is not always mindful of white men and white women's perception of his black body or the danger in any casual proximity to white women. Believing in his freedom and the education he was receiving, Bles did not defer to young white men like Harry Creswell with the obligatory gestures of black subservience. Likewise, Bles treats Miss Taylor with the respect befitting a teacher and takes pride in the responsibility of being her driver, but does not perform the gestures that let Southern whites *see* that he is a "boy" who knows his place. Bles fails to negotiate the threats to his physical safety because he refused to accept that a post Reconstruction black man still needs to show such deference to whites. This aspect of the unchanging rules of interracial interactions Zora already understands and will keep with her as she leaves behind the limited, but black-identified freedom of the swamp.

Bles can make the case for combining what Zora knows with what the white world knows and make the initial necessary break with certain types of black beliefs and practices deemed provincial. Instead of combining worlds, he rejects a black worldview that does not measure up to the white one. He now can only see Zora and her blackness through the white gaze of Miss Taylor and Harry Creswell, a Northerner and a Southerner whose marital union symbolically seals the fate of post Reconstruction southern blacks. Bles's own assumptions of his own valor, worth, training in white institutional spaces nearly get him killed because of his casualness around white Mrs. Creswell, his former teacher. Adenike Marie Davidson says in *Black Nation Novel: Imagining Homeplaces in Early African-American Literature* (2008):

> [Bles's] separation (physical, emotional, and psychological) from the masses of the Black community means that his survival skills for living in a hostile environment are not fully developed; his program of racial uplift designed by white society, does not include the learning of one's vulnerability in dominant society. Thus, here Du Bois stresses Bles's dependence on Zora—the elite's dependence on the masses for their indestructible spirit of survival. Bles's dependence on Mary [Taylor Creswell's] advice, symbolic of the Black community's dependence on white America, despite its hypocrisy, continues to place his hard won success, and ultimately his life, in jeopardy when he returns to the swamp. (126)

Mary Taylor Creswell helped initiate Bles's initial break with Zora and continues to aid Bles in misreading Zora as a woman only fit for her new role as community leader and organizer and not as a love interest. In the end, Zora using her black body and her always already perceived sexual immorality in whiteness, saves Bles, and a conflicted Mary regarding her attraction to Bles, from a southern white patriarch's gun.

To stay black (in terms that serve the black majority's needs) and pass on what the next generation needs to re-member about blackness in the United States need to work in tandem.

Even in this configuration Du Bois implies that Zora, not Bles, possesses and provides the cultural anchoring that enables her to be a true visionary for black racial uplift and is most able to begin what will develop into a universal humanism from a U.S. African American perspective.[83] Zora returns to Miss Smith with "the way" to expand the school and create facilities that will serve the black community. She begins a food co-op, a little library, and the beginnings of a medical facility on the Creswell plantation. She conceives of the plan to buy and drain the swamp and cooperatively grow the "silver fleece." Zora uses the courts system to stand up to Mr. Creswell, who believed no white man or white court would honor the word of a black woman against his, when he decided to take the cleared swampland back. Zora, with her black soundings now properly channeled, is ready to do the hard work of organizing and leading blacks against white supremacy. Bles returns to the South because he cannot accept or function in the face of the dissolution of black politicians and the black elite in D.C. He returns to do the people's work but with no clear vision of how to go about that work. Zora, with her vision and her plans, offers him "the way." Again, Davidson says, "In making Zora, a Black (brown-skinned) woman the center of the novel, and by the end, the leader of the Black domestic nation (represented by the swamp community), Du Bois presents Zora as 'the person of greatest courage, of greatest insight and dignity and power' (Aptheker 119) in the novel" (127). Thus, the best hope for the type of *entre nous* black institution building with transformative potential for the masses can only come from a figure like Zora. To want anything *entre nous* as black people, especially institutions that effectively serve their needs, will be met with fierce resistance at every turn.

Zora, more so than Bles, remains connected to blackness and believes in what black people have to offer. To the white institutions that she must learn from and engage with, she brings a black interiority able to resist the psychological effects of white supremacy. What she learns she brings back to the black masses in order to make accessing the dominant system of value by black people on their terms possible. Though he seems to advocate for a black nation within the white nation, Du Bois, in the novel he called his "little economic experiment," makes the point that blacks in the U.S. (and in the black diaspora) cannot survive without an understanding, at all levels, of the white value system affecting their overall choices—especially their dependence on a white monetary system. The "join" that Du Bois makes possible through Zora's black rootedness and her resiliency depends on her understanding that black values and black markers of power eventually have to translate elsewhere without losing their "essential" blackness. Carolyn Wynn, Zora's Washington D.C. counterpart in *The Quest*, uses her heightened skills to achieve a certain amount of the money, status, and individual success within highly racialized limits. Though dignified and living at the highest level possible for a black woman, Carolyn (Carrie) Wynn lives a hollow, empty existence unconnected to any deeper meaning or purpose. As an artist she is stifled by racism and made all the more bitter and cynical by her inability to move beyond (the black) race.

Unable to access her "proper stone,"[84] the talented Wynn, unlike Zora, at the very least will have the money, clothes, and whatever stature allowed the wife of a black political insider. Carolyn Wynn, aside from her own desires and comfort, chooses not to fight for or identify with the black masses. She rejects Bles's idealism, or what she calls his country ways. Of her three D.C. suitors, she genuinely cared for Bles and did everything in her power to help him land the

education commission. However, Bles would not play along with an appointment that offered no independence of thought and guaranteed the educational disenfranchisement of southern blacks. Thus Bles, described by Carrie/Carolyn as "a gorgeous misfit" is aided by two of the smartest black women in the novel (229). Zora at another end asks the powerful Mrs. Vanderpool to get Bles a U.S. Treasury appointment without "sacrificing his manhood or betraying his people" (259). Both Carrie and Zora work behind the scenes to place Bles in a political office, unbeknownst to him, and all to no avail. Though at different ends of the black color spectrum and black nation building, both of these black women have to "see things" for Bles and also take steps to protect his masculinity, his ego. Yet, Bles fails to understand Carrie's position as a D.C. insider who cannot just pick up and go (back) to the South or Zora's position as a young black girl living on the outskirts of the Creswell plantation and what negotiating those spaces entailed.

The level of self-awareness and interiority that Du Boisian women exhibit can be used for self gain, repurposed for rebuilding a community, or both. The women remain better at reading whiteness and blackness and negotiating the demands of the white racial hierarchy with regard to the black body, black labor, and black worth. In abandoning Zora, and leaving her, as he says, on her knees begging him not to go, Bles does not break Zora. Her spirit and her faith in blackness and in her own worth, pull her back. Zora returns to the swamp to work and eventually harvest the silver fleece all while becoming a boarding student at Miss Smith's school instead of a day student. When Harry Creswell steals the cotton and her labor because he can, the free child of the swamp experiences what every black sharecropper has experienced before her. Later, the pain of this injustice will serve to give her a cause to fight for

beyond Bles's love and respect. In the first chapter, I posed and examined Henry Louis Gates's rhetorical question, "What to do with the folk?" In my reading of Du Bois's literary texts he himself seems to ask, "What good is the black elite, the Talented Tenth, if they do not remain connected to the black masses?"

The Quest of the Silver Fleece also underscores Du Bois's own struggle with the hard Calvinist beliefs of his youth that preached no dancing, no swamp or forest meeting places—unless transformed into productive space—no witch's Hodou[85] or Vodou but the checked joy to be found in the hard work of black self-sufficiency in a hostile white nation. In *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, Herald Loomis's story can begin again once he finds his song and his song turns out to be the song of self-sufficiency. In the heart of the South, Du Bois's unlikely heroine will fight to build a self-sufficient black community. Zora will expand on the work began by a courageous, aging white teacher, herself a relic of Reconstruction. In 1911 Du Bois provided this song of self-sufficiency to the black majority and when self-sufficiency proved woefully insufficient in the face of capitalism and racism decades later, he returned to the subject in the character of Manuel Mansart, his latest version of Blessed Alwyn. In telling the story of Manuel Mansart's long evolution and growing consciousness in *The Black Flame Trilogy*, Du Bois also tells the history of U.S Blacks in the age of freedom, again with the intent of reaching the masses. They need to know in *Worlds of Color*, the final novel of the trilogy, Mansart, is a land-grant Negro college president. Described as an aging provincial black man who has not had the benefit of traveling (to Europe and Asia), he lacks the wider perspective needed for a broader understanding of how race and racism functions beyond the black/white binary. After a meeting with all the land-grant Negro college presidents, Mansart's board of trustees decides

to send him on just such a journey in hopes of initiating a cosmopolitan rebirth. The aging Mansart follows some aspects of Du Bois's life, especially as he becomes more aware and active in world politics. Interestingly, it is his female counterpart at the college, Jean Du Bignon, who more accurately reflects Du Bois's intellectual trajectory.

As the true scholar and visionary, held back from formal leadership of the college because of her gender, Jean Du Bignon supports Mansart by providing clarity and a more worldly intellectual purpose. She chooses, like Du Bois did, to fight for black access to higher learning and advocate for a series of black sociological studies of all the land-grant colleges that fails to materialize. Jean also uses her ability to pass for white to infiltrate racists unions and this same outer whiteness combined with her intelligence enables her to also study black leadership styles. At a Negro College function, she describes all the different presidents' strengths and weakness, the ambitious and the selfless as well as the self-serving. Jean quietly explains how each president came to power and stayed in power. Like Du Bois's Zora in *The Quest*, Du Bignon sees and understands what Mansart does not and similarly takes care of him without adversely threatening his own sense of himself as a leader. Unlike Bles, Mansart stayed in the South and become "the black flame" of his grandmother's prophecy. With a quiet determination boarding on stoicism, Mansart mourned his own losses and the many setbacks experienced by his people in freedom. He steeled himself against the slights and humiliations of staying in the South to educate black people effectively abandoned by the government after the Tilden-Hayes Compromise.

Mansart began his life and career having to understand southern politics, southern social mores, and the potential for certain types of racial violence from the slightest misread cue. This balancing act between surface deference to whites and unwavering dedication to his work was required of him to ensure that southern black students received a quality education. Like Mansart, his students had to access what the land-grant colleges offered without being suspected of not staying in their presumed place as black people. From one traumatic event after another—the lynching of his father, then later his son, and the Atlanta Race riots—Mansart develops his sense of purpose and his decision, no matter the unfolding horror, not to abandon poor black people to the worst of the white South. Despite steady eruptions of brutality, over the course of Du Bois's trilogy, Mansart manages to build a school to educate the freedmen and freedwomen and raise a family within this space. In the process, he calls to mind a less ambitious, less calculating but driven Booker T. Washington. To build his school and preside over it, he stoically suffers the contempt and disregard of the white men (and women) whose funding and support he needs to achieve his goal. His approach, neither radical nor incendiary, proves problematic for a younger generation not wanting to pay such surface deference to social bigotry or make allowances for how an entrenched racial power imbalance will affect their life choices.[86]

Mansart works within the system to advance his cause and raise at least three materially successful black children. He mentors a host of young black people by standing in and reworking the sounds of terror heard and felt throughout his life. Those sounds and soundings began his and other black narratives in the Americas. For example the screams of pain, though heard by all were unheard or hummed or sung into another distracting, distancing

rhythm. Terror became part of what M. Nourbese Philip calls "voiced silence" (Philip 48). Mansart's silence spoke volumes and his descendants were not interested in unpacking his silence. For Du Bois, and the characters he created, the pain and sorrow of black life is never far from the terror of the moans and screams of violation that blacks listening have to not react to in spaces identified with captivity and powerlessness. The flipside of Mansart's stoicism, his perseverance are the unmistakable sounds of the dying, of the son he could not save from a lynch mob, and the many left mangled during the Atlanta Race Riots.[87] For Du Bois the sounds of a firstborn son dying in Atlanta, Georgia, because he could not get him to adequate medical care in a segregated city connects him to the "six million or more" dead. In a more subtle form of reworking terror, Jean Du Bignon, as a black woman who can pass, travels alone without her black colleagues because they cannot pass and thus cannot as easily secure accommodations or safe passage.

In the post Reconstruction era these injustices encapsulate the terror of an earlier age in the Americas. The screams and the pleading Douglass recounts hearing, as a child cowering inside, from his aunt Hester and the slave master's physical and verbal violence also suggests the adjustment to terror in the form of "voiced silence." Whether in the fictional world created by Du Bois or in his or Douglass's narratives, the terror inflicted by whites and white institutions impedes black intraracial relationships at all levels. The institutional and ideological challenges to what should exist, *entre nous*, between black people, remains. To survive, black people needed to recalibrate the sounds of terror, the sounds of unbearable pain, loss, and powerlessness by going inside and leaving behind a false outside to withstand the unspeakable. Mansart's silence, his seeming passivity, is in contrast to the screams that could be made to

come from him at any moment. One suggests the other and both contain the places and spaces that remain forever out of reach for black people in a white capitalist nation despite all their racial progress. Living with the facts of their blackness and the unexplainable, almost unutterable, reality of racialized freedom meant coming to terms with the ease with which lynching and the fear of being lynched or stolen into forced labor camps became a part of U.S. American life after emancipation.

Mansart produces a much muted reaction to the shocking "scenes" of his family's "subjection." For instance, he does not leave and continues to work with the same community members responsible for his son's death. Mansart takes solace in the three children that lived to come of age to lead respectable lives. For Du Bois, Sam Hose's displayed knuckles in a store window signals a major turning point for the scholar. In seeing the knuckles, Du Bois can only imagine the sounds that came from his burning body, sounds that did not horrify the lynchers or the crowd that gathered to watch and listen. This scene continues the tradition of blacks telling and weighing the affect and effect of revealing certain truths when faced with white reading, listening audiences. Douglass recalls Aunt Hester's story, but she does not produce her own narrative account and one wonders if she could have spoken or written as Douglass did. What Harriet Jacobs needed to consider as she exposed her experiences in slavery Douglass did not. The complexity of Jacob's narrative telling, her turn inward to the silence and confinement of a small crawl space, contrasts but also acts as the flipside to Aunt Hester's screams. The risks she took to break through nineteenth century's insistence on the display of sexual propriety and decency in a time of intense sexual violence against black women acts as a bookend to the prostrate image of Aunt Hester and the sound of her violation.[88]

In this beginning, in the post Reconstruction period, a modicum of safety then lay in the creation of black institutions, especially those of higher learning, and black practices that kept certain aspects of blackness *entre nous*. A lifetime of adjusting to his black body and making the most of even the smallest gains took its toll by the last fifteen years of Du Bois's life. By the third novel of the trilogy, he becomes more self-reflective, questioning of his methods and the essence of his life's work. Post enslavement, free blacks like Mansart and his children continued to signify as unfree and, according to Du Bois, unconnected to a world of oppression that might shed light on their particular condition. The trilogy asks, how are black people standing in blackness post enslavement, post Reconstruction, and, indirectly, on the eve of the Civil Rights movement. How are they standing in blackness individually and as a group in a white nation and in a world of color? Nearing the end of his life's work Mansart (and Du Bois) attempt to answer these questions and to determine his legacy to a people and a family he hardly knows anymore. Mansart's dogged strength and imperviousness to racial slight, insult, and violence allowed him to move ahead, making modest inroads. While working within the system, he could not imagine breaking it from or destroying it by resorting to revolution. His understanding of himself in a white man's world and what his part called for in order to work within the system is both heroic and contemptible. Oddly then, Mansart shares this duality with another of Du Bois's prototypical characters: the feared but much needed Elspeth on whose dead body Zora must remake herself into a black leader who will also work within the system to achieve her goals for her community. Mansart, like Zora to a point, must rework the sounds of violation, the yells of the lynch mob, the screams of his father as they murder him, his grandmother's angry curse/prophecy of revenge, his son's agony, and the terror of the Atlanta Riots beyond

the effects of brutality and terror into an ordered, principled life for himself and for all those who cannot stop being black. This combination of soundings required of Mansart, his self-control, his pauses, and his singular focus. Nothing about whiteness, including the anxiety of poor whites in the South and their, at times, extreme animosity towards blacks, surprised him. However, his stoic and accommodating responses to racial and class trauma do not make him cosmopolitan. For that Du Bois says, Mansart and black people like him must leave the South for Europe and return "home" again. Because of the muting of the soundings that frame his life, Mansart does not struggle with speaking "it"—the lynchings, the disenfranchisement of poor blacks, like his own skin, are a fact to be dealt with.

Throughout the trilogy, *The Ordeal of Mansart*, *Mansart Builds a School*, and *Worlds of Color*, a young radical or impatient forward thinker balances the slow-to-anger and less dynamic Mansart. As he awakens to the world's condition and to what engaging the world might entail, Mansart wonders, "But do we really have to plunge into the world labor problem and the inextricable tangles of Asia and Africa. Our problem is simpler. We want to be Americans. Other problems can wait" (*Worlds* 66). Du Bois, given his Pan Africanist work and socialist bent, did not believe that "other problems could wait." U.S. black people's long engagement with the politics of black-identity formation has always depended on people like Mansart knowing and responding to the knowledge of the full extent of black alienation and white supremacy. Forced to stand in blackness, both by law and social custom, did give way to choosing to stand in blackness for the sake of blackness itself and make the case for the black humanity. The enforced legal definition of blackness left no choice; that is to say, the law made the choice of black identification moot. But choosing to stand in *blackness*, as Mansart does, is a

choice and Du Bois wanted that choice framed within the discourse of humanism. Being a decidedly black people within a white nation, U.S. blacks created a political apparatus that if others of African descent did not aspire to, and tried, in some way, to model in their own New World home spaces, they at least benefitted from upon arrival in the U.S. The black world in the U.S. at the turn of the twentieth century, despite the attendant horror of white supremacy, became a place to move to, to dream about and inspire meaning beyond that of localized ethnic identity.

The African diaspora in the Americas would give birth to universal blackness, the first black nation in the West, the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and assist in the charge for African and Caribbean decolonization. In all of these shifts U.S. black imagery, sounds, and iconography influenced a diaspora coming to terms with their identities as people of African descent. For example, the resistance to rabid segregation, the U.S. black cadence and rhythm became a part of the creative production of Caribbean writers like Aimé Césaire and René Depestre. Césaire's seminal work, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (trans. 2001), though written about his island return, encompasses the black struggle in the United States in the images, events that returnee must contemplate. Similarly, Depestre, an Haitian poet and communist revolutionary who lived in exile in Cuba towards the end of the twentieth century, wrote his famous book-length Vodou poem, *A Rainbow for the Christian West* (trans. 1977), about the Haitian *lwas* possession of a prominent white southern family. Even for Africans on and off the continent, U.S. blacks and their struggle for equality as blacks and their claims to universalism mattered. Du Bois, his painstaking gathering of African history into accessible, written texts and his claims to one all encompassing idea of blackness, and one humanity,

mattered. The slow and steady types like Mansart—despite great personal trauma and loss—along with black radicals like Frederick Douglass, Du Bois, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett mounted a systematic legal challenge to black dehumanization and black disenfranchisement that benefitted all people. The citizenship rights granted to the formerly enslaved by the Fourteenth Amendment, overruling Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857), granted U.S. citizenship to those born within its boundaries. Using the will of African ancestors "who chose to survive" and to believe in their right to be treated as human beings remains revolutionary. The steadiness of the fight for black humanity continues to influence human rights struggles all over the world. Du Bois took this understanding to the world and to the black millions in the U.S. still unaware of their true collective powers and what "their dogged strength" in the "lion's mouth" represented.

"How Long Is Long? Not Long:"[89] The Struggle for Legal Access in the U.S. and the Sounds of Freedom Deferred

I think we should have our liberty cause us ain't hogs or horses—us is human flesh. Tom Windham, former slave (Hartman 5)

The struggle for black freedom in the U.S. incorporated and sustained a battle for rights and access on measured and principled stances. The battle to coexist as credible human subjects always returned to the long view of history especially after the leading black figure of his age, Frederick Douglass, dismissed the calls for blacks to go back to Africa or be shipped to the nearest bit of Africa in the New World, Haiti. Instead, Douglass advocated that U.S. blacks stay in the country of their birth and fight for their rights as natural citizens of the land. The

steady fight for black freedom in the U.S. insisted on forcing U.S. law and white understanding of humanism to recognize black flesh as "human flesh" and right the wrong of turning some humans into chattel. Black people used their faith in their own humanity and in a higher power that enslavers, too, claimed to believe in. A wronged people, at each turn, attempted to hold fellow Americans accountable in depriving black Americans of their "unalienable rights." Thus the (legal) work of sustainable freedom did not end with the granting of corporal black freedom with the signing of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 (which abolished slavery in the United States), the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 (which contains the Citizenship Clause, the Due Process Clause, and the Equal Protection Clause), nor the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 (which banned restrictions on voting based on race). This long engagement with "the work of Emancipation" as Du Bois described Reconstruction and the development of a political black ideal based on acknowledging and maintaining African ancestry created a legal and political platform that effectively challenged the white superstructure. In many ways, blacks in the U.S. could and did speak as blacks and agitate for equal access in ways that other nations with majority black populations still struggle with. So much of the black ceremonies of re-membering, of recuperation, and regeneration of black personhood and black credibility as a subject had to be done in the open; in the dominant group's arena, in their language and customs without the false safety of nationalism. Black people in the U.S. learned to use white people's sacred things, their sacred words, and swayed them toward "the better angels of [their] nature." They balanced this open secret work with *entre nous* spirit work but the two lines of work, of consciousness, could not always remain separated or kept from bleeding into each other. The U.S. black people's greatest weapon, born out of the particularities of the

"peculiar institution" in the U.S. to be out in the open working the spirit in whiteness—left much of black cultural production, spirit products, for national (white) appropriation.

From the outset Du Bois, in his research and work on behalf of black people in the U.S. and abroad, placed less emphasis on intraracial conflicts and his status as a U.S. black citizen led him to use the U.S. as a beginning point. He relied on a legal and intellectual apparatus seemingly devoid of ancient black ceremony or ritual. On that international stage, Du Bois elided intraracial black differences in order to focus on the legal and moral fight for racial parity, equal access, and black independence. Du Bois wanted to produce a comprehensive black studies, beginning with the U.S, that spoke to the interconnectedness of people of African descent. His social and political reach, particularly his crusade for social justice and peace derived from a communist model, put him at great odds with the more intimate and interior racial struggle in the U.S., the parts that still remained secret and not explicit. In casting himself in the visionary role of black cultural interpreter, Du Bois put his faith in the writing and telling of black peoples' histories in order to provide the Morrisonian join.[90] And that emphasis was not enough because of racism's irrationality. Starting out in his career he did not know that knowledge and information would not win the day. Du Bois, as a newly-minted master's student in 1892, promptly becomes a member of the American Historical Society and gives a talk that gets him a mention in *The New York Independent*. He quotes a telling paragraph of the article that could have been written about another ambitious black man in the twenty-first century:

> . . . [S]carcely thirty years have elapsed since the war that freed his race, and here was an audience of white men listening to a black man—listening,

> moreover, to a careful cool, philosophical history of the laws which had not prevented the enslavement of his race. The voice, the diction, the manner of the speaker were faultless. As one looked at him, one could not help saying "Let us not worry about the future of our country in the matter of race distinction." (*Autobiography* 149)

In the rest of the chapter, I will examine the "cool, philosophical" and the history that shaped what another writer called his "good taste, great moderation, and almost contemptuous fairness" (*Autobiography* 148).

Du Bois's research focused on the plight of black people in a world where law, Christian morality, and the reasoning of "universal humanism" failed to "prevent the enslavement of" African people. Throughout the course of his long life, he examined how for power and profit various political and global economic structures worked in tandem to enslave, to colonize, and restrict the natural human development of others humans. In the U.S. those systems and structures that denied black humanity were violently challenged and altered by the U.S. Civil War and the Reconstruction that followed. The "suddenly" black and free, after "violently prolonged" wars, found themselves outside of most if not all of the nation's major institutions. These same institutions were established with the belief of the enslaved black body as a natural fact of life in the Americas. Du Bois would say of the Reconstruction efforts of the late nineteenth century, and especially of the Freedmen's Bureau:

> In a time of perfect calm, amid willing neighbors and streaming wealth, the social uplifting of four million slaves to an assured and self-sustaining place in the body politic and the economic would have been a herculean task; but when to the inherent difficulties of so delicate and nice a social operation were added the spite and hate of conflict, the hell of war; when suspicion and cruelty were rife, and gaunt Hunger wept beside Bereavement,--in such a case, the work of any instrument of social regeneration was in large part foredoomed to failure. The

> very name of the Bureau stood for a thing in the South which for two centuries and better men had refused to even argue,--that life amid free Negroes was simply *unthinkable*, the maddest of experiments. (*Souls* 231; italics mine)

This pattern of freedom that finally came without a way to fully integrate the newly freed into the body politic and into the economy while confronting white physical and ideological resistance to black freedom, would be repeated through the black Diaspora. Though the creation of Haiti established the first black nation in the Western Hemisphere and became the first all-out challenge to the system of colonialism, much of its newly freed blacks found themselves in a similar condition of being "unthinkable" at the turn of the nineteenth century.[91] In many of his essays, Du Bois often situates U.S. blacks and their history making turns within the significant events happening in the black diaspora and later within the world of imperialism.

In situating his paternal grandfather, Alexander Du Bois's, second trip to Haiti, he says:

> Suddenly, in late May 1861, my grandfather took a trip to Haiti. This may have been caused by the outbreak of the civil war. Perhaps he had just lost an American wife. In March, 11 American slave states had seceded and formed the Confederacy. In April, Southern ports were blockaded, and on May 14, Lee became Brigadier-General. The relation of colored folk to the war was uncertain, and my father, Alfred, was eligible for drafting. The future of colored folks in the United States was a problem; then, too, the rector of St. Luke was Theodore Holly, who early in 1861 had led a migration of Negroes to Haiti, and painted a future for them there. (*Autobiography* 68)

From his grandfather's diary, Du Bois receives confirmation that the émigrés did not fair well. His grandfather says upon seeing them when he landed in Port-au-Prince, "Poor men and women, I am sorry, heart sorry for them. They put on an air of cheerfulness, which I am satisfied there is not one of them, but would give all they had in the world if they could stand where I did a few weeks ago" (*Autobiography* 69-70). In essence, they would have traded the

black freedom of Haiti for the uncertainty of the Civil War had they possessed Alexander Du Bois's financial mobility and the casualness with which he can survey "mosquitoes, jackasses, Negroes, mud water, soldiers, universal filth" (69). But for Du Bois writing in the last decade of his first century, the start of the Civil War and the limitations of black freedom in the black republic foreshadow the Reconstruction to come. From *Souls of Black Folk* to *Black Reconstruction in America* to *The Quest for the Silver Fleece* and *The Black Flame Trilogy*, Du Bois goes on to examine in great detail, and in varying written styles, the immediate failures and successes of the U.S. Civil War and how enslaved blacks and whites handled the challenge that "sudden" freedom posed on existing institutions and the inadequacy of the nation's "social regeneration efforts."

The institutional issues Du Bois outlines in "Of the Dawn of Freedom" in *Souls* (221) speaks to many of the same institutional issues that plagued the newly formed black nation of Haiti. These same issues would continue to reappear in newly formed black governments throughout the Pan African world in the twentieth century. Du Bois would leave the U.S. before the social freedoms he identified as both missing from and failing to accompany physical black freedom in the U.S. became a legal reality with the hard-won successes of the Civil Rights Movement. But the potential gains of the Civil Rights Movement was not a reality he trusted or believed possible in the U.S. This made leaving and becoming a citizen of the newly independent Ghana his last symbolic act of protest with international significance. Of the landmark Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) desegregation case he says, "I assumed that legal discrimination along the color line would last much longer than it may. It is to the credit of Spingarn and Marshall that they fought so valiantly and intelligently in the courts at a time

when I had little faith in substantial victory. Nevertheless the battle is not won. Unfortunately in the United States there is a long habit of ignoring and breaking the law" (*Autobiography* 392). Du Bois's assessment proved correct, yet this victory in the courts after much legal failure would return to and thus continue the unfinished work of black Reconstruction.

The struggles in the United States developed strategies for litigating freedom within a white nation as citizens denied due process and created a structure, for challenging racial captivity and racial exclusion. What U.S. blacks gained was not a geographical nation space but a political apparatus that each petition for freedom and each challenge to the existing law defining slaves as property lay the groundwork for. The enslaved knew, despite the atrocities committed against them as humans, the difference between "hogs," "horses," and "human flesh." Hartman says:

> The flesh, existence defined at its most elemental level, alone entitled one to liberty. The basic assertion of colored folks' entitlement to freedom implicitly called into question the rationales that legitimated the exclusion of blacks from the purview of universal rights and entitlements. As Moses and Windham [former slaves] were well aware, the discourse of humanism, at the very least, was double-edged since the life and liberty they held in esteem were racial entitlements formerly denied them. In short, the selective recognition of humanity that undergirded the relations of chattel slavery had not considered them men deserving of rights and freedom. Thus in taking up the language of humanism, they seized upon that which had been used against and denied them. (Hartman 5)

By fighting the power that allows one race or powerful group to find another race or group "undeserving of rights and freedom" U.S. blacks ensured that the freedom that freed black people, would free all people to become national subjects. Reversing Dred Scott v. Sanford and black non-person status, the Reconstruction amendments, the Fourteenth in particular, declared that the protections of the constitution applied to all citizens. The U.S. black

understanding of humanism gave the burgeoning black political apparatus the power of moral high ground. This black political apparatus created a way, over time, to fight oppression at home and in the world at large and they became synonymous with the moral fight for justice. Throughout the years, this political apparatus provided a gateway, an opening for possible black mobility in the U.S.—nationality notwithstanding. U.S. black potential and possibility, as it was fought for, transcended nationality even as it established a black cultural preference for its own U.S. black cultural place markers.

Taking U.S. black beliefs and cultural practices out into the world, Du Bois made the case that U.S. black were not apart but at the center of the integrated world that he imagined and set about writing into being. Contrary to what people thought about his Pan-African organizing or his Pan-Asian outreach efforts, Du Bois did not abandon U.S. blacks. He wanted to collect all the important markers of black success in the U.S. and in the diaspora in the Americas and weave them into one continuous narrative of black resistance to dehumanization to address the root causes of racism, classism, and imperialism. Two markers that showcase the complexity of black freedom in practice are U.S. black Reconstruction and post revolution Haiti. Early on, the idea and possibility of Haiti for Africans in captivity remains potent and relevant for blacks all over the Western Hemisphere and on continental Africa as well. That Haiti did not become a bastion of the freedom imagined during the long years of fighting was a loss for all blacks and especially for Haitians. Du Bois and other blacks wanting black freedom in the West that truly mirrored white freedom would have to be achieved through different avenues, different routes than the corporeal freedom that Haitians achieved at the turn of the nineteenth century. The potency of that symbolic freedom was short-lived when not able, for a

number of reasons, to transfer that freedom into viable institutions. Black Reconstruction, after a bloody Civil War and a bloody surrender was devoted to institution building and ensuring the political, social, and economic entry of freed blacks into the nation proper until it became financially and politically expedient. Black Reconstruction tells the story after achieving physical freedom and the difficult, less idealized process of integrating into an existing hostile system.

The only successful slave revolt resulting in the creation of a black nation, Haiti, did not have any political models, social structures already in place, or nations willing to support its growth and further the nation's significance in a world defined by black slave ownership. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot says in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), the events unfolding in colonial St. Domingue were unthinkable as they occurred and were quickly erased or suppressed after the enslaved achieved the impossible. The U.S. road to black freedom would prove more sustainable and reproducible despite the many who died or were tortured by white citizens and the nation's unwillingness to enforce its own laws to protect black citizens. Attempts to define their humanity and freedom in the white world or the white nation did not produce the desired and imagined results. Thus, I am not arguing for the construction of a black nation per se but black peoples' struggles at self-definition and what they did in these spaces of captivity that became home. As Du Bois own remembered foremother suggests, they had to find something to hold on to in these spaces of captivity and create possible spaces of belonging, though with a difference. Holding on to blackness in the form of remembered songs, stories, Vodou, Hodou, or Fuku proved vital to surviving whiteness and a belief in the self as human. These memories and the legacy they provide for black-identity formation in the diaspora all come from black women. Du Bois both embraces, as he must, but

also resists this female lineage. His ancestor's song is so important to him and yet there exists a thinly veiled resentment of a form that would lead to the creation of not just the spirituals but the blues, gospel, and jazz.

Du Bois was not, in the beginning nor did he ever become a supporter of ragtime, the blues, or jazz and yet in those mediums black people were telling each other things. More puzzling, these soundings of the folk followed the trajectory that Du Bois witnessed at work in the U.S. during his Tennessee days. They continue the legacy of sound that his great-great-grandmother left for his black American family. The sound of black southern people directed a large part of what became Du Bois's life and work. But that sound stayed locked in one unchanging form, the "sorrow songs" which also meant he stopped listening to his base as their soundings changed and grew to include other narrative traces of the black experience in the diaspora. In wanting, as Rampersad said, "a proper appreciation of, even reverence for, the African past" Du Bois came to rely completely on words, and his Harvard training in particular, to tell the stories of the black diaspora to others. *Entre nous*, he often failed to code switch into a mode of speaking and listening that enabled him to hear how black people told their stories to each other. And sometimes, as Fred Moten says of musician Charlie Lloyd's response to an interviewer, "Words don't go there. Is it only music, only sound, that goes there? Perhaps these notes and phrases will have mapped the terrain and traversed (at least some of) the space between here and there" (*In the Break* 42). With this understanding what we hear, what gets said or not, can lead to physical and spiritual transcendence.

Like Du Bois, each artist, intellectual, or cultural interpreter has to hear the soundings that will define his or her cultural, intellectual production. While listening to Ma Rainey sing the blues, August Wilson, who grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, heard in her voice a sound and a speaking about the U.S. black experience that would have him dedicate his writing life to charting each decade of the twentieth century. In Ma Rainey's soundings, she *told him something* that left him unable to return to his prior life. In turn, August Wilson *told black people something* about themselves in his plays, beginning with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and continuing with *Fences*, *Piano Lesson*, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* to name a few. Before Wilson, Lorraine Hansberry *told black people something* about themselves in *A Raisin in the Sun***.** To write *Raisin*, though, Langston Hughes' long poem "Harlem," and specifically the "Montage of a Dream Deferred" *told her something* about black people that then prompted her to *tell.* From Hughes' poem she takes her title for her groundbreaking play about a black Chicago family's intergenerational conflicts and responses to racism.

Years later, with "The Message," rap artists like Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five would also tell on a level that made black people listening feel they were being spoken to directly, despite the message's reliance on a white-distribution structure. What Wilson, Hansberry, Hughes, and the various rap groups tapped into was the sound and the memory attached to the sound looking for its unique expression. That sound memory "finding its speaking," as Ishmael Reed says in *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), for a generation in a different time and place acts in the same way that the song that Du Bois's foremother sang. All her descendants recognized the meaning of the sound and not necessarily the words. This shared level of deciphering and speaking *entre nous* enables black people, as individuals and

communities anchored in a shared history, to "grow ten feet taller" and to prepare for possible movement into other spaces. Both Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston operated on this level of telling, only Hurston more so. Though fully aware of the white reading audience, in certain texts Du Bois wrote as if the Veil, that separated him from whiteness, also altered the hearing and sounding of his words. Black listeners and readers heard one thing—if they wanted to—and whites another. In *Souls* and in "Credo" Du Bois told black people something of his own inner beliefs about black life. He also told white people a great deal about themselves. Unfortunately, the volume and intensity of his speaking and his insistence in engaging whiteness in certain ways diluted his soundings and the power of his speaking.

To a certain extent, Du Bois existed and worked in white people's language and thought and thus always wrestled with the possibility of being their creation. Unwilling to accept the language of the "lower frequencies" as a viable mode of effectiveness, Du Bois remained the professor. This stubborn adherence came from his resentment of black men "playing the clown,—crouching, grinning, assuming a broad dialect when he usually spoke good English" (*Darkwater* 64) and because he came to believe in his writing classes at Harvard "that solid content with [the accepted] literary style carries a message further than poor grammar and muddled syntax" (*Autobiography* 44). The staunch historian could not do what Hurston and Langston Hughes would do with black people's language. These two artists and cultural interpreters embraced how black people identified their own thought languages—the ones that Africans in the New World created to mediate between Western languages of violation, loss, and perpetual black outsiderness—and used them to speak themselves into being. The songs that Du Bois did hear, and held on to, in the hills of Tennessee are reminiscent of the songs

heard throughout the many literal and figurative hills that black people call home in the diaspora. Twenty-first-century black diaspora soundings call for a deliberately acknowledged weaving together of these diaspora linguistic traces. I want to weave in a particularly menacing and lament-filled Vodou song that identifies the act of getting caught in *Bizango,* [92] a powerful act of magic brought on by forgetting[93] or stumbling and losing one's way. The song describes one of the ways that traveling blacks can fall victim to Haitian secret societies. The song, like the songs that Du Bois uses to head the chapters in *Souls*, offers readers another message or reading about black people and their experiences in freedom. Du Bois makes the songs he uses more thought provoking by providing the music notes—yet another language that readers would have to be versed in or not treat as one more moment of unintelligibility. Such moments of intelligibility, as Du Bois would know, occurred in translation and in speaking a language that one does not have full command of and in black songs where the words in themselves have little meaning outside of the sound. The sound of the blues opened up a complex black world to August Wilson that led him to write about the importance of finding your song.

A song sung about those stolen by Joe Turner and the system he represents, though with a different tempo and beat, captures the same terror and lament found in the Haitian song warning of the secret society waiting to seize the bewildered black figure lost in the forest at night. This song brings to mind Du Bois's Bles and his harrowing night in the swamp from *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. Bles also hears a song—one that saves him from the harsher, secret forces of the swamp. But in the song that Wilson's play takes its title from, he depicts another debilitating black experience in freedom in the first decade of the twentieth century. The infamous boogeyman Joe Turner, and the boogeymen that the practitioners of *Bizango*

represent for Haitians, come to signify the psychological and physical perils of the decades after emancipation and how life did not change that dramatically (or materially) for many. Often "evil" forces were in place to control both black mobility and the efforts to improve their material condition. The experience of capture, imprisonment, in effect the re-enslavement recorded in song, reflects a community's compounded sense of loss, as well as the individual loss, and registers the unfree state of the black body in freedom.

Herald Loomis was plucked from his life and what was taken from him in seven years hard labor could not easily be returned. He struggles to find his place in the world and says to the wife he has searched for since his release, "Joe Turner let me loose and I felt all turned around inside. I just wanted to see your face to know that the world was still there. Make sure everything still in its place so I could reconnect myself together. I got there and you was gone, Martha" (*Joe Turner* 89). Martha, his estranged wife, had also been looking for him in order to find their daughter, the marker of her place in this world. The reunion scene that Wilson writes between Herald Loomis and Martha Loomis Pentecost (and the child caught in the middle) encapsulates the struggle of black men, women, and children to be with each other; to stay on the same road together in the U.S. and in the Americas as free black subjects. All the fears that freedom should have allayed, remained. The family members became lost to each other and in true Freudian fashion uncannily began retracing each other's steps and never quite meeting up to be on the same path at the same time. Bynum, the root-worker, brings the violently separated, accidentally-lost-now-found family together, they do so to hand the child over to the mother she now needs to be with. Martha, who had "to kill [her husband] in her heart," to become the saved and pious Christian, Martha Pentecost, in doing so also projected onto him

all her worldly fears. Despite her Christianity and his disavowal of Hodou, both needed an African-based spiritual practice to actualize their release from the devastating effects of their familiar, yet strange experiences in post enslavement.

I, W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Man, Not Zombie

Most blacks in the United States and in the Americas made their living doing service work and enduring either Jim Crow conditions or a two-tiered social system between dark-skinned blacks and light-skinned blacks of means in the Caribbean. In his one stint at waiting tables for white people, Du Bois made this observation of what happens between white patron and black server. He says:

> Our work was easy, but insipid. We stood about and watched overdressed people gorge. For the most part we were treated like furniture and were supposed to act the wooden part. I watched the waiters even more than the guests. I saw that it paid to amuse and to cringe. One particular black man set me crazy. He was intelligent and deft, but one day I caught sight of his face as he served a crowd of men; he was playing the clown,—crouching, grinning, assuming a broad dialect when he usually spoke good English—ah! It was a heartbreaking sight, and he made more money than any waiter in the dining-room. I did not mind the actual work or the kind of work, but it was the dishonesty and deception, the flattery and cajolery, the unnatural assumption that worker and diner had no common humanity. It was *uncanny*. It was inherently and fundamentally wrong. . . . Then and there I disowned menial work for me and my people. (*Darkwater* 64-65; italics mine)

One of his moments of revulsion and horror at seeing a man he knew to be "intelligent and deft" suddenly appeared as a hunched-over "grinning clown" left him "crazed." The first horror he experienced in serving white men, Du Bois experienced and observed the horror of being treated like an inanimate object expected not to react in a normal human fashion. The waiters were responsible for making sure the men "gorging" remained undisturbed by not making

direct eye contact; by not forcing human recognition. The one who went out of his way to give the white men Jacques Derrida's "differance" succeeded in making the most money. As Du Bois observed, "[black] worker and [white] diner had no common humanity" and this for him becomes the example of the "uncanny." Here then, it is Du Bois, and the other waiters who are unhomed or made to experience the "unhomely" of Sigmund Freud's *unheimlich*. Fluent in German, Du Bois, by his own admission, came to Freud a little late. He remarked in his autobiographical writing that if he had come to Freud sooner, he would have known that the gathering and presenting of studies on black people and history alone, would not be enough to shift white thinking about black people.

The experience of the *uncanny* may have been the closest Du Bois came to understanding the African need for Vodou, Hodou, Obeah, or Juju. Theorists usually focus on the inanimate object or robot to demonstrate the *uncanny*, for example the disconcertingly familiar yet strange quality found in roboticist Masahiro Mori's "Uncanny Valley Graph." Black people, in particular, have enslavement: the process by which humans turn other human into "a hog," "a horse," or a cow. Du Bois's revulsion comes from not just seeing "a deft intelligent" black man transformed by feeding whites, the real horror comes in having to reconcile the recognition of that reduced figure with himself—also an intelligent, well-spoken black man. Laënnec Hurbon says in *Voodoo: Search for the Spirit* (1995), "The most dreaded form of sorcery is the practice of creating zombies. Already 'dead' and buried, the zombie is reawakened to serve as a slave on a plantation" (61). In Masahiro Mori's "Uncanny Valley Graph," the zombie has the lowest revulsion quotient even though non-Haitians dispute the existence of zombies. Laennec goes on to say, "The living-dead zombies are said to be conscious but deprived of will. . . . The voodoo

follower [and apparently non-practitioners] holds 'zombification' to be the supreme punishment, as it reduces the individual to a slave—precisely the condition against which voodoo developed" (62). Hence, Du Bois's education and that of his fellow mates would do little to protect him and his people from such a violation of spirit and will.

What he does in the face of such a cognitive dissonance is to reject service work, servitude—"I disowned menial work for me and my people." The impossibility of his assertion proves just as disconcerting to readers who know the long history of black women and men in service as Du Bois witnessing and listening to his doppelganger. Du Bois does not read the young man's performance as performance or as an example of "putting on ole massa." In fear of being reduced into a piece of "furniture," a "menial" with no individual will, Du Bois dedicated himself to perfect diction, meticulous dress, and cultivated an air of rigid professionalism. He could observe double consciousness but not practice it. Contained in his "island within" and controlling where he went and his "desire" to be where he was not wanted (*Autobiography* 137), Du Bois says, "I was . . . exceptional in my ideas on voluntary race segregation; that for the most part saw salvation only in integration at the earliest moment and on almost any terms in white culture; I was firm in my criticism of white folk and in my dream of a Negro self-sufficient culture even in America" (*Autobiography* 136). His fears of the *uncanny*, the grinning face and its broken dialect that haunts him, drives his need for protection and kept him, until his trial accusing him of failing to register as a foreign agent in 1951, from getting caught in white people's *Bizango* trap.

The *Bizango* song sung in Haitian Creole is important because in part it deals with searching and forgetting. The line that strikes a chord with Du Bois, the folk, and Post Civil Right era is about getting further ahead and realizing once you have gotten there, that you forgot something but cannot remember what. By the end of his long career, Du Bois lost a large segment of the U.S. black population. Du Bois does not try to retrace his steps but keeps going further out until he gives himself over to a black nation, Ghana. The figure, in August Wilson's play, Herald Loomis, retraces his steps trying to remember and reclaim what enslavement destroyed or contested gets caught in the chain-gang *Bizango* of Joe Turner. The section of the song that focuses on how a soul-stealing, body-snatching sect works, it says they wait for the victim to lose something, to mis-remember, forget to be vigilant, or try to recapture what was lost and strike during the frenzy of attempted recovery. Being disturbed by the sense of something important being mis-allayed, she/he gets caught while searching in the woods, in swamps, in inner cities, rural dirt road towns. They also find themselves trapped in traditionally white-identified spaces repeating or retracing their steps (in, for instance, Ph.D. programs). But even in sung capture, the fury of the drums and the force of the voices singing the call, "Yes, they really caught me" to the response, "I got caught in *Bizango*." And it repeats and thus the shouting, singing, drumming, and dancing works its own release. Fred Moten says about black soundings such as the one I described:

> Here lies universality: in this break, this cut, this rupture. Song cutting speech. Scream cutting song. Frenzy cutting scream with silence, movement, gesture. The West is an insane asylum, a conscious and premeditated receptacle of black magic. Every disappearance is a recording. That's what resurrection is. Insurrection. Scat black magic, but to scat or scatter is not to admit formlessness. The aftersound is more than a bridge. It ruptures interpretation even as the trauma it records disappears. Amplification of a rapt countenance, stressed

> portraiture. No need to dismiss the sound that emerges from the mouth as the mark of separation. It was always the whole body that emitted sound: instrument and fingers, bend. Your ass is in what you sing. Dedicated to the movement of hips, dedicated by that movement, the harmolodically rhythmic body. (39-40)

These various soundings transferred the language of captivity into one that could encompass black freedom—white freedom reworked and re-voiced as black sounds, black speaking, and black body movements that challenged a white aesthetic dependent on black erasure and black dehumanization. Du Bois remained woefully out of step with this type of black recuperation of human flesh.

The soundings of black peoples throughout the Americas assure the continued tonal presence of blackness in whiteness even as the black body seems to be the only one that cannot be officially absorbed into whiteness. The darkest black person remains forever connected to the whitest black. This meant, for Du Bois, that black freedom continued to come up short in combating the raw displays of white power and the execution of that power on out-of-place black bodies. The extent of black outsiderness continues to catch many black people off guard leaving them ripe for being snatched and put into dominant culture's agenda and their own. Du Bois wrestled with a particular type of understanding of whiteness and the shadow that white institutions cast on any (and all definitions) of black freedom. This shadow of difference he resented and chafed under. Freedom, as Du Bois imagined it, would always be the aesthetic (provenance) and practical and economic domain of whites if blacks did not create their own institutions. Du Bois wanted and fought for this type of aesthetic freedom, the promise of its mobility, and the deference he believed it paid to ability and talent. In his

understanding, his blackness should not have kept him from enjoying the dress and manner of a European-educated man of letters. There was a distinct white or black way to dress, talk, and be addressed as a man specifically with his educational background. For Du Bois, ability and achievement should determine one's level of access. Going to the right schools, getting the *right* kind of training mattered and thus the individual pedigree coupled with familial pedigree—when that information was available—mattered. As a credentialed black intellectual, he positioned himself, along with other such black-identified folk, to represent the race and their potential to whites. Rampersad quotes Du Bois saying, "'It is then high time that the Negro agitator should be in the land.' Du Bois acknowledged that 'it is not a pleasant role to play,' but 'nevertheless it is the highest optimism to bring forward the dark side of any human picture'" (*Art and Imagination* 97). This constituted the arc of Du Bois's response to the *Bizango* that whites practiced.

Du Bois did his considerable best to overwhelm racists and the racism of white institutional spaces with knowledge, with information, and thus using the tools of his training for what they were never quite intended: to speak of and about black, African-descended people as a people affecting history, place, circumstance, and time. Yet, within this construction of black humanity, he emphasized the extraordinary conditions that altered Africa's and the African's natural historical growth that created the diaspora of which he was a part. Despite Du Bois's training, his high use of the tools of his trade, his degrees from Harvard and his work with the premiere thinker of the period in Germany, Max Weber, Du Bois found his in-credibility impossible to accept. He needed the joins and the breaks that black language usage created to negotiate black in-credibility in the Americas. Part of Du Bois's refusal came from having to live

with and compensate for his black in-credibility despite his genius and his ability. The more Du Bois spoke "bluntly," like a man, the more in-credible he became. His quick temper and prickly rage made him in-credible even to other blacks especially since he did not speak in the idioms common to the folk. He was not comfortable using those sounds and their recuperative effects.

There is a little Du Boisian conflict within all black people who cross over and gain access to whiteness: the refined sensibilities, the desire to live in well-appointed neighborhoods with the city or town services reserved for those in the higher tax bracket, and to not have to explain anything to anyone. To get from a working-poor black community to the Ivory Tower or to continue on a trajectory where, like Du Bois, few of his kind existed made him acutely aware of being outside of the inside world of Great Barrington and later the rarefied world of Harvard. The constant narrowing of his world required several reassessments of what it meant to be black and connected to a black majority in a racially-stratified society. With his outsider's gaze of the inside, Du Bois observed and reacted to the ways black people were first denied access and then given no real chance of belonging once inside traditionally white spaces. Fighting for ways to read the effects of race, class, and gender on blacks in the U.S. often left Du Bois figuratively and literally alone in his vision of what the battle entailed and how to fight it. Not connected intrinsically in the ways that mattered to most blacks to a specific locale or place, left Du Bois open to Pan Africanism, to the black diaspora as a real geographical space of political strength, and to fighting white *Bizango* traps, though he would not call it that. Though born and raised in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Du Bois's people's connection to this space did not have the magic and mystery of Hurston's Eatonville. Du Bois never learned how to engage in black social mores that to outsiders may have come across as clannish and provincial. The trick

was to move within whiteness, as all black people must figure out how to do, in the New World and in the United States, without the pathology. Du Bois wanted certain things from white America and felt entitled to them. The urbane Du Bois was forced to confront the stark reality of black urban life. Du Bois would not have claimed to want "the money and the cars, the cars and the clothes" but he shares the yearning contained in many rap hooks. What he had his fictional Zora call white people's "dead things" in *The Quest* he understood as placeholders for national acceptance and arrival into the American Dream. For the urban, not urbane, black youth, money, cars, and clothes symbolize the national yearning for access and for the rich lifestyles represented all around them. These symbols of arrival and the credibility they bestow are not that different from Du Bois's attempts to enter into the historical society, "Sons of the Revolution," based on a great-grandfather's conscription into the American war of Independence or his desire for appointments to prestigious colleges based on his contributions to academia. Without access into the nation proper, Du Bois turned further and further away from integration. "During the years of the Great Depression, Du Bois came to believe that the only hope 'lay in the use of self-segregation against the fact of imposed segregation'" (Kirschke 223). As evidenced by *The Quest*, Du Bois had been seriously considering the limits and strengths of integration for all black people since 1911. By the start of the Civil Rights Movement, the U.S. black world had moved on without him. Mark A. Sanders writes, in the afterward of the Oxford edition of *The Black Flame Trilogy*, that, by the time Du Bois starts the *Trilogy*, the historical novel and its message of social change, much like the protagonist, Mansart, is out of date, out of place, out of step with the changing times. Sanders says:

> Finally just as Du Bois was at odds with virtually all the literary trends of the fifties, so too he stood at a distance from one of its defining social movements: civil rights. He regarded the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision with skepticism, doubting the efficacy of sending black children to white schools and instead emphasizing the need for greater resources in black schools. So, too, the Montgomery bus boycott was 'something of a puzzle.' While he entertained the possibility that Martin Luther King Jr. was a latter-day Gandhi, in the end Du Bois found the civil rights movement insufficient because its lack of a material critique or economic agenda; in short, integration into a bankrupt economic system was misguided at best. In a larger sense, Cold War culture, mainstream literary tastes, the new African American literary paradigm, the budding civil rights movement—the zeitgeist, in effect—had no room for Du Bois and [the historical sweep of] his ideas. At best he was an anachronism, at worst a real threat. (245-246)

What Du Bois wanted most and felt certain he would never get was "true human fellowship" or recognition of what he believed could not be contested: his humanity and his right to be treated accordingly.

As an intellectual who prided himself on his abilities and enjoyment of the finer things in life, the idea of racism, as practiced against him and his people was beneath the rational, educated sensibilities he placed his hopes on. With the master's tools, Du Bois tried to dismantle the master's house only to leave almost no way into idiomatic blackness outside of white speak. In other words, Du Bois remained alien and out of step with the black majority he championed. The fellowship he desired was recognition of himself and his race as being on par with the best that the Western world offered. This desire and his tireless quest against the *uncanny* as he experienced it offered Du Bois no true "other place" in the U.S. for him to reconcile what whiteness as an ideology did physically and psychically to black people's blackness. Du Bois would have had to turn to the "old ways," some half remembered yet still effective practices to negotiate the psychic onslaught of the *uncanny* power of all whites to dehumanize any and all

blacks no matter their social, political, or economic standing. In the black spaces black people carved out for themselves, with the dangers of psychic annihilation all around them, they retained their humanity, their songs, their laughter and their bittersweet yet effective ways of countering *Bizango*. Zora Neale Hurston devoted her most salient work to negating the *uncanny* and deploying her black style for maximum effect. Her blacks experienced difficult times without the race pathos and overt castigation of white people and whiteness. History indeed was personal, as generations of activists would claim in the first of several revivals, the personal was political. Women's lives and how they lived them belonged in the political discussions and in the larger understanding of race work

Chapter Three:

"De Inside Meanin' of Words": Zora Neale Hurston on Reading, Writing, and Speaking in Black and White[94]

You see the negro is not living his lore to the extent of the Indian. He is not on a reservation, being kept pure. His negroness is being rubbed off by close contact with white culture. Zora Neale Hurston

The only way the African artist could be in this world, that is the New World, was to give voice to the spilt i-mage of voiced silence. M. Nourbese Philip

The History of Afro-American fiction, along with poetry, has represented a tension between oral and literary forms. Gayl Jones

Turning from Du Bois and his inability to fully mix and mingle with "the Negro lowest down," chapter three examines what Zora Neale Hurston became known for: her attempt to render the speech patterns that came to signify black folk in the U.S. in writing that captured its full historical, psychological, and human complexity. I explore Hurston's role in advancing and adding significantly to the black literary tradition by engaging in literary tellings that I say do not tell on black people per se. She does not expose them for the sake of white consumption—solely. More accurately, Hurston does not perform the expected autobiographical poses that traditionally appealed for white sympathy or describe sordid scenes of violation at the hands of white captors. In *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, Baker says, "[Booker T.] Washington strikes a 'straight lick with a crooked stick'. He turns minstrel nonsense into what he believes is

the only available good sense, or, sense intended for a common black good" (Baker 32). Hurston respected Washington as a fellow Southerner and she spent the rest of her life "strik[ing] a 'straight lick with a crooked stick'" though with a difference. Her difference is what led white theorists, like Barbara Johnson, to take a critical look at her life and work. What Johnson took on as "a white deconstructor . . . reading Hurston" was her black in-credibility as a subject (172). Johnson attempted to interrogate the minstrel mask and the inside/outside, black/white binaries it signifies—if not to get beyond the mask then to deconstruct part of its workings. Unlike Johnson, Hurston's life and livelihood depended on skillfully negotiating the "conflicting . . . structures of address into which [she] was inserting [herself]" (172). As an artist, Hurston's challenge lay in her use of the inherited minstrel mask and making her authentic black sounds come through the then expected forms of black speaking and writing. She tells mainly intraracial stories that whites are privy to but speak to black people about their experiences with each other while hemmed in by whiteness.

This chapter provides a theoretical analysis of the narrative frame that black people in the U.S. use to speak to each other as people with a shared history of enslavement and as individuals who still operate outside of the institutional spaces that define U.S power and culture. I consider the spaces black people created for themselves within "the breaks"—the unaccounted-for gaps and elisions within the official history, culture, and power structure of the U.S. In addition to Fred Moten's use of "the break," as a way of reading black cultural production, I also use Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s definition of the break. In *Black Studies: Rap and the Academy* (1993), Baker quotes early Hip-Hop artist Jazzy Jay's definition of the "break" in this way:

> We'd find these beats, these heavy percussive beats, that would drive the hip hop people on the dance floor to breakdance. A lot of times it would be a two-second spot, a drum beat, a drum break, and we'd mix that back and forth, extend it, make it 20 minutes long. If you weren't in the hip hop industry or around it, you wouldn't ever have heard a lot of these records. (87-88)

With this description of the "break," Jazzy Jay identifies the elusive nature of *entre nous* gatherings and echoes Fred Moten's theoretical use of "the break." Though Moten primarily focused on jazz, the creative process, relying on a response from the people, is similar. This moment in black cultural production, that has since past, established a connection with the earliest makers of black sounds and soundings that also grew out of what many perceived of as "nonsense." Getting the bodies "on the dance floor" countered the violence and degradation that regularly assaulted those living in the Bronx and in other parts of New York City in the early days of Hip Hop. The extended beat recalls the blues wail and moan and the primal scene signified by Aunt Hester's screams. The recalibration of a "two-second spot" into "20 minutes" came in response to the war zone areas many black and Latino youth found themselves living in. These types of soundings that occur in between or on the margins of the mainstream channels of expression, speak to New World Africanness and blackness as alien, as other, and still "searching for its *speaking*" like Ishmael Reed's contagion "Jes Grew."[95] With their innovative use of "the drum break" and repurposing of public spaces left to urban blight, early Hip Hop originators did for forgotten segments of the black population, in New York City, what Zora Neale Hurston did for Harlem in the winter of 1925. Hurston reworked the narrative breaks identifiable to the "negro lowest down" to present her understanding of the black world in the U.S. to a white readership on her terms. In her writing, she succeeded in separating the nuances of black people's linguistic reality from what dominant culture diminished and

disdained about black language use. Furthermore, Hurston did not feel like she needed to explain her tactics to other black people.

Hurston made the case for retaining the words, gestures, and intonations developed during the crucible of enslavement to speak black self-consciousness into being. In *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays,* (1997), M. Nourbese Philip says, "Africans in the New World were compelled to enter another consciousness, that of their masters, while simultaneously being excluded from their own, while similar prohibitions extended to music at various times, language was one of the most important sites of struggle between the Old and New Worlds" (46). Though she writes at a different point from the earliest black writers, what Hurston tells and how she tells her stories within the "breaks" of the black autobiographical tradition does not shock or shame white readers into forced recognition of black humanity and white inhumanity. Hurston makes no pleas, socially or politically, to the collective white conscience, instead she continues the struggle that Philip describes as "Africans [in the New World] attempting to leave their impress on the [European] language. That language now bears the living linguistic legacy of a people trying and succeeding in giving voice to their experience in the best and sometimes only way possible" (49). Hurston extends the moment of telling in the patois of the South to include the desires of insecure black men dreaming of becoming an individual "big voice," young black women's and older black women's opposing views on what constitutes stability and protection in white (and black) spaces (*Their Eyes*), and black preachers with moral failings trying to lead a people and a congregation (*Jonah's Gourd Vine*, 1934). All these individual and group struggles occur within the U.S.'s Jim Crow reality and the larger reality of black people's struggle for meaning and purpose in spite of ongoing racial terror in

and around their home spaces. Instead of didactic tomes that reproduced sociological studies or critiques of the functioning of society at large, Hurston chose to honor "the living linguistic legacy of" black people (Philip 49). Operating with her own and the black majority's humanity as a given, she created a unique literary voice similar to yet distinct from her public persona.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says:

> Hurston's very rhetorical strategy, her invention of what I have chosen to call the speakerly text, seems designed to mediate between . . . a profoundly lyrical, densely metaphorical, quasi-musical, privileged black oral tradition on the one hand, and a received but not yet fully appropriated standard English literary tradition on the other hand. The quandary for the writer was to find a third term, a bold and novel signifier, informed by these two related yet distinct literary languages. This is what Hurston tried to do in *Their Eyes*. (Gates 174)

I would also argue that black in-credibility in the West, like the veil and double consciousness, enabled Hurston to speak and write from an altogether different vantage point. "The quandary" that Gates identified largely existed for black writers, not for white publishers. The search for the third way, between "What White Publishers [Will] Print" and the story black writers want to tell, is at the core of most black cultural production in the black Atlantic.[96]

The sounds and soundings of black people were heard differently and acted upon differently depending on the particulars of their circumstances. Hurston was not ashamed of those circumstances—at least not in the way that other blacks, vying for a specific type of white acceptance, were. She did not feel the need to argue for a complexity already inherent in black ways of speaking and sounding developed through terror refigured. Unapologetically black and southern Zora Neale Hurston, a generation removed from Du Bois, represented the different responses to the meaning of the sounds and soundings of blacks in the U.S. and later in the

diaspora as she made her way to the Bahamas, Jamaica, Haiti, and parts of Latin America. She heard in those sounds an individualism that did not conflict with black group identification and left room for her exploration of gender differences.

Hurston's insistence on black's interiority, what they should keep for themselves sets her apart from Du Bois, and the world that he envisioned black people sharing without restrictions and certainly without the effects of the "color line." His Universalist appeals enabled black diaspora scholars to embrace him while neglecting Hurston's pioneering work in the black diaspora in the Americas. In *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), Hurston writes:

> Dey [white folks] knows too much 'bout us as it is, but dey some things dey ain't tuh know. Dey's some strings on our harp fuh us tuh play on an sing all tuh ourselves. Dey thinks wese all ignorant as it is, and dey thinks wese all alike, and dat they knows us inside out, but you know better. . . . De only difference dey makes is 'tween uh nigger dat works hard and don't sass 'em, and one dat don't. De hard worker is uh good nigger. De loafer is bad. Otherwise wese all de same. (169)

Hurston managed white expectations and shortcomings, where white people were concerned, better than Du Bois who sometimes betrayed a desire for an acceptance that eluded him. A large part of the black consciousness that Hurston formulated turned on the understanding that white people saw no differences or, rather, the differences they valued did not serve black people's needs. Even with their interior differences, both of these early black diaspora theorists believed that the U.S. black experience was expansive enough to include the black diaspora. Their approaches to black consciousness depended in part on what they heard and what they remembered hearing. Du Bois, in particular, went on to transcribe re-membered black

soundings into what he considered viable research-based theories for understanding a race, a people within a national framework while Hurston concentrated on the stories, beliefs, and practices that made a people, a people to themselves.

These studies of blackness and black people existed alongside the vexing need to continue performing blackness and deploying those performances without over telling and keeping expectations of being accepted fully into white society down to a minimum. What did it mean for a black person to want entry into white society and culture during the turn into the twentieth century; during the Harlem Renaissance? What does entry into white ideological spaces mean in a post Civil Rights era culminating in the election of a black president? Where words fail, the raw stripped down wail of the blues take over. How black individuals deal with their positioning in the black Atlantic and how they "ride the rhythm" of that history determines how they will go out into the world and experience it.[97] Since Hurston believed that there were "some things [whites folks] ain't tuh know," she reserved her most intimate self, the self-awareness of herself as a self, regardless of white people's power, for her "kissing friends." In the twenty-first century, and in the age of Barack Obama, this notion seems antiquated. *Entre nous* black-speaking spaces became harder to maintain and justify with the access gained in the Post Civil Rights era. It also became harder, in many instances, to convince younger generations and some of their striving elders of the importance of having such spaces. Denying or negating the importance and power of *entre nous* black spaces required the rhetorical strategy of *unspeaking* blackness, in the ways that politicians say they mis-spoke, in order to deny or downplay racism and racial differences. The resistance to black in-credibility as subjects, *still*, at times leads black people to unspeak each other's racial vulnerability and to

deny the need for the double-voice minstrel mask while in certain white spaces or while employed in traditionally white positions.

In many ways Du Bois and Hurston represent the contradictions of speaking for or speaking with, or speaking in ways that negate the black majority. They also highlight the fact that there are privileges to be gained by adopting and adapting to the speaking positions that do not serve as a "common black good" (Baker 32). Where does the black majority, then and now, fit in the plans of striving blacks? What were those who *made it* suppose to do with the vast numbers of blacks who did not, could not—for a number of reasons—*make it* in or to white mainstream society as potential players? Du Bois and the other social scientists that followed him in examining black life in certain urban cities or in some rural counties, like E. Franklin Frazier or John Hope Franklin, believed that the middle class model represented the only viable model for success in the U.S. Both Hurston and Du Bois would have agreed that without sustainable ethnic enclaves similar to the ones that exist for ethnic whites, where else can poor blacks go that is not a New York City project, Chicago's Cabrini Green, or South Central LA?[98] In these northern and western urban spaces, often suffering from economic blight on the one hand and gentrification on the other, blacks do not have family-owned businesses to fall back on—except, to a certain extent, in the South, in places like Eatonville. Coming from this latter space determined how Hurston located herself in blackness and in *entre nous*, between us, black speak. From Hurston's own use of black sounds and soundings she developed a complex system of "gaming 'em." Hurston's inside/outside dichotomy continues to frame and to haunt black/white speaking and writing exchanges in the U.S. Hurston herself seemed to privilege a black inside speaking world even though that world was heavily framed and

encroached upon by whites and their aesthetic. By the time Hurston fell into obscurity, many of the black people in her inside world, like Langston Hughes, were no longer in touch. Yet Eatonville, where she returned to escape New York, remained an interior black space that gave her peace (in one way) but very little financial stability. Her return was less triumphant than the one Du Bois imagines for his fictional Zora, the black girl of the Alabama swamp.

Hurston had the perceptiveness of Du Bois's fictional Zora in *The Quest*, but here the comparisons end. Du Bois's character fulfilled his desires for properly directing black women's power to the work of racial uplift and demonstrating the heterosexual union best suited for such work. Like the fictional Zora, Hurston also had "to take care of [herself] and see things" herself and not for a man (Du Bois 35). What does it mean "to have to see [or know] things for" yourself as a poor black woman negotiating white spaces without anyone or anything to fall back on? To garner the difficult success of her early years, Hurston became "a figure in disguise and [after her death] a trope for the indeterminate" (Cronin 18).[99] I would add that the "disguise" and "indeterminacy" represents her use of Baker's "minstrel mask" and her reworking her in-credibility as a speaking, writing subject. For young black women and men discovering Hurston today, she poses this dilemma: is there still a need for "disguise" and "indeterminacy" in spaces; positions formerly designated as "whites only" and if so, will they know the difference between "slipping the joke to slip the yoke" and negating the racism experienced by the group in order to continue participating? Hurston lived Du Bois's twoness in ways that many in the age of Obama refuse and resist just as the figure named to signify this epoch of racial crossing-over refuses and resists the performances expected and demanded of him as a black man—despite his title, president of the free world. Hurston easily separated the

black “sound and soundings” of the “minstrel mask” that whites desired from what black people sounded like with each other. The twoness, the double voice, “de inside meanin’ of words” might be lost on the dominant culture, but those blacks schooled in this way of speaking and not speaking knew to listen for the “inside meanin’.” Hurston understood this as a strategy that black people could not do without during her lifetime. Unlike Du Bois, she did not wrestle as visibly or volubly with black in-credibility. *Entre nous* black spaces, which she frequented, often filled the gaps and erasures.

The kind of access into “whites only” spaces that Du Bois desired, Hurston reasoned away because her body would always signify as black, as other. She knew how and why black people remained silent, “told lies,” or used the minstrel mask. Even as Du Bois understood the rationale for such practices, he resented a strategy based on “deception and lying” (Du Bois 347). Du Bois says in *Souls*:

> Today the young Negro of the South who would succeed cannot be frank and outspoken, honest and self-assertive, but rather he is daily tempted to be silen[t] and wary, politic and sly; he must flatter and be pleasant, endure petty insults with a smile, shut his eyes to wrong; in too many cases he sees positive personal advantage in deception and lying. His real thoughts, his real aspirations, must be guarded in whispers; he must not criticise, he must not complain. . . . With this sacrifice there is an economic opening, and perhaps peace and some prosperity. Without this there is riot, migration, or crime. Nor is this situation peculiar to the Southern United States, is it not rather the only method by which underdeveloped races have gained the right to share in modern culture? The price of culture is a Lie. (347-348)

Hurston mastered telling “lies” and keeping her “real thoughts” “guarded.” If she felt less than a fully realized human being because of these strategies, she rarely let on. Hurston’s poverty and her lack of access left her with few options for challenging a racist system head-on. As far as she was concerned, the spaces she needed to access for her financial and artistic well-being

required of her a series of lies predicated on other lies. Thus Hurston, a Southerner, would not be shocked by the realization that the "The price of culture is a Lie." Northern blacks, as Du Bois knew had greater freedom of movement and the illusion of more power. He says in *Souls*:

> On the other hand, in the North is the tendency to emphasize the radicalism of the Negro. . . . What wonder that every tendency is to excess,—radical complaint, radical remedies, bitter denunciations or angry silence. Some sink, some rise. . . . [T]he better classes segregate themselves from the group-life of both white and black, and from an aristocracy, cultured but pessimistic, whose bitter criticism stings while it points out no way of escape. They despise the submission of the Southern Negroes, but offer no other means by which a poor and oppressed minority can exist side by side with its masters. . . . Between the two extreme types of ethical attitude which I have thus sought to make clear wavers the mass of the millions of Negroes, North and South . . . (348)

Du Bois returns to these themes in *The Quest for the Golden Fleece*. In his first novel, he makes his dark-skinned male hero a recent Georgia (and Alabama) transplant to Washington, D.C., politics, Blessed Alwyn, the one who cannot stomach deceit or the striving of northern blacks.

Bles says to the D.C. insider, Carrie Wynn, "[I]f the time spent cajoling fools [racist white people] were used in convincing the honest and upright, think how much we [black people] would gain" (Du Bois 242). To which Carrie, the Northerner, says, "Very little. The honest and upright are a sad minority [when it comes to justice and equality for black people]" (242). The two works cited written by Du Bois demonstrate the way traits attributed to the South and the North change easily; reverse to set up a different dynamic. The bitter strivers in *Souls* and in *The Quest* calculatingly use deception and cajolery for personal gain, for political appointments at the expense of the black majority. Du Bois could not reconcile himself to the sounds of the performance that blacks needed to give to access "culture" and the modernity that whites represented. He knew the double-bind in which black speaking and writing developed and

continued to shape black/white encounters but could not accept it or believe it. Nor was Du Bois willing to hear fully the responses of the masses caught between southern and northern strivers. Giving in completely to the belief that "The price of culture is a Lie" or that modernity itself is predicated on "lies" meant total defeat. Hurston kept that knowledge for white people and for black people wanting and needing access to the modern world. Without *entre nous* spaces, it becomes harder to process this knowledge and to re-member why the work of addressing multiple audiences at once was important to black survival.

The black humanity that existed in the gaps and silences; in what Philip defines as the "leavings of [a] language" of brutality was turned into both art and a way of speaking black humanity credibly (50). Her characters were everyday black people aware of their status in the wider (white) world but also very much consumed by the vagaries of black life. By not shying away from black dialect or country settings that came to signify certain aspects of the black experience, Hurston told stories that broke away from demeaning black portrayals that black dialect often signaled. She created for readers a black interiority with several layers and granted her black figures an intimacy few outsiders of that time cared to imagine about blacks. Thus, within the familiar stereotype of unintelligible black sounds and soundings, Hurston allowed whites to hear/read about aspects of black life usually hidden. Far from pandering to white stereotypes of black speaking and writing, Hurston's mediation between two languages to create a third term, as Gates said in *Signifying Monkey*, broke new ground. Her reworking of the literary ground for black speaking and writing did what Gloria Naylor's fictional Sapphira Wade did for the Gullah Island of Willow Spring in *Mama Day* when she says, "It ain't about right or wrong, truth or lies; it's about a slave woman who brought a whole new meaning to both them

words, soon as you cross over here from beyond the bridge" (3). It is the "meaning" that Africans in the black diaspora in the Americas brought to the European words that continues to matter. Because this meaning-making matters to black-interior survival, the demand and preference for unspeaking racism or denying the continuing struggle with black in-credibility as writing and speaking subjects, especially *entre nous*, poses a great challenge to blacks in the post Civil Rights era.

Without an anchoring in black norms that are not vilified, and without a sense of rootedness within what constitutes blackness, blacks in the diaspora, young and old, can lose themselves and "the way" in white narratives of national belonging that began and often continue to depend on black exclusionary practices. These white narratives that, by and large, form the default narrative of the Americas, depict blacks, if at all, through the nonsense sounds of their own creation. Black people's own sounds and soundings compete with those sounds ascribed to it by the dominant culture and because black speakers and writers have to negotiate those sounds, the nonsense can become the real. This danger highlights "the many ways in which the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production" (Trouillot xix).[100] For those still without full unfettered access to the formal production of history and power, they become experts in "look[ing] for historical interpretation on the fringes of academia when not altogether outside it" (Trouillot 21). For Hurston the chance to study and collect black folklore, the dictate she received to study blacks by Franz Boas, was no imposition or burden and caused no resentment. The "historical" and academic "fringe" suited her.

Today, those with conflicting emotions about the black masses, and about being relegated to the study of blacks "on the fringes of academia," may respond differently. For instance, rejecting most *entre nous* overtures is one way to deal with the dominant white gaze and rebuff Du Bois's twoness and Hurston's inside/outside configuration in *Their Eyes*. Denying what cannot be spoken directly, or what different sounds and gestures stand for, alters black meaning-making and negates the ways of speaking to be gleaned from a collectively understood twoness and the things blacks have to see and know about this country and about being in the black Atlantic. "Outside on the fringes," black soundings created by and for the marginalized, like Hip Hop or Hurston's literary response to the demands of the minstrel mask, needed to work doubly to maintain a meaningful connection to black art forms that can easily be appropriated or reduced. To the Drama Club at North Carolina College for Negroes, Hurston told her students, "We are going to have to struggle against people who think if we don't do anything highbrow we haven't accomplished anything" (Boyd 327). This type of accusation would follow Hurston throughout her career. Forever the trickster, her death in obscure poverty with her back to much of the Civil Rights Movement, allowed Hurston to have the last laugh in her rebirth in the late twentieth century. But it would be a complicated; tiered laugh with multiple meanings. As she writes in *Mules and Men*, "The brother [or sister] in black puts a laugh to every vacant place in his mind. His laugh has a hundred meanings. It may mean amusement, anger, grief, bewilderment, chagrin, curiosity, simple pleasure or any of the known or undefined emotions" (Hurston 62).[101] For the descendants of the enslaved laughter, like the other sounds that the body produced under duress, also needed to be decoded and read in the context of mediating loss and terror. "[A]laugh with no humor in it" briefly counters black

vulnerability and masks the feelings of powerlessness against the whims of a racist society (Jones 55).

The inability of many whites to admit to their visceral discomfort with un-policed blackness and the black people's inability to believe that blackness can cost an individual, a people, human recognition remains unspeakable.[102] Both whites and blacks in white-identified spaces were left to unspeak or negate the full extent of the ongoing racism in order to maintain the Civil Rights gains that made speaking about a post Civil Rights era possible.[103] This unspeaking or negating of racism denies any credible space for Toni Morrison's "unspeakable things unspoken" and most other diasporic theoretical attempts to give sound or words to what Caribbean writer M. Nourbese Philip calls "voiced silence"—a concept I will return to later. Hurston did not negate blackness or the harshness of black lives by telling the stories she did. She attended to her white audience, as she had to, but also showcased the southern dialect as a language black people used to speak to each other despite the entertainment value dominant culture derived from blacks speaking. The dominant culture's investment in blacks not speaking English but one whites invented did not supersede Hurston's investment in the literary value of black folk speech. Because of her solid footing in a southern black culture, she "could [choose what] not to reveal" in alternating "fluent" passages" and in dialect that strained the eye.

Whether telling the story of fallen reverend, John Pearson, in *Jonah's Gourd Vine* or Janie Crawford Killicks Starks Woods in *Their Eyes*, the writing of the spoken words keeps the difference, "the leavings of a language" of abuse and power intact. Hurston revealed what she wanted and what worked best for her purposes. Hurston allowed for a certain amount of black

unintelligibility in speaking and writing, much like what happens when going from one language to another. Unlike Michelle Cliff a Jamaican writer cut off from the Jamaican *entre nous* language because of class and color, Hurston did not experience this kind of black-language loss or alienation. The assimilationist coda of most directed well-to-do black parents in the diaspora instructed their children to not "tell outsiders anything real about yourself [and not to] reveal our secrets to them. Don't make us seem foolish or oppressed . . ." (Cliff 16). In many ways, Hurston upheld this edict but where she placed her emphasis and what she defined as "foolish" or "oppressed" differed from that of the racial uplift generation and later from protest writers like Richard Wright. Hurston revealed human truths in a black idiom rife with the secrets and desires of black individuals within the parameters that defined their lives.[104]

Hurston created her literary persona within the breaks of white expectations of black performance. Hurston borrowed heavily from the best that the black oral tradition offered and developed a type of black writing style that left space for contradiction and reflection in the language that slaves made their own. Her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, is another example of skillfully "[c]ombining the demotic and King's English allowed the story [of her life] to release more of its inner energy, meaning and contradictions; it also reflects the tension—oftentimes hostility between the two languages, the two world views" (Philip 50). Hurston's post slavery voice, and her own engagement with black in-credibility, altered the autobiographical form. She continued the tradition of "[bringing] a whole new meaning . . . to words like . . . truth and lies" (Naylor 3). The black writers before her, like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, used the autobiographical form to address a host of issues, first among them their credibility as black writing and speaking subjects.[105] "To hit a straight lick with a

crooked stick" their narratives had to serve the abolitionists goals, assist them in making a living, and tell about the horrors of enslavement while maintaining a semblance of dignity.

Hurston knew that in her black woman's body she was still expected to show, to tell, and even to shock. Instead, she artfully selects what to tell, omits what does not suit her purposes by dispensing with a standard chronology of life events to focus on the key moments that shaped a black writer's life. It would take another forty years for critics, like Johnson, and writers to appreciate Hurston's autobiographical innovations as well as her innovations in collecting and presenting her folklore fieldwork.[106] What she did for sermons collected during her fieldwork, edit them by taking out the slow parts and rendering them in verse to capture the true spirit and essence missed when providing a straight telling, Hurston did for her life—without a hint of contradiction. Existing in the "world as it [was]," Hurston made the most of the opportunities for formal and informal support from the people and institutions that could provide it (Du Bois 241). To be the writer and anthropologist she became required her to withhold information, to lie about her age, and other details that might have detracted from the story she needed to tell in order to get the formal education she wanted and the access she needed. Hurston did not "insist on acting as if [the world] were something else" or as if the rules governing white and black interactions did not control the simplest verbal exchanges (Du Bois 241).

Dust Tracks on a Road reveals, even with its omissions, the interconnectedness of parallel black and white worlds separated more by racial ideology than actual physical distances. As Hurston constructs her narrative in *Dust Tracks*, she implies that she received her

first life lessons from the white man who helped to deliver her. She also points out that she knew, at age of 8 or 9, this white older man's use of "nigger" meant class not race (30). While this explanation comes across as "oddly false-sounding," (Walker 20) it does present an example of the black/white interactions—though without overt terror, the signs of potential terror or the misunderstandings that can lead to violence and violation remain. Other white people passing through Eatonville also help Hurston by giving her books and small change as she accompanied them on the main road (31, 34). As an adult, her "brazenness" and willingness "to look . . . white folks right in de face" enabled her to compete for grants, jobs, and fellowships (Hurston 34). A cadre of powerful white women, in particular, provided the institutional interventions that a smart young black woman without money or black bourgeois connections needed. No doubt that her friendships with Anne Nathan Meyer, Fannie Hurst, or even the working class white friend in Baltimore (who helped Hurston land a job as a maid to an actress in a traveling Gilbert and Sullivan troupe) were personally meaningful to Hurston, but these relationships contained racial and power inequities that Hurston negotiated. One of the signs of this inequity that Hurston adhered to, since most white friends did not insist that she do away with it, was the racial deference that paid in the form of black/white address. This comes across clearly in her letters to Meyer, Hurst, and Charlotte Osgood Mason, her patron. Whatever the depth of the private relationship or possible feelings of mutual respect, the public norms and expectations defining black/white social interactions remained largely unbroken.[107] In this way Hurston was not free to do otherwise and neither were the black people who criticized her. This is what she knew and did not want to keep. Thus, *Dust Tracks* acts as harbinger of the modern fissures in and challenges to what black people understood

entre nous about the white demands on blacks while in white spaces.

Hurston's proclaimed "self-assuredness," her individualism, and her twoness enabled her to separate the performance of those types of social gestures (with Meyer, Hurst, and Mason) from her self-worth. By the time she published *Dust Tracks* in 1942, the inherited black autobiographical form had undergone some revisions but not enough to suit Hurston's personality and her resistance to the type of self-revelation that readers came to expect from black women. Hurston's resistance to the form, combined with a genuine uncertainty with what the post slavery autobiography was supposed to do and say for whom, to whom, produced *Dust Tracks*. Her autobiography is, in a sense, a response to both Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* and Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*—only without a specific agenda in mind for black people, white people, racism, classicism, or gender discrimination. Hurston "deftly avoiding [traditional types of] self-revelation" produced a narrative that does not seek to be credible (Walker 20). What led to her ultimate demise was her willingness to use her in-credibility as a subject to live and work as a black writer. As an exercise in black in-credibility *Dusk Tracks* succeeded commercially. White readers were thrilled with this false inside from a black woman who did not desire to be formally allowed into white circles. Black readers who struggled against their in-credibility, and desired a particular type of entry into whiteness, could not accept Hurston's *trompe l'oeil* telling and the way she seemed to play with race and racism. In the end, the stories black people wanted her to tell and the ones white people wanted coalesced in the form of the protest novel and left Hurston unable to publish her stories and earn a living.

Hurston's initial rediscovery and revival by Alice Walker in 1974 was followed by a literary biography by Robert Hemenway in 1977 and a reissuing of all her unpublished texts edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. a decade later. Hurston's work invited all writers and theorists to explore her literary "breaks" and the nuances of her black sounds and soundings. By the end of the twentieth century, Hurston figured prominently in discussions about "race, writing, and difference" most notably in a couple of essays, as I mentioned earlier, by Barbara Johnson who used Hurston to "rethink [her] own work" as a deconstructionist.[108] In this section of the chapter I will examine aspects of one of Johnson's essays on Hurston, the period that produced that essay, and, within the breaks, the issues particular to black writing, reading, and speaking as framed by whiteness.

Reading Hurston's Black In-credibility in the U.S. and in the Diaspora

In her 1987 essay, "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston," Barbara Johnson turned her critical gaze to Zora Neale Hurston and invited other non-black critics to do the same. In the first paragraph of her groundbreaking essay Johnson says:

> In preparing to write this chapter, I found myself repeatedly stopped by conflicting conceptions of the structure of address into which I was inserting myself. It was not clear to me what I, a white deconstuctor, was doing talking about Zora Neale Hurston, a black novelist and anthropologist, or to *whom* I was talking. Was I trying to convince white establishment scholars who long for a return to Renaissance ideals that the study of the Harlem Renaissance is not a trivialization of their humanistic pursuits? Was I trying to contribute to the attempt to adapt the textual strategies of literary theory to the analysis of Afro-American literature? Was I trying to rethink my own previous work and to re-referentialize the notion of difference so as to move the conceptual operations of deconstruction out of the realm of abstract linguistic universality? Was I talking to white critics, black critics, or myself? . . . Well, all of the above. (172)

In the decades since the essay's publication, the challenges that Hurston's speaking and writing choices posed for pre-Civil Rights blacks in a white nation has led to the academic "rethinking" of blackness and black in-credibility. Johnson writes, "It was not clear to me what I, a white deconstuctor, was doing talking about Zora Neale Hurston, a black novelist and anthropologist, or to *whom* I was talking" (172). Hurston and not Du Bois made this type of questioning possible. With this introduction to her essay, Johnson takes a leap, not the one black critics applauded her for, choosing to read black, but reading black in-credibility. With her essay, Johnson vindicates Hurston's tactics in dealing with the reality of the racial difference that separated whites and blacks but that black people were required to constantly disavow or negate. White people, even white women, did not have to read black beyond the usual "nonsense . . . sounds of the minstrel mask" (Baker29). "The [white] textual strategies of literary theory" did not readily lend themselves to black literary production (172).

Reading Hurston was an attempt to acknowledge the performance that people give for white people's benefit and then read beyond it. And the performance was multifaceted and complex. Black lives and livelihood depended on knowing and maintaining the appropriate structures of white address to survive in "the world" described in *The Quest*. Within and between those rigid structures, the ones white people came to expect when in contact with black people (in the "two-second break" sounding the address) Hurston spoke volumes. She excelled in addressing the "all of the above" that Johnson suddenly confronts in turning her attention to a black woman writer and her text. In lauding Johnson's choice to read black, as Gates did in "*Race," Writing, and Difference*, black academics negate or unspeak their own lack of choice in reading white, addressing a white audience, and being schooled in whiteness.[109]

What remains unspeakable is the continuing demands on black speaking and writing because of black in-credibility. That Johnson racially locates herself and questions her own positioning in relation to black and white readers was an important step, though one that eventually failed to correct long-standing racial biases and just as quickly fell out of favor. The disjunction that Johnson points to in reading Hurston acts as a marker of a period most in academia have quickly rewritten. A generation of black and white U.S. speakers, writers, and readers came of age masking, excusing, or unwilling to admit to any racial awkwardness in school or work spaces.[110] They erase the verbal negation or silencing that occurs to make black people's disruptive presence in traditionally white spaces acceptable. Oddly, the mining of the terror of enslavement as simply art or an intellectual exercise by post Civil Rights black artists and scholars—solely—is also one of the responses to black in-credibility in white spaces. In the decades since publishing *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* the "optimism" that Gates volleyed back at Baker's critique of his "enthusiasm for academic address [of black texts] and his . . . championship of the current academic scene" (384), "[t]he vernacular [did] become almost a tag" with no other real significance in Gates's rise as a public intellectual (384).

This generation of whites and blacks has come to expect a further compartmentalization of black experiences and to insist on unspeaking or negating the black majority and the extent of the racism they experience. The lack of a seemingly larger black agenda or a direct focus on racial uplift enabled white readers to latch on to the universal aspects of Hurston's writing. Her exploration of a black inside, a black interiority apart, though never far, from white domination made a deconstructionist reading possible. Johnson's reading of Hurston and the slippages that seem to both reify and reinscribe the black/white binary that the essay attempts to

deconstruct. Johnson, partly because of her acclaim as a literary theorist and partly because of her whiteness, helped to refigure Hurston for the (white) American literary canon. Hurston's journey to this point of literary consideration by Johnson and others began with Alice Walker and her famed search for a black literary foremother and the research efforts of Robert Hemenway to write Hurston back into the literary circles with his literary biography of her.[111] For Walker, a U.S. black woman writer, re-membering Hurston's text, body, and place in the literary imagination took on psychic and spiritual dimensions. Walker's ceremonial "fixing" of Hurston in a now identifiable place—with a proper tombstone and moniker, "Genius of the South,"—opened the gates for her reclamation especially by black women and, soon after, others looking "to rethink [their] own previous work"(79). [112]

In the process of this recovery work, by Walker (and Hemenway) and the later rethinking by Johnson, Hurston went from minor, almost forgotten writer to major figure, if not writer, in the canonical and non-canonical debates of the late twentieth century.[113] Although the overtly racist aspects of those debates no longer dominate canonical determinations today, the ideological structure that gave rise to such debates remains, for the most part, intact.[114] The racism used to normalize the scholarly erasure, marginalization, or "trivialization" of black texts and black lives, like Hurston's, remains not only difficult to address directly but, also, in some instances, academically dangerous to question or read as indicative of how Blacks and (their) blackness are positioned within the U.S. This current "stasis—[with racial theorizing almost] at a standstill, neither going forward nor backward…" comes over twenty years after Henry Louis Gates Jr., at one point officially given the title of HNIC (Head Nigger in Charge) , dedicated a trilogy of texts to critical black theory. [115] [116] [117] In *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory*

of African-American Literary Criticism, his second and most important volume, Gates suggests that the most significant way to "[confront] the remnants of prejudice that manifest themselves against even the academic study of [black] subjects . . . [is] by the scholar's patient labors" (xiii). The burden of addressing a seemingly intractable racism remained on black writers and scholars wanting a particular type of entry into white-identified spaces to do the painstaking work that will counter black reductionism and out of hand dismissal. In his introduction, he asked emerging and would-be black scholars to heed his call and produce the work that would make the need to prove black culture, black literary tradition, and hence black people *worthy* of formal white consideration unnecessary in the future. This "call" was no different from one issued nearly a century earlier by the likes of Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke, W.E.B Du Bois, and others during what Locke termed the era of the New Negro. An older generation attempted to channel the creation of art for the sake of racial uplift rather than just "art for art's sake." Racial uplift became synonymous with white acceptability and a conversion to white bourgeois aesthetics. It was easier to blame black in-credibility on the masses of poor black people not speaking, writing, or behaving in ways that conformed to the white middle class model.

Artistic production of the type encouraged by the black vanguard was one of the few areas that blacks could participate in outside of the full force of Jim Crow laws. White audiences were receptive to black arts and artists who acted within their idea of entertainment. The New Negro Movement, that put Hurston together with Du Bois, early on exposed a generational, gender, class, and regional divide that would remain a hallmark of that movement and all such future missions to represent the race—to white people. The vexed issue of what constitutes

appropriate black representation and appropriate black behavior in white spaces remains difficult to address without first conceding the disruption that the black body in the Americas always already signifies. Thus, authenticity debates on the part of blacks and the interventionist work of a Barbara Johnson, for all of their significance, can sometimes ring hollow to those listening for the soundings of the unspeakable. Hurston hit upon the intraracial divide within those positioned to speak for the "folk" and their willingness to disregard so quickly most of black popular culture. The breaks in Hurston's written work that occurred in between a way of speaking that became synonymous with minstrelsy, radically revealed black people using their language to work through the concerns of their everyday lives. Hurston's text and her commitment to rendering "a range of emotions" that did not devolve into social protest or black literature aimed simply at a white oppressive audience did much to advance the black literary tradition and capture the white imagination.

Though Du Bois, the sociologist, activist, and writer, wrote perceptively and often movingly about black men and women's lives across a complex class and color spectrum, his distance and preoccupation with a white audience took him away from the people he championed. In Zora Neale Hurston, Du Bois would have confronted not the long-dead and now figurative "Josie" but her living embodiment in the figure of Hurston who made it well beyond the "veil," as defined by Du Bois, against the most difficult circumstances, to Harlem, the place Claude McKay, himself a transplant from Jamaica, called the "Mecca of the black world."[118] Such a figure like "Josie," it seems, Du Bois was willing to tolerate and mourn—to a point. Without an extended family to support or leave behind, Hurston made it by making the most of all opportunities and by using her own ingenuity and grit, especially after each

debilitating disappointment. She proves more than worthy of being the descendant of "those [Africans] who chose to survive" (*Daughters* Dash). She negotiates the literary narrative openings of Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass' Aunt Hester, Harriet Jacobs, and her mother's experience in a racist, sexist society. Hurston's rise from several falls and reemergence in the unlikeliest places breaks her narrative from one of black female sacrifices for the race or self-effacing black mother love to one privileging black self-fulfillment and individual artistic quests within black-identified spaces. Most importantly, the women she wrote about expressed sexual desire, sexual complicity, and only sexual victimization. Hortense J. Spillers writes in her essay, "A Hateful Passion, A Lost Love" (1983) that Hurston's heroine, Janie, prepared the literary way for the non-maternal, non-familial race-bound black woman artist to emerge. Furthermore Hurston was not willing to demonize the South in order to make the North and its liberals feel better than their southern counterparts. Black dignity and white recognition meant adapting and adopting white upper middle class ways and reforming if not dispensing altogether with all identifiably black traits of the working poor.[119]

From 1925 on, Hurston went on to represent the race in ways Du Bois would deem inappropriate and not particularly helpful to the brand of racial uplift he favored. He wanted her, and the young upstarts that produced Fire!!, a magazine dedicated to showing black Harlem life from the bottom up, to fall in line with the agenda set forth by Du Bois and his generation. Hurston belonged to a group of younger blacks that Du Bois knew were impatient with the older generation. In the flesh, Hurston, at times deploying the disruption of her Southernness for maximum effect, did not elicit the same amount of pathos and tears as the country strivers he wrote about early in his career nor did she fit in the "Philadelphia Negro"

mold. Hurston was willing to sacrifice for her work and for her art, but not necessarily for a man or a people in the way Du Bois imagined. The closest she came to such devotion, from reading her letters, was in her relationship to Langston Hughes. Hurston promoted his poetry, read it and sold it to black people she encountered during her field trips. It was not the case that Hurston and Du Bois did not share some of the same racial anxieties, but that their approach differed and their intimate connection to the people they both wrote about differed in significant ways. Where Du Bois bristled and raged at what a white system denied black citizens, Hurston focused on what blacks chose to celebrate without reserve or pity. The crushing poverty was not the point of her observation or her writing.

Hurston's and Du Bois's life and work diverged on the uses of a distinct blackness in a white world and where blacks belonged in their conceptions of the black diaspora, especially if they were unable or unwilling to be refitted for potential white social inclusion. Were the worlds blacks created for themselves physically and more importantly, linguistically when the physical space did not exist, enough to sustain a people? Both Du Bois and Hurston placed different emphasis on what white inclusion and exclusion meant. Though Du Bois grew up in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, it was not a black-identified home space and not where any white people thought his "people" came from. His family made a living in and around Great Barrington under the glare of whiteness without cultivating black retreat spaces, psychic or otherwise. Racism as he experienced it made him work harder to outsmart and outshine his white classmates and later the white people and a system that required his servility. Du Bois believed that he *chose* to fight for a people he considered "flesh of his flesh" and he later would connect the U.S. black struggle with white capitalist domination to a global struggle. Though he

had some financial difficulties, Du Bois went to school almost uninterrupted unlike Hurston who met with harsh difficulties at every turn. As Du Bois fought to put black people's struggles in a global context, he also fought for black men to be treated like white men. He also knew that black women were signifiers of what black men suffered socially, politically, and economically. Black men could not always protect black women from sexual violation or even general disrespect. More often than not, as Du Bois wrote about in his fiction, Black women were left to (silently) work through black men's relationships with white men and white women and keep those negotiations for them. Du Bois's sense of being perceived as inferior or slighted in any way also meant closing himself off, being guarded even with black people. Hurston did not and could not react the same way. She would not have been allowed to. Hurston struggled and maneuvered as a black woman with the least amount of protection. There are still ten years of Hurston's life that researchers have yet to fully account for. What she did in those lost years, what was done to her remains unspoken. Hurston scholars and readers have, by quiet assent, decided to keep this space blank.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and in stories like "High John de Conqueror," her central characters "make a way out of no way" or "throw up highways in the wilderness" to achieve both personal and group satisfaction within American hostility and the memory of African abduction. "Making a way out of no way" became a core tenet of the U.S. (southern) black experience. Hurston, and those who came before her, had to come to terms with the "no way" of the white power structure. They often hid and plotted behind the forms of address required of the black body in motion and determined when to become visible or invisible when negotiating white people's spatial and psychological needs around the issue of visible

blackness. Hurston used the tenets of the oral tradition in her writing, not simply to appeal to white sensibilities but to tell stories in ways that reflected the complexities of lived black lives that those blacks would recognize. Those complexities often hinged on narratively conceptualizing the black self and anticipating the appropriate form of address.[120] Black people needed to understand the established white conventions that came to be associated with their overall speaking performances and work with "the distortions (human and linguistic) of [a] minstrelsy [that] also existed as literary models . . ." (Jones 141). White people came to rely on these conventions, "a manner of speaking" and acting that had little to do with black reality and more with "remind[ing the] white consciousness that black men and women are *mis-speakers* bereft of humanity" (Baker 21). Black writing, post Phillis Wheatley, developed between dominant culture's psychological need for both the lynch mob and codified minstrelsy. In her essay, "Breaking Out of the Conventions of Dialect," Gayl Jones says, "Not only then was there the tension between the 'pure' [black] oral and literary models as complex forms, but the uses of oral tradition and 'black speech' were further complicated by the intrusion of the 'artistic models' of the minstrel show and its reduction of the artistic possibilities of Afro-American oral tradition—speech and folklore—through distortion and caricature" (141). Jones acknowledges the written narrative frame that Hurston broke through and out of when she wrote in dialect and gave "the folklore tradition . . . more of its own authority" and credits her with initiating "an important transition . . . in the depiction of black humanity in literature" because of her focus on black intraracial relationships (147).

Hurston's breaks with and within the "conventions of dialect" meant that the "physical presence and psychological reality" of black "characters were pulled into the foreground black"

(147). She goes on to say, “Like most literary transitions, this does not appear to be of great note these days with contemporary Afro-American writers who automatically do the same, not withstanding certain persistent (or recalcitrant) white critics who may still be asking the former whether they write about ‘black people or human beings?’ and consider the Afro-American perspective ‘the broader perspective’ and the significant one” (147). Hurston certainly made the case for the human and for the ordinary in blackness. This then-unheralded moment in the black literary tradition has proved to be an academic and marketing boon. Though Hurston’s subject matter is no longer “trivialized,” Barbara Johnson as late as 1987 still could legitimately ask, in her essay quoted earlier, “Was I trying to convince white establishment scholars who long for a return to Renaissance ideals that the study of the Harlem Renaissance is not a trivialization of their humanistic pursuits? Was I trying to contribute to the attempt to adapt the textual strategies of literary theory to the analysis of Afro-American literature?” (172). My analysis of speaking, writing, and reading returns to this quote from Johnson because of this subtle slippage and honest racial awkwardness still present in black/white exchanges about black texts that she voices. Johnson’s rhetorical concerns differ only slightly from the presumably white critics that Jones paraphrases. Both display what seems unalterable about racial difference: a power imbalance whereby one race, whites, gets to philosophically question the humanity and relevance of another race, blacks. Put another way, blacks remain unrecognizable as human, and potentially kin, except when passing for white. Johnson’s reading of Hurston’s modes of address provides a way to read Hurston addressing whiteness and its demands on blackness in the post slavery, Post Civil Rights eras.[121] What those demands of whiteness on blackness do to black people in the U.S., in the diaspora that meets in “the

Mecca of the black world" still remains difficult to speak out loud and particularly in upwardly mobile circles.

As Michelle Cliff says, "Passing [in whatever form] demands silence" (6). Upward mobility demands its own type of silence about the extent of the racism encountered; how it is managed, explained away, or denied altogether. Again, because Hurston does not exactly appeal to white guilt, does not register her outrage against a racist system with open resentment, or betray an open desire for white acceptance, she, and not Du Bois, provided Johnson with a way to begin her query about black texts, black speaking and white speaking, and consider black marginalization from the desired "common ground of subtle academic discourse" (Gates 385). What Hurston "left outside [of] the door of [her] mind for [strangers] to play" with, while she remained an enigma, was a welcome trove for those wanting to read race as discourse (Hurston 3). Though Du Bois both frames and names what whiteness does to the black body and psyche—all negative and inexcusable—Hurston, as a Harlem Renaissance writer and anthropologist, embodies, in voice and text, a world and a consciousness where whiteness and white culture exist on the margins. This surface difference, where Hurston marginalizes the psychological effects of whiteness in the interior lives of blacks attracted Johnson and Jones, Hemenway, Walker, and Gates to name a few. The "I" Hurston created in writing, in her research—and the historical context framing that "I"—is what I focus on next.

Hurston's evasive maneuvers in language transpose the oral forms onto the written form creating an "I" spoken/written voice that recalls what Africans in the Americas have done to, in this case, the English language.

> Hurston forces upon readers a subtle recognition of an African American past, present, and future at once similar and distinct from that of European Americans. Hurston's soundings recall what Philip describes in *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*:. . . the vortex of New World Slavery, [and how] the African forged new and different words, developed strategies to impress her experience on the language. The formal standard language was subverted, turned upside down, inside out, and even sometimes erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at a time; rhythms held sway. Many of these 'techniques' are rooted in African languages; their collective impact on the English language would result in the latter being, at times, unrecognizable as English. Bad English. Broken English. Patois. Dialect. These words are all for the most part negative descriptions of the linguistic result of Africans attempting to leave their impress on the language. (49)

The address, then, born out of brute white force and used by blacks to resist and evade outright provocation became a normalized part of white expectations—one noticed only when not performed as expected. With so many to consider in her address, not to mention her own representation, Hurston needed to be masterful in speaking all at once to several listeners/readers, artfully using the linguistic "techniques" her ancestors developed. Gates says:

> Hurston's unresolved tension between her double voices signifies her full understanding of modernism. Hurston uses the two voices in her text to celebrate the psychological fragmentation both of modernity and of the black American. As Barbara Johnson has written, hers is rhetoric of division, rather than a fiction of psychological or cultural unity. Zora Neale Hurston, the 'real' Zora Neale Hurston that we long to locate in this text, dwells in the silence that separates the two voices: she is both, and neither; bilingual and mute. (296)

I would argue instead that Hurston dwells in the breaks and reproduces in writing a strict coda for being in whiteness.

Hurston's dissembling coda, even as it reveals universal (black) insights, especially for a Post Civil Rights black generation did not promise a freedom that mirrored that of their white counterparts. Freedom for black people is circumspect, elusive, and near impossible to achieve.

What Hurston tells a new generation, if they are willing to listen, is that many who identify as black, no matter the age, may always have to learn how to "dwell . . . in the silence that separates the two voices" and accept the reality of the minstrel mask as their reality in the post Civil Rights era. The performances go on as well as the black self negation to keep from fully knowing that, on some level, black people remain in-credible speaking, writing subjects. Hurston lived fully as an in-credible subject and her embrace of black in-credibility enabled her to write about love, dreams, and the meaning of life—subjects that did not immediately challenge the white social order. To read Hurston only at the surface level, though important, erases the psychological terror of black in-credibility for people of African descent especially without *entre nous* spaces. Despite "develop[ing] strategies to impress her experience on the [English] language," black people reading Hurston now can question for whom, to whom, she is writing, and the meaning of her textual manipulations (Philip 49). Hurston wrote with a clear sense of their own "real" and one she did not feel she needed to explain to other black people or tell white readers about. The theoretical sophistication many in the academy were willing to accord Hurston was done with the premise that readers could focus on story, characterization, and language usage. But Hurston's language, her sound and sounding, came out of the resistance to unspeakable horror, cultural erasure, and silence. Not being able to locate the "real" Hurston, in or outside of the text, does not register as freedom but as yet another level of horror and loss. Thus Hurston's struggle to get other black people to read, without negation, their shared sounds and soundings reflects the later struggles of others in the black Atlantic.

Hurston had to react to and against the version of the minstrel mask that Harriet Beecher Stowe's Topsy ushered into "American popular culture" (23). In *Dust Tracks*, Hurston

described a willful, individualistic, and exasperating child, and later young woman, determined to chart her own course. For readers, Topsy could not have been far from their imagination, particularly in those descriptions of her childhood. One cannot help but consider how much of the stereotype, of the impish black girl, Hurston willfully incorporated into her written persona. The Zora of *Dust Tracks* is recouped by Hurston saying, despite her behavior, she was still "everybody's Zora" (1009). Baker discussed Topsy briefly to establish his vernacular theory, which I use throughout this dissertation. He says, "Mrs. Stowe's exotic creation 'Topsy,' a character who entered the American popular imagination not only through the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but also through hundreds of performances of 'Tom Shows' derived from the novel, which played relentlessly in the United States and in Europe" (23). In many ways, Du Bois's Zora Cresswell from *The Quest*, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, could be considered a rewriting of Topsy with his desired outcome for free black people in the U.S. instead of Stowe's immigration. Hurston would not have seen herself in the "minstrel spirit house" but providing a bona fide black artistic cultural product (24). Instead of commending her engagement with black sounds and sounding, and the difficulty of that endeavor in whiteness, Hurston experienced rejection. She found her work being "trivialized" by black people who wanted a different point of entry into the white imagination. They did not always see the difference between minstrelsy, its racist distortions, and a viable art form that could not be divorced from its origins in enslavement. In her essay, "Characteristics of Negro Expression (1934)," Hurston writes, "Self-conscious [black] individuals may turn away the eye and say, 'Let us search elsewhere for our dramatic art'. Let' em search. They certainly won't find it" (1031).

If asked, “Where your people from?” or “*Moun ki bo ou ye*?” in Haitian Creole, Hurston could answer it in the way that black people asked it or in a way that confirmed an inside black identity that alluded to the wholeness that later diasporic writers like Michelle Cliff and M. Nourbese Philip attempted to piece together in their “broken English.” For the black women and men who come after Hurston, understanding the pain and disfiguration of black identities in the Americas is almost impossible without the ways of speaking that enslaved blacks developed to resist mental enslavement. Writing in between Aunt Hester’s screams and the minstrel mask of Topsy about ordinary black life, Hurston identified many of the core tenets structuring the speaking and writing. She tells and yet she does not, speak while withholding, “offer a featherbed resistance” and “do not let the probe out” (2). To have her “say and sing [her] song” did not necessarily mean exposing “that which the soul lives by” (2-3). As in-credible black-speaking subjects, the space for that level of interior exposure in whiteness did not, then, exist. It is doubtful, if she ever believed such a space, where blacks were no longer in-credible, would ever exist. Working with this paradox, Hurston undertook the task of providing a theoretical framework for writing and reading black sounds and soundings. That oral cultural includes the sound made sucking the teeth between the tongue, what college does not teach the black daughter returning to the South, needed to be written down by insiders already aware of the limitations of the white historical and artistic record (Hurston 40-41). What supposedly untutored and unlettered black folk culturally produced mattered as art and as social, political commentary.

The sound and soundings of these languages explain the difference blacks must represent and disavow. Understanding and working the difference hold a key to exist *entre*

nous in the black diaspora. Hurston's embrace of this black self-styled belonging in the Americas made her less dependent on the reconnection to continental Africa and the recovery of lost kings and queens. And yet displaced black peoples needed to belong to places where questions like "Where your people from?" or "Where you from?" can come to stand in for who you are and what does not need to be explained. Bridging the need for a home in specific black-identified places with the need for a shared black diasporic identity, still presents a challenge for U.S blacks and others in the black diaspora. There are always insiders and outsiders. Hurston, for all her need to document black linguistic and cultural practices, did not believe black authenticity meant revealing the innermost thoughts and experiences. Those, as well as her own, she kept and protected. The particulars of black Atlantic experiences made secrecy and silence core features of black soundings not meant to be understood by dominant culture. Barbara Johnson says Hurston withholds telling how the people of Jacksonville, Florida, let her know "she was a fast brown—warranted not to rub nor run" (175). Should that experience in a dominant white space be spoken at all, it would have to be *entre nous*. Though Hurston does not describe the racist acts, she makes a point of not disavowing racism by leaving a space for the reader to fill in. Readers make a choice to register the absence; to hear omission or ignore it. In "How It Feels to Be Me" and in *Mules and Men* Hurston suspends the preoccupation with whiteness to focus on how poor, working class black people live with black in-credibility. *Dust Tracks on the Road*, produced at the request of her publisher, "tells de biggest lie[s]" of all" (8).

As a testament to black in-credibility taken to its logical conclusion, *Dust Tracks* presents a frightening reality for most black people in white spaces: to be outside of the real, missing from the official text (again) while present. What soundings will keep the knowledge of who

they are? The need for black *entre nous* spaces is the challenge of reading Hurston in the twenty-first century and in the age of Obama and the desire for a post racial society. Maybe certain black soundings, and their meaning, should not go beyond the racial insiders. Hurston's body of work seems to suggest that blacks in the Atlantic belong in the world with a difference that will not change. Recognizing the built-in resistance of these black Atlantic sounds and soundings and using parts of it to theorize the black diaspora to balance and challenge black in-credibility must remain a focal point. This theorizing needs to happen with and between other black Atlantic languages. To really suspend black in-credibility *entre nous*, creoles and patois must be put in conversation with other creoles and patois. Hurston's worldview relied on a more intimate perspective and a more participatory approach to researching what constitutes U.S. black folk ways and its equivalent in the Americas. For Hurston, place conferred an anchoring to blackness and to the self as a self. Unlike Du Bois who identified the South as black cultural placeholder for Africa and then moved on to Africa, Hurston believed the South, and other black spaces in the Americas, to be active and relevant spaces of black cultural production that gave black people coming to know themselves as a diaspora their meaning.

Because I locate Hurston within the push-and-pull factors affecting black diaspora formation and the movement of Africans across the Americas, the "saltwater" aspect that provides the diaspora with its meaning, like Hurston, I make deliberate use of the words and sounds those members of the diaspora use to speak their place and condition within the Americas. These words contain other linguistic facets of black in-credibility. Tracing the origins of black people's languages, their patois, their creoles, and pidgins Philip says:

> And yet there is another genealogy: of language. Spoken with the whole body. Of sounds like steups and gestures—arms akimbo. 'Don't put your hands on your head,' the elders caution the children in Tobago, 'your mother will die.' Decades later the child will learn the signs of grieving. In Ghana. placing your hands on your head. . . . Through the language. Genealogies of music. Waking the world to other rhythms. Other times. Other spaces. (25)

In one of the stories that Johnson quotes from Hurston's *Mules and Men*, a poor black sharecropper asks his educated daughter, newly returned from college, to write a letter to her uncle (181). The father makes a sound that he expects her to reproduce in writing. The sound that she cannot reproduce in writing interrupts the progression of the letter. Her father repeats the sound fully believing that anyone should be able to write that sound. Johnson presents Hurston signifying about formal learning and black culture. I put Hurston's unprintable sound with "steups," or what Haitians call "chuppe," sounds. The "steups" that many blacks speak and have tried to write, is similar to the sound that the educated daughter cannot write in *Mules and Men*.

The uses Hurston made of her inside/outside dichotomy in writing and speaking is part of what Hurston has to teach black scholars, artists, the upwardly mobile, and those unable to get beyond the various urban holding centers or islands of color-based poverty. Hurston also has a great deal to teach a twenty-first-century black diaspora "looking for the join" within the United States. Hurston's work and life tells us to re-member the sounds and soundings of the black diaspora in the Americas that helped Africans in the Americas to resist dehumanization and psychic violation. Philip says, "I will give an account of descent. Resist the command to 'speak in a certain manner' so as to excise the 'badenglish,' recognizing in it the resistance of the people. The ancestors coming alive in stories, the loving lies, and the *i-maging* . . ." (23).[122]

Hurston spent a lifetime telling "the loving lies" and convincing her literary cohorts that this defiant use of language allowed the resistance and the resilience of black people in the U.S. to shine through. To be sure Hurston stroked white egos, reassured white friends by adhering to the racial social mores of the day without complaint, although while letting another view slip in for those who knew what to look and listen for about the nature of these relationships and her black American identity.

By the twenty-first century, many blacks in the diaspora imagined that this level of offensive/defensive, quasi-duplicity would no longer be required once having accessed political, social, and economic freedom that the Civil Rights movement promised. In a sense Hurston understood well the edict the protagonist's dying grandfather in *Invisible Man* gave him on his deathbed—"Yes' em to death." The grandson does not understand his meek grandfather's parting message—that he succeeded in living a life of resistance. The completeness of in-credible subject he gave back to the dominant race did not yield any interior ground. Part of entering into U.S. blackness, from elsewhere in the black diaspora, whether from the Americas or the African continent, involves understanding this history of black resistance *as* resistance. What Philip writes about the "acquisition of English [and other European] language[s]" explains in large part what U.S. blacks were up against when speaking in English. What Johnson and Gates read in Hurston's "two voices" as "bilingualism" and "muteness," comes out of "[t]he paradox of this [English] acquisition, however is that the African learned to speak and be dumb at the same time, to give voice to the experience and the *i-mage*, yet remain silent"(48). She goes on to further say, "The only way the African artist could be in this world, the New World, was to give voice to the spilt *i-mage* of voiced silence. Ways to transcend that contradiction had

to and still have to be developed, for that silence continues to shroud the experience [of blacks in the New World], the *i-mage* and so the word" (48). Without an agenda, without Hurston's embodiment of double consciousness, and a useful understanding of the "split" voice speaking that earlier blacks engaged in, later generations were left to unspeak blackness as a way of not "pil[ing] difference upon difference" (Cliff 23). This had the effect of making black speech function closer to the original European intent that Philip described as "the leavings of a language" meant to police and restrict black intraracial exchange. In the post Civil Rights era of racial arrival many blacks cannot admit to the "voiced silence" contained within their speaking or the importance of "split-voice" speaking because it would be admitting that blacks, as a people in the diaspora, remain outside of the nation proper and outside kinship narratives.

In the decades since the publication of Johnson's essay, the literary ground did change and always because of the "patient [unceasing] labors" of black people in the U.S. reading and speaking an understanding of the letter of the law that most white people did not initially want to read or hear. Starting with Brown vs. Board of Education, in 1954, and the implementation of school-desegregation ordinances in predominantly white schools, where black people could legally go changed. The black difference remained. The pressures on black group and individual expression of black identity within entry-granting white institutional spaces were exacerbated. Each new generation inheriting the integrated ideal, those who made it by crossing over saw their ability to code switch, to speak doubly, or *entre nous* about the unspeakable erode. Without a space to acknowledge instances of "it," the unspeakable, and the unspoken then the work needed to "transcend the contradiction of voiced silence" stops. The absence of these devices, though needed more than ever, recalls the image that Du Bois described in *Souls* about

inchoate black speakers thinking about their lives behind the Veil with no way of speaking their feelings to *entre nous*. Psychologically, little prepared black people for what their lives would be like once they had legal access to white social and institutional spaces. Entry into white institutional spaces continued to demand versions of the old forms of black address, this time under the unsafe guise of an already achieved racial parity. For instance, in the twenty-first century one cannot admit to being a "wise Latina," one who recognizes the particular plight of other Latinas and Latinos, without the risk of losing her conditional entry into traditionally white spaces.[123] Such admission breaks with the accepted speak for a Latina allowed access and entry into the highest court of the land. Along with hard work and skillful negotiations, acquiring positions of that power and magnitude often expects a certain amount of unspeaking or negating of race and racism.

This negation of black in-credibility, demanded of striving blacks, denies recognition of and participation in the breaks—spaces where one could "break it down," as Curtis Blow rapped in the 1980s. Rap soundings repurposed a language of violation and the market to speak people human in the most unexpected ways. Thus "the price of the ticket" comes at the expense of accepting the silence already built into black soundings as nothing more than silence. In her famous opening line for *Beloved*, Morrison described "124 Bluestone Road as spiteful" and a whole black community pretended not to hear, feel, or see the roar. They avoided the house and did their best to unspeak its inhabitants and to unspeak their own experiences as the formerly enslaved and thus kin. By the end of the text, the black women of the community do not necessarily attempt to "transcend the contradictions" of "voiced silence" but to beat its most destructive manifestation, with sound, back to the outer reaches. Mainly,

the black women stopped denying the "it," the unspeakable. The women who knew and experienced enslavement do not speak except in gestures and sounds. They provide no direct answers for the past itself. With their power, they create a small living space in the present for one of their own through ritual soundings that meant little to the white abolitionist they also saved.

Hurston, Black Literary Tradition, and In-credible Women

In many ways, the scene at the end of *Beloved*, relying on black women's soundings to restore spiritual and temporal order to a black woman's life, is the opposite of the earliest attempts by black people to transpose sound into writing. Gates says, "Writing for . . . slaves was not an activity of the mind; rather it was a commodity which they were forced to trade for their humanity" (9). Though writing remains a commodity that many blacks use to trade and engage with other artists and a larger culture, it still does not now conform with dominant conceptions of "writing . . . [as a leisure] activity of the mind." Each writing act, each speaking act seems to require reexamining the space of black women's racial, gender, and class struggles and examining anew the ways black women (and men) tried to circumvent proving themselves worthy and deserving to white people and black people who found it racially prudent to adhere to "voiced silence" and unspeak a shared identification with the black majority. More than discounting the racism directed at blacks, Hurston wanted a balance that included the totality of black lives: the mundane, the joyful, as well as the setbacks. She wanted an appreciation of the lives that blacks created in the face of white supremacy and a way to discuss how white terror and the enviable access many whites had as whites adversely affected some black desires

and perceptions. As a formally-trained anthropologist, Hurston also marked the beginning of black women's scholarly speaking and writing in white academic spaces that does not first assume blackness as an absence or lack. She works within an understanding of the black (female) in-credibility in the Americas. It is within this space of in-credibility that Hurston tells but does not reveal and helps usher in a next phase in the black literary tradition.

Embodying the space of in-credibility, black women, speaking and writing for a largely white audience had to first establish credibility. Black female in-credibility, due to race and gender, made access to the traditionally understood rhetorical space, as a place to speak or write from, an elusive and exclusive one. Considering the rhetorical questions posed at the beginning of Johnson's essay what rhetorical questions was Hurston allowed to pose in order to frame her entry and participation in institutional spaces overwhelmingly invested in privileging their own aesthetic? As Hurston understood it, to be in white academic spaces or any other traditional all-white space, she would have to give her audience, on some level, what they wanted while simultaneously trying to maintain a black interiority. As an in-credible subject, she knew better than most of her black contemporaries the autobiographical exigencies placed on black-speaking subjects. One of the earliest to experience such pressures was Phillis Wheatley. Though not an autobiography, Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects: Religious and Moral* (1773) not only begins the African American literary tradition, but also begins the formal tradition of black literary in-credibility when subjected to her infamous interview by a roomful of prominent white men of the then British colony.[124] As has been written by Gates and others about the interview that the young Wheatley was subjected to, the hopes of a diaspora full of Africans depended on her performance of credibility. He writes, "Phillis Wheatley and her

master, John Wheatley, had attempted to publish a similar volume in 1770 at Boston, but Boston publishers had been incredulous" (Gates 8). Thus the black written tradition begins as one forever mired in the in-credible especially as it was a black woman dependent on a white reading audience and subject to the privilege of being judged worthy by white men of note. Wheatley establishes the pattern of writing and speaking blacks exposing themselves for examination by a leading body of white men to be found credible.

Frederick Douglass' narrative "was written in part to counter the incredulity of audiences dubious that a speaker of Douglass' eloquence could have emerged unaided from such a lowly background . . ." (Smith iii).[125] Douglass came out of slavery as an in-credible subject and recreated in writing his Aunt Hester's screams as her owner whips and curses her. Aunt Hester defied her master by giving in to her intraracial desire as a slave woman forbidden to do so by Captain Anthony. Harriet Jacobs, unlike Douglass' aunt, escaped the whipping and one aspect of slavery's sexual degradation by choosing between the lesser of several bad options. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* continues this trajectory of in-credibility. In her co-edited volume with Rafia Zafar, *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays* (1996), Deborah M. Garfield says:

> When Jacobs writes "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction," she is well aware that she must begin, before even writing of birth, by breaking down the walls of prejudice and disbelief between her and her white audience. Rather than embellish her own story, Jacobs says "My descriptions fall short of the facts" (1). From the time of the first slave who dared tell the story of enslavement, African Americans have faced a hostile, disbelieving audience . . . Faced with the "double negative" of black race and female gender, Jacobs like Wheatley before her and Hurston after her, had to contend with a skeptical readership that said her work could not be "genuine" because of her emphasis

> on the domestic, her "melodramatic" style, or her unwillingness to depict herself as an avatar of self-reliance. (3-4)

Harriet Jacobs, before her, used the desire for the display of her highly sexualized enslaved body to shame her callous or indifferent onlookers for wanting such displays from black women. Jacobs's unbelievable domestic tale of an enslaved woman's sexual degradation because of white male sexual deviance, gave the white gentry a chance to disavow their own racial and gendered double standard.

This double standard allowed white women to represent the female ideal, sexual chastity, which served white men's needs while black women's alleged sexual permissiveness was used to justify and rationalize rape. Because of the specificities of the minstrel mask for Hurston were different for black women. Hurston worked against the implication that Aunt Hester could not resist Lloyd's Ned and thus willingly risked being brutally punished and Jacob's, for a chance at freedom, being telling white readers how she negotiated one less damaging sexual encounter over the prospect of a more violent one. Hurston also had to work against the supposedly comic antics of asexual mammies and even the fictional Topsy. She tried to circumvent the white need for a particular type of black bodily spectacle by focusing on black ordinary subjects even while blacks were menaced by the extraordinary world of former enslavers or people who could enslave. They were the architects of segregation and the racial terror they disavowed legally. In subtle and not so subtle ways Hurston refigured and adapted the obligatory autobiographical telling that both marked and framed black women when they addressed white audiences and their disbelief. From this historical understanding of race and

gender Hurston would locate what would become her rhetorical strategy for addressing white audiences and white women in particular.

Hurston did not tell on black people in the ways that other blacks wanted and what she told people mistakenly conflated with minstrelsy. She left certain narrative constructions, sociological protests, and racial uplift to writers negotiating, in many ways, the shame of being from a race of always already in-credible black women. Not knowing how any truth would be received because of her race and gender, Hurston became an artist who believed in her subject matter and in the material she used to tell stories. Hence, Hurston provided the narrative frame that brought her stories to the best light given her financial constraints. Being in-credible meant not spending time proving her veracity, her authenticity, even as she decried the appropriation of black art forms by whites and the black who aided in the process. Hurston's response to a white rhetorical question like "How does it feel to be colored?" was a rewording of the question, providing an unexpected change in emphasis, and a shift to "How it Feels to be Colored Me." The trick that Hurston pulls off turns a rhetorical query asked of no particular black person into one answered by a specific black "me" baiting the white gaze into focusing in on her as something more than an object. In responding, Hurston causes a disruption, a break in "abstract linguistic universality," that those posing the rhetorical question now have to consider rather than admit they were not really asking a question. Both the questioner and the black woman answering, Hurston, get to play with the social norms framing black and white linguistic exchanges.

Between white rhetorical questions that required black women like Hurston to account for their in-credibility, by demanding irrefutable autobiographical proof, Hurston's "me" became the perfect foil, saying just enough to seem credible while seeming to bow to the overall importance of a particular black performance. She negotiated the gap caused by being an unexpected and unintended speaking subject, enabling her to rework dominant culture's disbelief into an artistic writing space. White disbelief provided her with a rhetorical buffer. The distance created by the simple insertion of "me" and no question mark, especially during the Harlem Renaissance, and other such writing gestures, enabled Hurston to manipulate white expectations to speak intraracial experiences beyond white minstrel impositions. Her characters voice the complexity erased by the desire for laughs and/or titillation. The ordinariness that Hurston writes about both foregrounds her fiction and obscures it. Negotiating white spaces, as a speaking, and writing subject, then and now, meant using the established black autobiographical form that proposes to tell white readers what they resist knowing or acknowledging about the black condition (especially black women's sexual denigration) without the display of the body.

The kind of rhetorical space that Johnson and other white writers and academics can call on to focus their gaze and prime their readers did not exist for Hurston. To white readers, Hurston's black woman's body, like that of her forbearers, brought different meanings to words like truth and lies and thus made it impossible for them to take any speaking gesture or unprintable sound for granted. Knowing her rhetorical was always in danger of being taken for the real and/or becoming an indistinguishable part of her, Hurston made the "lie" of the performance, "the lie of autobiography" her point of insertion.[126] For a racially-demanding yet

racially-incredulous white reading audience, Hurston "suspends" white disbelief. Johnson says, "If I initially approached Hurston out of a desire to re-referentialize difference, what Hurston gives me back seems to be difference as a suspension of reference. Yet the terms black and white, inside and outside continue to matter. Hurston suspends the certainty of reference not by erasing difference but by foregrounding the complex dynamism of their interaction" (183). What Hurston could control was where she positioned herself and the imperatives driving her telling. The oral tradition and ownership of the "dynamism" of black speak allowed for the subtle manipulation of what came to be the expected black performances in writing to become a space for Hurston to insert her literary and academic individuality. Hurston's understanding of "the complex dynamism," of traditional black doublespeak, without being apologetic of the black masses, facilitates her physical and linguistic movement in white spaces. She strategically enters into her scholarly writing by inserting herself into the process of folklore collection rather than feign distance and objectivity.

Hurston challenged the demands of whiteness by refusing to both embody and disavow her black difference. She also refused to join the "sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature had somehow given them a dirty deal by making them black" (1009). She did not believe that "racism had reduced black people to mere ciphers, to beings who *only* react to an omnipresent racial oppression, whose culture is 'deprived' where different, and whose psyches are in the main 'pathological'" (Gates 293). The research that has come in the wake of Hurston revival present a clearer picture of the amount of racism and resistance she endured to do her work. She did not want the only picture of her life to be what the white world took from her. "Transcending" the limits of "voiced silence," she reproduced in writing a black aesthetic that

she believed did not have to exist solely on the margins of dominant culture.[127] Where she positioned herself when she wrote about black people and culture mattered and shaped what she told. Where she positioned white people and their culture of merit also mattered and influenced her telling. Hurston's resistance to a school of thought pathologizing blackness as a way to read and write black cultural production, did not mean she denied the power of racial oppression to shape the debates about black authenticity within black communities framed by whiteness. Part of Hurston's public face involved not conceding anything culturally to white people, yet personally her experiences told another story. How best to address black in-credibility, the ongoing racial terror and the access white people] controlled caused legendary divisions within Harlem?[128]

Hurston's particular brand of resistance, one that allowed her to hide in plain view, today read as indeterminacy, took traditional "gaming 'em" and "lying" strategies to the "big house" of scholarly production. She established a way to write as a black woman within a tradition of black speaking that always had to be mindful of the slave master, the lynch mob, and the local authorities. Hurston's verbal maneuvering should be read as a deliberately evasive rhetorical performance that allowed her to come closest to doing what her white contemporaries were able to do as scholars, critics, and artists. She did receive the level of recognition or the pay given to white women she knew, but Hurston did not expect this level of equality. The humble servant her letters referenced in her letters to Mrs. Mason had little in common with the woman people knew in spirit. Hurston admitted all her ruses and performances to trusted black friends and hoped these friends would share in the joke and understand the guise she used "to slip the yoke." Only most blacks friends and colleagues did

not seem to share Hurston split-voiced speaking style or her ability to stand in her black in-credibility as a subject.

The tradition that began with Wheatley and Jacobs, and the questions surrounding the authenticity of their written work, will continue to put black-speaking subjects at odds with a dominant white tradition. Black culture and literature had arrived but overcoming what Gates called "the remnants of racism in the academy" of the 1980s and 90s also produced an academic climate that further separated black cultural production from the black communities responsible for much of that production. Yet as Hurston said looking elsewhere, other than within the black majority, for black art, is futile (1031). Hurston was one of the first to "bring authentic black folk expression—jook songs, West Indian dances, sermons—to the public's attention with profiting from her efforts" (Boyd 286). Her second major biographer Valerie Boyd quotes Hurston as saying, "I made no real money out of my concert work. . . .But I am satisfied in knowing that I established a trend and pointed Negro expression back towards the saner ground of our own unbelievable originality"(286). Hurston also helped to establish a cultural *entre nous* exchange between the U.S. and the other blacks in the diaspora. Black diaspora sounds and soundings shared commonalities that defied national boundaries but those boundaries did affect the recognition of those shared commonalities. Here to, the challenges to what Hurston took for granted about black in-credibility and white demands for black difference and disavowal of that difference resurfaced with startling results.

In the age of Obama it is less likely that the U.S. will address dominant culture's insistence and dependence on black rhetorical performance that disavows racism and, more

importantly, the ways that institutional power traps many black-speaking subjects, allowed into white spaces, in these expected performances. [129] In this new age, the referential demands on black speaking continue to create "You can't talk to them like that!" moments that Colin Powell coined when he reached across the political divide to comfort Donna Brazille during the 2000 presidential election.[130] Gates replied with a similar response to Houston Baker criticizing the lack of "vernacular critics" in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*. Gates says, "[Critics like] Todorov can't even hear us, Houston, when we talk *his* academic talk; how he gonna hear us if we 'talk *that* talk,' the talk of the black idiom? Maybe you think we should give up, but I am still an optimist. Things is just gettin' interestin', as LeRoi says" (409). Gates' optimism not withstanding, he got it wrong in directing his energy to convincing white scholars like Tzvetan Todorov to "hear" him. Despite the centrality of Hurston's body of work, as a writer and anthropologist who "talked *that* talk" and took great pains to do justice to "*that* talk" in writing, to his own work, Gates quickly dispenses with her theories of black speaking and writing for the kind of black male posturing Hurston detested. Foregoing the development of *entre nous* black "academic talk" for white academic recognition was tantamount to abandoning the black majority while using their cultural practices as a point of entry. Dropping one's "g's" was small consolation for the kind of teaching that did not take place while some post Civil Rights black scholars and artist worked their soundings for white listeners.

Many in the literary world could have benefited from Hurston's "spyglass discourse" whereby she unflinchingly uses her twoness to examine and theorize about black life and black cultural production. In many ways, scholars, and researchers are still "chewing on" what Hurston left outside her door for them to busy themselves with. In describing this black

sensibility regarding white inquiry just for the sake of inquiry, she speaks to an older black consciousness when she says, “[They] can read my writing but [they] sho’ can’t read my mind” (3). Today, it would seem that black people who want entry into a particular type of white space no longer want to know or want to read Hurston’s “for us”/“for them” distinctions.

Chapter 4 "De Understandin' to Go 'Long Wid It:" Reclaiming the Reclaimed Hurston

They wonder why we insist on being Negroes. Zora Neale Hurston

Nope, Ah ain't got to do nothin' but die and stay black. Big Sweet, *Mules and Men*

Hurston's "refus[al] to be humbled by second place in a contest she did not design" as Alice Walker says in her "Dedication" to her edited volume of Hurston's work, *I love myself when I am Laughing . . . and then Again when I am Looking Mean and Impressive*, describes only part of the larger-than-life persona of Zora Neale Hurston and her revival towards the end of the twentieth century. That Hurston "refused to be humbled by" her race, her gender, or her class is fairly well established. Her "refusal to be humbled by" her U.S. nationality and the history of the U.S. is less established. In a sense, Hurston would not trade her black in-credibility as a subject in the U.S. for the particularities of that of another national space. She scoffed at the idea of twenty-two black Harlem Renaissance figures "traveling overseas [to Russia on board the *Europa*] to make a film about American race relations" (Boyd 237). Hurston "saw little logic in seeking refuge from racism in the 'whiteland' of Europe. Black people could find their aesthetic, artistic, and emotional center only by turning within, she believed, and embracing their own culture. 'As I see it' Hurston offered, 'unless some of the young Negroes return to their gods, we are lost'" (Boyd 238). She implied that few in that group of twenty-two were willing to go to other black Atlantic spaces or back to "their gods".

If Du Bois represents the U.S. black political engagement with the idea of the African diaspora on a grand theoretical scale then Hurston represents the interior, intraracial complexities of *entre nous* black diaspora formation. In this chapter, I examine the challenge of black diaspora *entre nous* relationships in the work of Zora Neale Hurston. When first published in 1938, *Tell My Horse*, unlike *Mules and Men* (1935), failed to break any real new ground in the writing and thinking about Haiti and Jamaica by a daughter of the U.S. South. The discrepancies between her intention to produce a more authentic reading based on shared African ancestry and her response to the realities on the ground is what this chapter explores. Hurston's attempts to study for a Ph.D. on "the Negro," under Franz Boas and Melville Herskovits included the islands and Haiti specifically (Kaplan 334-342).[131] Her letters make an elision, between U.S. black folk and Caribbean black folk that did not easily occur once on the islands.

Tell My Horse embodies the difficulty of negotiating diaspora and the difficulties of early black diaspora studies. This chapter also examines Hurston's inability to make a living doing her work exploring black sameness and difference. Her letters present the other side of the negotiations with editors, her colleagues, and the institutions she depended on for funding to get to the Caribbean and back. To understand what did not happen in Haiti and Jamaica or what Hurston could not do differently, given the demands of white publishers and money granting institutions, I suggest *Tell My Horse* has to be read in the context of her other texts and her life as a researcher and writer. If we trust Hurston's telling and framing of the events leading to her consciousness of herself in the world as a black folklore researcher and as a writer, then she learned early on that what came natural to her, an exuberance that made performing and telling tales easy, was mostly tolerated by black people wary of such displays

that could be reduced to minstrelsy. To maintain the surface relationship, one said very little of relevance or, if Hurston, regaled one's audience with songs, stories, or dances—still not revealing much.

The performances that whites passing through "the Big Road" in Eatonville paid for with nickels and pennies reflected the black image they were familiar with—ones Hurston felt Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* popularized for northerners. In a letter to Alain Locke, she writes:

> Then came UNCLE TOM'S CABIN and typed the Negro for the North. Not knowing Negroes, [the] characters were real. So, they have the fixed idea that we should all be sweet, long-suffering Uncle Toms, or funny Topsys. When the real us shows up, there is disillusionment. Then the northerner finds that he is no more willing to live in close communion with a number of Negroes than the southerner. (Kaplan 490)

The white travelers she describes in *Dust Tracks* knew well the image of the singing, laughing, incorrigible black child and the social order that that black child reinforced for them. [132] Hurston, more likely, fashioned herself after "High John De Conquer" who she says "is really Brer Rabbit the hero who wins by ruse . . . and symbolic . . . of a *force* universal that has more to it than appears on the surface" (Kaplan 489). Hurston goes beyond the "surface" when writing her letters to black friends and colleagues. Other than in the letters, most of the thoughts she spoke out loud about race and racism did not get published. In the letter to Locke she explains how the piece she wrote on High John De Conquer for the *American Mercury* had to be modified because the editor requested that she "sugar it up to flatter the war effort" (Kaplan 490). Of the ordeal with this magazine publisher (and others) she wrote, "Sometimes

you have to give something to get something" (Kaplan 490). As a black woman with little to fall back on, this give and take, with her giving more than she received, came to characterize most of her working life.

Thus from her earliest interactions with the white world, Hurston learned how to distinguish between what white people expected and believed about black people from how black people understood their reality in the United States. Keeping the two separate, and knowing how not to mix them, could and did prove difficult even for black adults. Simply put, some wanted to do away with the practices developed over years, centuries, to mitigate black in-credibility. Hurston blamed the desire for another way of relating to the white world as a black subject, for the 1943 riot in Detroit and the riots occurring elsewhere in the North. The article she wanted to write no one would let her and she hoped that Locke might take it up *Survey Graphic* by "showing that the basic trouble of that incident and others of its kind in the North arises out of the false premise that northerners love Negroes and that all the intolerance is in the South"(Kaplan 490). Hurston goes on to say, "I have seen the tragedy coming out of millions of simple, (and not so simple) Negroes rushing north with the firm belief that all is permitted there, and finding otherwise" (490). Her community in the South would have been familiar with withholding information and /or providing the "lie" that stood in for the truth that whites wanted to see and hear regarding *their* America. These "lies" kept certain black truths from overtly disrupting dominant white assumptions about themselves as white people and the black people they assumed they knew often because of the minstrel mask. As Houston A. Baker pointed out in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, "white America fashioned" the minstrel mask, "a device" to filter black speaking and writing (21). All regions of the United States made

liberal use of the minstrel mask.

Hurston considered it "a monstrous insult to [black people's] intelligence to blame northern racial unrest and violence on the South because northerners were unwilling to "admit [their] actual feelings about black people" (Kaplan 491). Black expectations in migrating north needed to be tempered because of the southern sensibilities and not because of black in-credibility. In *Workings of the Spirit: Conjure and the Space of Black Women's Creativity* (1991), Houston Baker says:

> If being "in the South" is taken as a metaphor for a traditionally oppressed or bounded situation, if it is a sign that gestures, for example, toward the closures of over-determined meanings in language, then one understands 'the lie' as a performance designed to forward the cultural anima's always already impulse toward freedom or liberation. And in such culturally grounded and always poetic performances, distinctions between matter and spirit, form and content, written and spoken are dissolved. (285)

"The lie," then, is what black people still resort to in white spaces in order to make future gains. Baker's definition of the "lie" comes from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). The protagonist's inability to "lie" to the white trustee when he "orders" him to show him real black life, what exists away from the black college, sets in motion a series of events that leads to a life far from what the soon-to-be graduate of a black college imagined for himself. When the trustee asked for the truth, Bledsoe, the dean, is outraged that the student he hand picked to fulfill this task did not know how. The protagonist did not know how to *discern* between the "truths" reserved for white trustees and the truths that blacks, like him, have had to keep for and from the whites, with power, who come asking. For being so unaware of his in-credibility and the

performance he was suppose to give back to the white trustee, the dean punishes him by ensuring that the larger white world will always "keep [him] running" (Ellison 496).

Unlike Ellison's unnamed protagonist, no one in Hurston's community would ever accuse her of not knowing any better and then devise for her the type of punishment that Bledsoe does for the unnamed protagonist. Hurston was, after all, one of their own and she knew how to read in black and white and also in gender and class terms. What she did do came from a willingness to test the boundaries or push them—and not out of an ignorance of how race and racism functioned and the risks involved in playing within the prescribed boundaries. Hurston came to the North with this understanding of herself as a black woman who knew white people and their possible racial limitations when it came to issues that went beyond the accepted norms. This understanding often set her at odds with those black people, New Negroes, who wanted to leave the Veil behind for one set of codes to read and apply and one non-race specific way of maneuvering and speaking in the United States—even if in a black body. During the Harlem Renaissance, certain black sounds and soundings were put to work in hopes of achieving the freedoms reserved for white people—sometimes with unintended results. Although the North offered some challenges for Hurston as a new arrival representing the South, it did not compare to the black differences she encountered while conducting research in the Caribbean.

The black particularities she observed in Haiti and Jamaica and published in *Tell My Horse*, at times did not benefit from Hurston's "spy-glass" discourse (*Mules* 1). She went to Haiti and Jamaica fully intending to be immersed and to blend in; she did not and possibly could

not. Carla Kaplan says, “In her Rosenwald application, Hurston adopted all the self-possession of a seasoned professional. ‘The major problem in my field,’ she wrote, is that collecting ‘must be done by individuals feeling the material as well as seeing it objectively. In order to feel and appreciate the nuances one must be of the group’” (165). The racism and sexism directed at Hurston by Edwin Embree, director of the foundation, most likely cut short a fuller consideration of intraracial differences and the mindset needed to “feel and appreciate the [Jamaican and Haitian] nuances” (165). At its most egregious, *Tell My Horse*, a project she fought for by obtaining a Guggenheim Fellowship after the Rosenwald Foundation decided her proposed course of study lacked rigor and discipline, oddly defended U.S. imperialism and the 1915 occupation of Haiti.[133] Hurston wanted to document the soundings of the islands as part of the effort to develop the “Negro field” in United States. Black Studies, let alone Diaspora Studies, did not yet exist when she applied in 1934 and made her proposal.

Unlike her introduction to *Mules and Men*, where she establishes her connection to “the familiar ground” of the South and her awareness of the way her academic training positions her, *Tell MY Horse* begins with the heading “The Rooster’s Nest” (*Mules* 1). That heading signals Hurston’s distance and difference in a place where the natural order of things is subverted. In Jamaica and Haiti Hurston became her most American self, a *blanc*, as Haitians called foreigners, who they did not tell their inside business to—easily. For instance, her Haitian maid Lucille who “loved to please” and whom Hurston “put on [her] roster of few earthly friends” would not reveal the meaning of the distance drumming or allow her to investigate” (Hurston 200). Hurston also provides the example of Joseph, “who bestowed himself upon [her] as a yard-boy” and her response to the awful smells coming from his room one night (201). Joseph

tried to explain that out of fear for his newborn child he needed to hold this "little ceremony to drive . . . away . . . the bad thing" that the drumming signaled (201). Hurston called his explanation "a fantastic lie" and ridiculed his fear that the "cochon gris [grey pigs] knew he had a really young baby and wanted to take it and eat it" (202). This story that Hurston relays is interrupted by the arrival of an upper class Haitian man. Joseph stops speaking and leaves which Hurston attributes to the rigid class structure of Haiti. Hurston tells this guest Joseph's "fantastic" story and immediately, "the gentleman" excuses himself to go scold the yard-boy. Hurston overhears the gentlemen "speaking in Creole and calling Joseph every kind of a stupid miscreant. He ended his tirade by saying since Joseph had been so foolish as to tell a foreigner, who might go off and say bad things about Haiti, such things, he was going to see that the Garde d'Haiti gave him a good beating with a coco-macaque" (203). Hurston pretends not to have heard the exchange and together they politely explain away Joseph's story, and his legitimate fear, "as figures of speech" common to Haitians and Americans (203).

Hurston realizes that after the verbal beating from the "Gros Negre," the Haitian gentleman, the yard-boy would not reveal himself to her again. Several questions immediately arise from this puzzling exchange. Where, in this multi-layered encounter with Joseph, was the nuance and the training that Hurston took pride in? Who benefits from reading a description about an in-house black maid who "loves to please" and a yard-boy who "lies" and lives in a room outside the main home?" Though she acknowledges the class structure and how that affects what get said or not said, Joseph's fear prompted him to tell her. She reacts the most forcefully against Joseph and his black in-credibility. Yet, if *Mules and Men* provides the model for her work in Haiti, the yard-boy, like the turpentine workers in South Florida, should have

been her most credible informant. Hurston, positioned like Ralph Ellison's white trustee in Haiti, leads Joseph to a Bledsoe like retaliation by his social betters for risking to tell the truth to the black American woman standing in for the *blanc*.

What disturbs Haitian and U.S. black readers is where Hurston locates herself in her retelling of Haiti's history and in the research that she conducts regarding both Haiti and Jamaica. She demonstrated an unwillingness to empathize with her Haitian or Jamaican subjects and did not allow them the complexity of her Southern black folk. For example, she finds nothing funny or familiar about the Haitian "lies" she hears. Hurston says:

> Certainly at the present time the art of saying what one would like to believe instead of the glaring fact is highly developed in Haiti. And when an unpleasant truth must be acknowledged a childish and fantastic explanation is ready at hand. More often it is an explanation that nobody but an idiot could accept but is told to intelligent people with an air of gravity. This lying habit goes from the thatched hut to the mansion, the only difference being what is lied about. The upper class lies about the things for the most part that touch their pride. The peasant lies about things that affect his well-being like work, and food, and small change. (82)

How are Haitians and their "lies" different from the blacks in the Florida swamps telling "lies" and tall-tales to appear bigger than their circumstances and to, at least verbally, move above their stations? Their "lies" do not signal what should have been a familiar "impulse toward freedom or liberation" (Baker 285). Hurston says, "The Haitian peasant is a warm and gentle person, really. But he often fancies himself to be Ti Malice, the sharp trickster of Haitian folk-lore" (82). It seems Haitians subjected Hurston to their tricksterism in response to her objectification of them. Seemingly, at no point, in a slippage that defies Hurston's

understanding of inside/outside dynamics, did she feel the need to record these exchanges as examples of Haitians exerting some power over their "betters." She also did not try to tell any "lies" of her own in order to break the barrier separating her from them—one of her earliest lessons in folklore collecting. The similarities between what Hurston observed and participated in and writes about in *Mules and Men* and in her research for *Tell My Horse* exist but gets lost in her overly defensive and critical assessment of Caribbean blackness and U.S. blackness. In Haiti, as well as Jamaica, Hurston was not one of the people, but a foreigner and treated as one. She knew that and did nothing to seriously bridge the divide.

Though the rigidity of the colonial slave legacy in both places disturbed her, other concerns and her own refusal to reproduce the accepted Black Nationalist idealism long identified with Haiti played a role. This Hurston, and the questions she raised about the idealism of being in a diaspora not measuring up to the realities especially with regard to black women's lives, deserves to be revisited. She did not "sugar coat" what she felt she needed to say to Haitians, Jamaicans, and U.S. blacks in this hastily folklore written collection. *Tell My Horse* basically castigated diaspora blacks for simply imitating whites and failing, at all levels, at nation-building. The sign of black diaspora failure, the limits of its idealism personified, was the black woman, her labor, and her sexual violation post enslavement. Hurston's earliest writings touched on all these issues but found their full, complex expression in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), *Tell My Horse* (1938), and parts of *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). In many ways, these texts borrow from each other and provide a backdrop or a context for exploring Hurston's growing black diaspora consciousness and the difficulties of coming to terms with what such a diaspora might mean along practical, geographical lines.

The novel published after *Tell My Horse*, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939) also continues a trajectory that finds Hurston wrestling with the spiritual and physical dimensions of black freedom as well as the difficulties of becoming a people. Reaching any promised land required a constant negotiation of the punitive power of white institutions. This side of Hurston, where she did her most significant black diaspora work, needs a wider audience. After its publication, parts of *Tell My Horse* did anger the Haitian and U.S. black gentry who accused her of either ignorance or maliciousness. Academics, like Alain Locke, and laypeople alike dismissed her book as either entertainment or "blatantly . . . exploiting black stereotypes for personal gain" (West 135, 137). Hurston was neither ignorant nor malicious. The pressure to support herself may have led her to try to capitalize on the interest in Haiti and that interest had to incorporate the Haitian version of the minstrel mask. The success of William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* (1929), and the white king of La Gonave himself, Faustin E. Wirkus, influenced the finished volume.[134] Parts of *Tell My Horse* continues to disturb present day readers, but others aspects of the text make it ripe for a renewed critical black diasporic engagement.

Zora Neale Hurston's rediscovery and attempts to reclaim her for the work of black diaspora needs to be as willing to go against the prevailing demands for a particular linear, academic historiography. Her second book of folklore, as reviewer Elmer Davis wrote for the Saturday Review, "is a curious mixture of remembrances, travelogue, sensationalism, and anthropology" (Gates 24). To begin to tell the stories of the black diaspora in the Americas, Hurston experimented with many narrative forms. In this volume, as in most of her other works, her "remembrances," her autobiographical, first person voice provides a fuller, more circumspect view of intraracial struggles in many ways more sharply drawn than Du Bois's.

Black diasporic life as seen through the eyes of other black diaspora figures, or of returnees like Aimé Césaire, to a "native" black space is often awash with contradictory reactions to "the leavings of" enslavement and colonization.[135] Hurston knew enough about white people in order to advance "her own freedom and liberation," with "lies" that blurred, in groundbreaking ways, the lines "between matter and spirit, form and content, written and spoken" (Baker 285). This latter understanding is only part of the way to read *Tell My Horse*. It needs to be combined with intraracial sayings like "My People! My People!" and "*Nou lèd, nou la*" (We are ugly, but we are here). These English and Haitian Creole are examples of black people responding to their in-credibility in the West. Both sayings come out of black experiences in the Americas and specially enslavement. This black way of speaking captured what the ships of the Middle Passage help to create, black people, and the racial hierarchy that demonized, distorted black people humanity.[136]

In his introduction to *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader (1995)*, David Levering Lewis says much of what Hurston felt when he describes the reaction to Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926). He says, "While the novel's title alone enraged many Harlemites who felt their trust and hospitality betrayed the deeper objections of the sophisticated to *Nigger Heaven* lay in its message that the Talented Tenth's preoccupation with cultural improvement was a misguided affectation that would cost the race its vitality. It was the 'archaic Negroes' who were at ease in their skins and capable of action, Van Vechten's characters demonstrated" (xxxi). Though troubling, this assessment from Van Vechten, a white man, reaffirmed Hurston's own positions regarding the worth and value of the community's most vulnerable members." She, along with Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Bruce Nugent, and the others of their set,

felt that Van Vechten presented Harlem in all its dirt and glory.[137] As an artist and researcher of black folklore, Hurston did not believe it was her job to sanitize Harlem or erase the illicit sexual activity associated with this emerging black cultural center. Speaking in the language and idiom of the folk, she knew from her experiences in jook joints and sanctified churches, and what these black folk said in front of strangers about their beliefs, Hurston told just enough to foreground her understanding of blackness. Within the aspect of black Southern cultural production that she developed, she did not let fears of what whites wanted and needed to see from their black subordinates interfere with the truth of black life as she knew it. Hurston decided that she wanted to tell the "beautiful-ugly"[138]stories of black people and all of their foibles.

Like newly arriving Southern migrants to segregated cities like Harlem, Hurston came, as I stated previously, with her "featherbed resistance," (*Mules* 2) a form of resistance that in Hurston's hands assumed that all blacks understood the difference between the performance of blackness in mixed circles and the reality. Like other migrants, Christine Hickman says, "[Hurston's] memory was overflowing with the acquired narrative legacy of her race, and . . . this was something she *brought* to the Renaissance. She rejected the propagandistic aspect of the bourgeois Negro literary philosophy, which stated that 'black art should avoid reinforcing racists stereotypes by refusing to portray the lowest elements of the race', she wanted to be an authentic, not a bowdlerized, Negro voice" (*Devil* 1218). But unlike other new arrivals, without Hurston's confidence and intellectual abilities, Hurston defended and insisted on a strategy of being her Southern self. She would turn the opening created by the white desire to fetishize blacks and their perceived primitivism to her own advantage. In her mind, whether she ate the

figurative watermelon white hosts provided or not, did not alter what the watermelon signified about black/white relationships. In-credible moments called for more in-credibility. Sometimes it seems Hurston went out of her way to stoke the embarrassment that the "broken English" of the black majority invoked in the black middle class. Whatever their speaking desires, many blacks in dominant white spaces were still heard through the minstrel mask. Black reactions to their in-credibility in white spaces created moments that could fall under the heading of "My People, My People" or "Nou léd, nou la."

This Haitian proverb recalls a similar thought expressed in Langston Hughes' essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." Hughes says:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (qtd. in Gates and McKay 1271)This attempt to accept black ugliness and beauty, usually with a laugh that contains any number of feelings, from Haiti to the U.S. and all across the black Atlantic represents an example of a shared history of outsiderness, of black differences recognized and claimed. The ugliness that only blacks can name stands in for more than mere physical appearance. It contains a history of being the other, of being the one who could be enslaved and owned by any other group of people. Through it all people of African descent survived "to leave our place markers in the soil" (Dash *Daughters*). In the black

Atlantic, Haitian Creole and the English Patois of several nations return to the ugliness of the history and the processes by which they came to be in-credible and at the same time assert their "beautiful-ugly" right to the places they call home.

These sayings and phrases, like "saltwater African," continue to give voice to the complexities of *entre nous* black speaking and sounding. They join resignation and resistance in one body: we are here and we are a people. Hurston wrote the original version of "My People! My People!" while in Haiti in 1937 and revised it into chapter twelve of *Dust Tracks on a Road*.[139] In both versions, Hurston writes unflinchingly about the intraracial divides within the black diaspora in the Americas. The later version focuses on U.S. blacks and, appropriately, is more autobiographical. She takes aim at the "self deprecating humor" that produced the refrain, "My People! My People!" that she says usually follows the monkey tales. "My People! My People!", still exclaimed today, acts as a place holder for the displaced monkey tales in U.S. black popular culture. Chapter twelve in *Dust Tracks* recounts how Hurston struggled to understand the vacillation between race pride and race hate "from the very people who always applauded 'the great speech [about the genius of the race],' when it was shouted to them from the schoolhouse rostrum" (Hurston 161). Then, she says, "For instance, let some member of the community do or say something which was considered either dumb or underhand: the verdict was 'Dat's just like a nigger!'. . . . It was not said in either admiration or pity" (161). Witnessing black people's response to the threat of racial violence, Hurston, as a child, came to understand that the community's seeming contempt and self-ridicule was a mask that hid their aspirations and fears. The earlier version reaches across the black diaspora to deliver a pointed critique of black people's pretensions without an attempt to interrogate what lies beneath the surface

narrative.

Throughout *Tell My Horse* she does not provide clear signs that could be read as her saying one thing but meaning another. Hurston says of black people across the diaspora, going as far as Ethiopia, "We would rather do a good imitation than any amount of something original" (220). After a catalogue of blacks copying whites she asks, "What did Haiti ever do to make the world glad it happened? Well they held a black revolution right behind the white one in France. And now their Senators and Deputies go around looking like cartoons of French Ministers and Senators in spade whiskers and other goatee forms" (220). No doubt she saw different Haitian officials up close and noted the pains they took to look like they belonged in their respective offices. She concedes that in striving to look official, they were no different from their U.S. black counterparts. Outside of the language, they were indistinguishable from their U.S. counterparts (221). But to question the significance of enslaved men and women revolting, creating a nation, and challenging the practice of Western slavery must have enraged many Haitians and other blacks in the diaspora who needed Haiti to be the site of what black people could achieve politically (Dash 50). What her salacious statement does do is put French and Haitian Revolutions side by side—the creation of a black republic to match a white one. The black republic did not, as one would have hoped, resolve intraracial issues like color discrimination. Though Haiti was known as a black nation, it had the same color stratification as other nations and colonies in the black Atlantic.

Of the Jamaicans who make up the first section of her research, she writes:

> In Jamaica, the various degrees of Negroes put on some outward show to impress you that no matter what your eyes tell you, that they are really white

> folks—white English folks inside. . . . You get the impression that Jamaica is the place where roosters lay eggs. That these Englishmen come there and without benefit of females they just scratch out a nest and lay an egg that hatches out a Jamaican. (221)

Hurston's observations about Jamaican color stratification under colonial rule in *Tell My Horse*, along with the gender inequities she that she objected to, also threaten to overtake a research on folk practices. Hurston reacted strongly against what appeared like the total rejection of African ancestry in those in Jamaica. Jamaican straining for English or Scottish ancestry erased the sexual violation of the enslaved or the later freed but still colonized black women. Moreover, the darker the black woman and her off-spring, the worse was her social standing. Under the notorious chapter "Women in the Caribbean," in *Tell My Horse,* Hurston makes some of her harshest statements about Caribbean women's treatment and the sexual and physical abuse men, usually upper class, heaped on women of all classes. According to Hurston the Caribbean men reserved their most vile contempt for poor, usually darker skinned women. Though the geographical space differed, gender, color, and class stratification also happened in U.S. black communities.

One of Hurston's earliest short stories, "Sweat," (1926) published in the black magazine she helped to organize, *Fire!!*, examined in stark emotional tones black women's domestic abuse in the United States. Her play *Color Struck!* that won second place, and occasion "her refusal to be humbled by a contest she did not design," addressed colorism in the U.S. (Walker 4). Who if anyone is being "gamed" in a text that seems bent on disavowing the recognition of the shared legacy of enslavement? In Jamaica and Haiti what she heard and saw disturbed her and led her to conclude, "My skin-folks, but not kin-folks" to distance herself from those other

blacks (Hurston 168). Hurston, writing the first version of "My People, My People!" in Haiti, says "It is the interpretation [of the saying] that is difficult. . . . Which ever way you go to describe it—the cry, the sigh, the wail, the groaning grin or grinning groan of 'My People, My People!' bursts from us when we see sights that bring on despair" (213).[140] On the surface her visceral reaction to Haitians and Jamaicans "[brought her] despair." By the time she published the second version "My People! My People!" in *Dust Tracks*, the sexism, colorism, and self-hate examined in mock; scathing detail all takes place in the United States. In the end, "the sigh, the wail, the groaning grin or grinning groan" was indeed one of recognition—a recognition at first rejected.

My reading of *Tell My Horse* counters J. Michael Dash's brief review of the Hurston's work in Haiti. In *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (1988), he writes:

> Haiti was for Hurston a nightmare world fit only to be probed anthropologically and to be rehabilitated militarily. Hurston's comments on Haitian folk culture are consistent with her reactionary politics. Other black writers could be forgiven since their sensationalist fictions were often motivated by the urgent need to establish a common folk heritage. Hurston's motivation seems to have been unmitigated contempt. (60)

Part of reclaiming Hurston and this text is to unpack "the nightmare," if indeed Haiti was ever her "nightmare," and read her reactions in the context of black Atlantic in-credibility and the possible pressures of the publishing world that wanted to hear the soundings they associated with Haiti. Hurston's complex relationship to Haiti and Jamaica becomes clearer when considered with her most famous novel. The particulars of race, gender, and class experienced in the Caribbean, plus the pain of ending a recent love affair, form the backdrop for writing

Their Eyes Were Watching God in seven weeks while in Haiti.[141] *Tell My Horse* was published in March, 1938, six months after the publication of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The two texts speak to each other and share certain intraracial anxieties that also need to be reclaimed. The distance created by the journey away from her home place allowed for the recognition of horror, of the ugliness that black people needed to find ways to live with from early on. In the edited version, of "My People! My People!" she revisits the multilayered terror that the "crudest" black soundings negotiate. Janie Crawford could not have come to life without the difference and sameness of black women's lives in the U.S. and the Caribbean. Hurston could create a black female heroine longing for love and spring time in a marriage and have a grandmother who did not want her "used like a spit cup" by either white men or black men. Furthermore, she did not want her granddaughter worked like a mule.

By the late twentieth century, many writers would return to this oft-maligned text to begin unpacking or explaining aspects of the unspeakable *entre nous* in the black diaspora. Caribbean American writers like Michele Cliff and Edwidge Danticat return to Hurston's troubling images of black womanhood in their writing. In Danticat's first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), the battle to keep daughters chaste during the violence of the Duvalier[142] regime heightened the internal trauma of poor Haitian black women who did not want to be source of familial dishonor. Hurston writes, "A man may marry a girl but if he wishes to do so, he can return her to her parents by saying simply, 'I was not the first.' Then he can vindicate his honor by getting a divorce and marry the woman he prefers. She cannot refute his statement. What could she offer as proof?" (61). The proof, in Danticat's novel, would be obtained in the form of "tests" that the mother performed on her daughters. In the text, the "tests" do not

achieve any of the desired social goals since it does not protect against rape or give a young, poor black woman "rights which [a man] is bound to respect" (Hurston 59). The "tall haired" Jamaican, Michelle Cliff, positions her autobiographical telling within Hurston's description of Jamaica's social and color stratification. To begin her prose poem, *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise* (1980), and her attempts to "reveal" in *The Land of Look Behind* (1985), Cliff addressed Hurston's observations about "roosters who lay eggs" and the "pink Jamaicans" becoming legally white (*Horse* 6). Cliff says, "Under British rule—Zora Neale Hurston writes about this—we could have ourselves declared legally white. The rationale was that it made us better servants/ This symbolic skin was carried to the United States where passing was easy" (Cliff 6). Becoming "legally white" did not mean they socially mingled with the British whites on the island, but in the U.S., with the proper precautions, light-skinned Jamaicans could pass into the white race.

Black in-credibility made each of these black responses to whiteness not only possible but logical and acceptable. The particularity of black women's in-credibility as subjects, in these spaces, displaces the Vodou and Obeah that Hurston goes in search of. For her, how black women became the "mule of the world" signified the biggest act of terrifying transmutation, one that Vodou, Obeah, or Hodou could do little to alter. Hurston's own encounters with black female in-credibility that felt like she "stepped back to the days of slavery" upended the original focus of her journey (*Horse* 7). Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987) will continue to delve into the color and class conflicts in Jamaica. The plight of poor Jamaican women and children, children Jamaican men did not have to claim, living in "the Dungle," homes made out of the garbage heap, echoes Hurston's outrage in *Tell My Horse* (Cliff 32). She writes:

> Of course all women are inferior to all men by God and law down there. But if a woman is wealthy, of good family and mulatto, she can overcome some of her drawbacks. But if she is of no particular family, poor and black, she is in a bad way indeed in that man's world. . . . Women get no bonus just for being female down there. She can do the same labors as a man or a mule and nobody thinks anything about it. (Hurston 58- 59)

This reads as if Hurston refused to recognize the legacy of enslavement in Caribbean women's treatment, the expectation that they work as hard as a man while also being subject to sexual violation. In her own fiction, *Their Eyes*, Nanny[143] will represent this slave past and its hold on the present black reality. Janie, the granddaughter of a slave woman will spend the novel trying to break free of the strictures of her slave inheritance regarding the need for love and self revelation post enslavement.

Hurston's research in Haiti and Jamaica added the sharpness to Janie's longing, as a poor black girl with "tall hair," for a space where "love and marriage [are] related" (*Horse* 59). Creating spaces for consensual love, sexual desire, and marriage in black Atlantic spaces became, as M. Nourbese Philip says, "in those circumstances [of slavery and post slavery] . . . the most powerful gesture of resistance possible" (29). Gayl Jones would develop this idea further in her poetry. To Nanny, love did not enter into her marriage calculations for her granddaughter, this time and this place called for "protection." Hurston, and the writing of black women like Gayle Jones, argues that black people had to "create [the] time [and] the place" for love even though that love defied Western credibility (Jones 52). It is no surprise that the blues, as an art form begins, with black people sounding their loss and longing of a loved one as well as their powerlessness to resolve certain situations. Unrequited love, spurned love, or the risks taken to love as a black person another black person, as Aunt Hester does in

Frederick Douglass's slave narrative, provides the give black soundings their layers of meaning and complexity. Looking for what the Jamaicans and Haitians did with "the leavings of a language of" (Philip 50) of terror and oppression, she found, at times, an overwhelming negation and disavowal of blackness and Africanness as she understood it.

Hurston pointedly contrasted the American approach to blackness with that of colonial Jamaica by saying:

> There is frantic stampede white-ward to escape from Jamaica's black mass. . . . Perhaps the Jamaican mixed bloods are logical and right, perhaps the only answer to the question of what is to become of the negro in the Western world is that he must be absorbed by whites. Frederick Douglass thought so. If he was right, then the strategy of the American Negro is all wrong, that is, the attempt to achieve a position equal to the white population in every way but each to maintain its separate identity. Perhaps we should strike our camps and make use of the cover of night and execute a masterly retreat under white skins. If that is what must be, then any way at all of getting more whiteness among us is a step in the right direction. I do not pretend to know what is wise and best. The situation presents a curious spectacle to the eyes of an American Negro. It is as if one stepped back to the days of slavery or the generation immediately after surrender when negroes had little else to boast of except a left-hand kinship with the master, and the privileges that usually went with it of being house servants instead of field hands. Then, as in Jamaica at present, no shame was attached to a child born "in a carriage with no top." But the pendulum has swung away over to the other side of our American clock. Even in His majesty's colony it may work out to everyone's satisfaction in a few hundred years, if the majority of the population can be persuaded to cease reproduction. That is the weak place in the scheme. The blacks keep on being black and reminding folk where mulattoes come from, thus conjuring up tragic-comic dramas that bedevil the security of the Jamaican mixed bloods. (7)

A similar "insecurity bedevil[ed]" the light-skinned Haitians in Haiti, though they lack any legal way to become white since they belong to the first black nation in the Western Hemisphere and the dark majority of Haitians keep reproducing. Jamaica and Haiti presented an extreme of Hurston's experiences of Negro uplift movements in the U.S. The black leadership thought they

knew best but instead, according to Hurston, they offered poor leadership and poor cultural examples for the black masses. Above all, Hurston's occasional calling out of lighter-skinned blacks in the U.S. for not being black enough did not alter the fact that she knew the lightest black person and the darkest black person were still subject to the same laws, resisting the same racism. The white ruling system did not offer legal whiteness to its blacks and black people, no matter their visible differences from each other or their proximity to visual whiteness, were legally identified as black. Thus what Hurston could take for granted, the culture that developed around fixed notions of black identities, caused her to react In the twenty-first century, the question Hurston asked, "what is to become of the Western Negro: absorption or continue to attempt to achieve full equality as a separate black race?" in the last century remains a valid one (7). Aside from denying one's black heritage and passing, blacks were not going to be black in the United States. Claiming a black identity meant respecting and maintaining the connections to the "Negro farthest down" (Hurston 129). Hurston seems to say those blacks accessing white institutional spaces could not be trusted to hold out and not join "the stampede white-ward" in one form or another.

Hurston suggests that Jamaica and Haiti needed more time to develop and come to "respect themselves . . . and to love their own things like their songs, their Anansi stories and proverbs and dances" (9). In her initial reaction, she felt her U.S. black people were further along on this black cultural trajectory. This process was already underway all over the black Atlantic as black people from the Caribbean settled in Harlem and lived and worked in Florida with U.S. Southern blacks.[144] Michael Dash says, "Haiti would provide for black writers [during the 1920s] not a shudder of fear but a 'frisson' of recognition. . . . The celebration of folk values

did extend beyond Haiti to include the entire Caribbean" (56). By the time Hurston arrived in Harlem, in 1925, Haitians and U.S. blacks were already engaged politically and creatively because of the first U.S. Occupation of Haiti in 1915.[145] *The Crisis*, edited by W.E.B Du Bois, and the *Opportunity* rallied blacks in the States to protest this attack on Haitian sovereignty. Dash says, "The Crisis sent James Weldon Johnson to investigate reports of injustice emerging from Occupied Haiti" (Dash 49). Thus Hurston was well aware of affairs of Haiti and Haitians and what Haitian independence meant to black people in Harlem.

As a black diasporic text, *Tell My Horse* remains problematic for a number of reasons even as it provides clues for addressing the misconceptions about the black "other" to each other. For one, *Tell My Horse* does not fit the recent narratives of revival and rethinking surrounding Hurston research. Though produced in part as a way to capitalize on the success of other Haiti-themed texts, written primarily by white men, *Tell My Horse* is an important part of understanding the difficulties of joining black diaspora identities in the Americas.[146] The success of her Bahamian forays while researching *Mules and Men* and her Bahamian Fire Dance revues made going to Haiti and Jamaica a next logical step. [147] For the most part Hurston was still home and still in her own context. *Tell My Horse* presents a Hurston, clearly positioned within the U.S. black masses and more controversially as an American citizen advocating her government's foreign policy towards Haiti. For many Haitians, and her U.S. black American contemporaries, this was an unforgivable willful offense. It is as if what happened in Haiti, the totality of her experience there, stayed in Haiti. Her Southern roots and her training at Columbia University, under Franz Boas and her later work with Melville Herskovits, enabled her to go "looking for the join"[148] in Jamaica and Haiti but what that "join" would actually look like outside of her own

black context led her to react defensively. What Hurston chose to *tell* and how she did it, seemingly without a deeper understanding of the people recent experiences or the deference they must pay for because of her U.S. citizenship, registers her distance, her discomfort, and what appears, at times, as her disgust.

Moments of black rejection and recognition need to be recouped before intraracial differences can become a source of strength. Hurston willingly embraced her "saltwater origins," but that did not stop her from reacting against perceived black differences in the Caribbean and fearing points of sameness. In *Tell My Horse*, Hurston says, "I do not pretend to know what is wise and best" (7) but to her mind the Jamaicans and Haitians will need to adapt to the U.S. Black American way for much needed "stability and coherence"(Smallwood 7). On the surface, she can be accused of presenting the mirror image of what she railed against in the U.S.: Northern blacks looking down on Southern blacks. The gender and intraracial encounters she commented on were subsumed by the jingoism of parts of *Tell My Horse*. Lines like "They were like that [desecrating the body of Haitian President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam] when the black plume of the American battleship smoke lifted itself against the sky" (72) coming to save Haiti from itself. Hurston also names Raphael Trujillo, the Dominican dictator, as a possible champion of the Haitian people in spite of the estimated 30,000 Haitians he ordered killed in the 1937 massacre. That statement and how she turned the Caco resistance fighters, heroes of the people during the first Occupation, into armed thugs reads as completely irresponsible.[149] Haiti's organic heroes from the peasant class were fighting against the instituting of U.S. style chain-gangs in Haiti.[150] The chain-gang and the Marine trained Haitian Garde, used to keep peasants like the yard-boy Joseph in line, did not deviate that much from what she knew to be

the hallmarks of the U.S. racism and the effects on U.S. blacks. Interestingly, nowhere in her text does she refer to the pioneering work of Jean Price-Mars, a "*noiriste*" who stressed the cultural importance of Haiti African past" (Arthur and Dash 48). He published a seminal work on the African roots of Haitian culture and identified the resistance to enslavement in the Americas as the main source of the current culture in *Ainsi parla l' oncle* (1928). Of the people she encountered and named as the future of Haiti's revival, Price-Mars cannot be found. Haitian writer and activist Jacques Roumain is not mentioned either, though Langston Hughes and the other U.S. blacks protested his political arrest by the new Haitian President Sténio Vincent pictured in *Tell My Horse*.

Hurston writes of Jamaicans not "respect[ing] themselves" without considering where the Jamaicans she knew or heard of, like Claude McKay and especially Marcus Garvey fit in her analysis. Questions like why a Jamaican was able to come to the U.S. and begin the largest popular black movement and launch the Black Star Line in the U.S., and Harlem no less, were not considered nor what his mobilization of the black masses meant since Hurston wrote about and represented the cultural interests of the U.S. black masses. What remains true even as the assumptions of a monolithic mass of black people does not, is that Garvey as a black diasporic leader could not have become Garvey, whom Du Bois referred to as "a Negro with a hat," without the United States.[151] These intraracial complexities were often lost on white editors and a white readership not inclined to think of those of African descent as kin to them anyway but as commodities. In the U.S. the line of descent began and ended with the black mother in the "one drop rule."[152] The "one drop rule," though enforced by the U.S. as a way to maintain enslavement and provide a steady stream of laborers, came to serve the purposes of U.S. black

political identity formation in creating a people that would indeed "die and stay black" (*Mules* 150)

In "The Devil and the One Drop Rule: Racial categories and the U.S. Census," Christine B. Hickman says:

> The Devil fashioned [the one drop rule] out of racism, malice, greed, lust, and ignorance, but in so doing he also accomplished good: His rule created the African-American race as we know it today, and while this race has its origins in the peoples of three continents and its members can look very different from one another, over the centuries the Devil's one drop rule united this race as a people in the fight against slavery, segregation, and racial injustice. (1166)

The laws in the U.S. ensured that whites stayed white and that blacks stayed black. Passing, in literature and practice, became a U.S. phenomenon where as Michelle Cliff put it "[she] could not talk about [her] darkest grandfather who climbed coconut trees with his bare feet." Those stories were saved for when she returned home. In Jamaica and in most of Latin America, one could become white even with such a grandfather or grandmother. Carlos Moore black Cuban activist and author, says, "In Latin America the norm equals phenotype while in the U.S., the racial norm is based on genetics. In one Latino family, you can have several races" (Leonard Lopate Show, Dec. 8, 2008). This aspect of U.S. black identity formation sets U.S. blacks apart from many other nationals of African descent in the diaspora. As mentioned earlier, Hurston described how light-skinned Jamaicans were given nominal whiteness "on the census rolls." As Baker says, Hurston was working within "the double jeopardy of white disapproval and Afro-American rejection" (293). *Tell My Horse*, and to a lesser extent *Mules and Men*, in the hands of white publishers became examples of this "double jeopardy." What pleased white people did not always please black people. During trying times, one was not guaranteed to be understood

or appreciated by all black people.

One explanation for the differences in tone and feel between the two works has to do with what publisher Lippincott wanted to publish and market for white readers who wanted a sensational, titillating tale from the Africa of in the New World. The version of the mask that Hurston knew how to use to give a *trompe l'oeil* telling, whereby she provides a fake outside that masks an *entre nous* inside, backfired. Her attempt to be Guedé's horse—"the spirit or l[w]a who mounts believers . . . fling[ing] insults or reveal[ing] compromising events in someone's history with impunity" left black readers confused (West 131).[153] *Tell My Horse* would begin Hurston's slide outside of the black intelligentsia and into a world where she is signifying and black people cannot or do not read the messages. What M. Genevieve West says about her essays "written between 1943 and 1945," in *Zora Neale Hurston and American Literary Culture*, also applies to Tell My Horse:

> Hurston's reputation, however, would not have inspired the trust of black readers. It is difficult to know how many of Hurston's black readers decoded her secondary message. She played the trickster, but she did not necessarily come out on top. (199)

I would add that the triumph of tricksterism is complicated, not always immediate, and does not satisfy people who want or have greater access and power. Hurston had neither access nor power, in the traditional sense, but she wanted to live a writer's life and the life of a researcher. *Tell My Horse*, the product of intense immersion, as published in 1938, did not live up to its potential. The collection of tales, practices, and observations did not sell well and it did not enable her "to reassert herself as a serious scientist" by the standards of the profession (West 144). But Hurston's reworking of form, content, and voice to create something original and her

own, though not as successful in *Tell My Horse*, had another audience in mind. She was "build[ing] [her] temples for tomorrow, strong as [she] kn[e]w how . . . free within [herself]" (Hughes 1271).

Hurston's idea of a black diaspora within the Americas required a mind shift away from the lost, edenic Africa of an earlier generation to the Americas and the places that the descendantsdescendants of enslaved Africans remade. Du Bois used African royal history as a starting place and providing a social, scientific understanding for the state of black America. Even with their shortcomings, U.S. blacks would lead the world-wide black renaissance—something Du Bois in his later years retracted. Hurston's interests were not as far ranging in terms of establishing a unified program or policy. Whatever blacks needed to learn about being black, existed in the Americas. The personal biases in her thinking found their way into *Tell My Horse* in tone and in the observations that compared black cultural development in the U.S. with that of Jamaica and Haiti. Hurston wrote as if doubly removed, as if standing outside of an always already outside with only a hint of attachment or kinship. Haiti and Jamaica became potentially all consuming jungle spaces of unintelligibility ready to negate the "stability and coherence" of U.S. black identities. As evident in *Mules and Men*, where Hurston positions herself in relation to the telling makes all the difference. Hurston's experiences also revealed the importance of continuously locating oneself in the telling.

Thus, her two anthropological works present two approaches to telling: one standing outside of the group while being a legitimate insider using the researcher's tools and the second, standing outside of the group as an outsider with less of a need to make the data

attend to what the training and the "facts" sometimes omit, elides, or disregards. This breakdown is equivalent to the (clucking sound) that the uneducated father makes and the educated daughter cannot write down in *Mules and Men* (41). The father cannot write and the daughter cannot adequately reproduce the sound on paper. As Barbara Johnson says, "The daughter in the tale is in situation analogous to that of Hurston" (181) Hurston goes to another black "home [space] to transcribe what [another set of African] forebears utter orally" and the adjustments she made to the "notation system" for U.S blacks needed to be amended again for the Caribbean and the larger transcription of black diaspora sounds and soundings (Johnson 181). In *Tell my Horse* Hurston reads the fitness of the Caribbean and the U.S. as always incredible spaces for the challenge of being a black diaspora. For black peoples who share a common origin in Africa as descendants "of those who chose to survive" (*Daughters* Dash), they seemed ill-prepared for the diaspora identity she had in mind. Hurston was also not as prepared for the task of black diaspora interlocutor.

The struggle to identify what "joined" people of African descent in the black Atlantic was already underway when she deliberately challenged some of the established myths and iconography. Beyond the sensationalism and the shock of her words, Hurston rightly asked on what terms would the black diaspora be conceived going forward. Would the terms, iconography, and soundings be distinct to the history of the region or an "imitation" of white ideals and practices? Without the wholehearted acceptance of folk soundings and practices, her own reaction to Haitians and Jamaicans not withstanding, she felt they had little else. Hurston said, "Roll your eyes in ecstasy and ape his every move, but until we have placed something upon his street corner that is our own, we are right back where we were when they

filed our iron collar off" (Gates 267). She exemplified dilemma of black differences, of the one group of black people disavowing the saltwater, *kongo*, or *bosal* qualities of other blacks in the diaspora. Each New World nation and its people had to come into it own understanding of what belonged to them and have other blacks accept their manifestation of black diasporic difference.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse* has its greatest significance "in the break" that Hurston's chapter on Caribbean women left for future writers. That break allowed her to write *Their Eyes were Watching God*, a novel that I contend needs to be read with *Tell My Horse* to fully grasp what Hurston was writing against. The two works together represent an aspect of the black diaspora that the black male engagement of with the concept often resists and Hurston could not. Black women's lives in the diaspora in the Americas took over her narrative search for Vodou and Obeah practices. Women that Hurston described in animalistic terms continued to signify the terrors of enslavement. The black diaspora in the Americas still cannot hold together because its initial story, its sounds and soundings, is gendered black and female. The stories handed down, despite the best efforts of W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Gilroy after him, to skew the narrative telling towards the unspeakable and the unspoken of which black women signify. Hurston's gendering of the black Atlantic began this difficult part of black diaspora speaking about women's lives pre and post enslavement. The breaks in her work allow for this examining of what makes black *entre nous* speaking and telling problematic across U.S. regions, across class and gender, across national borders while also addressing the overarching problem of attempting such cross dialogues within spaces of continuing white domination or the legacy of such domination.

Freedom is the kind of thing that required you to leave your bones on the hills of Brimsbay, or to burn the cane fields, or to live in a garret for seven years, or to stage a general strike, or to create a new republic. It is won and lost, again and again. **(Hartman 169-170)**

Zora Neale Hurston did not want the kind of racist kindness that came from white people "not seeing" her blackness nor did she want the kind of kindness that came from an agreed upon perception of black disadvantage, black inferiority, or pity for circumstances she did not want to change. For her, in the kindness of the unspoken, ignored, or forgiven, there was no kindness. These gestures only served to reinforce what she could not accept or believe about black cultural production in the United States and elsewhere in the black diaspora in the West. These gestures on the part of whites and other acts of black self-negation seemed to say that blacks in the West had produced nothing significant and contributed nothing to the Americas while Hurston knew better. The enslaved and their descendants changed everything—including white culture. Hurston spent her life resisting and rejecting the kind of kindness and condescending consideration she felt her contemporaries wanted from the dominant culture and scoffed at the anger or protest that followed when they did not get it. She believed blacks, who had since arrival, made a place for themselves in the U.S., as Africans in the Americas, would never be fully recognized as part of the American norm and thus never accorded their true value in the general culture at large without, at first, knowing their worth.

Valerie Boyd says, "freedom [,] Hurston believed [,] was not a commodity that one race

could give another—nor take away—because it had little to do with political or even economic gains. . . . . Once a critical mass of black people had attained this internal freedom, Hurston felt, more pragmatic freedoms would be inevitable" (369). In one of her letters she told Countee Cullen, "I mean to live and die by my own mind" (398). For Hurston, the kindness of looking beyond her race, which she celebrated, was too unkind. She responded to blacks and whites who insisted on these gestures of racial elision—without challenging or disrupting the overall notion of white superiority—often with disdain, if not downright anger. In making the case for Hurston's spirit work in fixing place, Baker quotes this long passage by writer Yi-Fu Tuan that also serves my understanding of the spaces black people occupy and define and the places they have made for themselves in the Americas:

> In experience the meaning of space often merges with that of place. 'Space' is more abstract than 'place.' What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The idea 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (282)

In his analysis Baker goes on to say, "On the basis of Tuan's observations, we might say that space is the condition of possibility of movement, a possibility that can be affirmed by sight or vision and confirmed by touch. Place, as a complement, is a locational pause contoured by distinguishable interests. Hence, place, insofar as interests mark boundaries, may be thought of as 'a focus of value, of nurture, and support'" (282). The "pause in movement [that] makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" has to accommodate the realities of double consciousness and the dangers of the "pause" that could turn into stasis, the end of movement

if all members stay.

The resistance of the first Africans and their descendants created counter racial spaces that become place markers; place holders for a subject race to re-member themselves in spaces of initial hostility. Hurston's use of space and her understanding of place begin, in many ways, with the traditional black stories that acted as place markers for people of African descent in the U.S., stories like those of "High John de Conqueror." With High John, "as a focus of value, of nurture, and support," people who knew themselves by ethnic groups and village identities from another continent became black and created places for black culture to thrive. While Hurston indeed stayed black, her blackness was neither facile nor simple. Hurston was able to stay black and fluid in her black identity. Part of black diaspora cultural legacy centers on the dynamics of moving and staying. Movement demands fluidity, but at the same time one's sense of place and belonging provides the context for meaning and the ability to successfully create new meaningful places. Again, the difficulty, as always, remains in the twoness, in the ways each new black generation understands the significance of "operat[ing] in a split consciousness" (14), and in the "other places" that blacks need to maintain while in white spaces. Hurston no doubt visited the *lakous,* sacred yards, where the family held their ceremonies to the *lwas* (gods) and honor their dead while in Haiti and Jamaica. Even when, people leave they need to finds ways to maintain these spaces even as enter into traditionally white institutions that make renewed these ties in the old ways difficult. Many devise new ways and new practices to keep the connection to these anchoring places or else suffer the consequences. It is this understanding of black wholeness that keeps blacks, black and recognizable to each other.[154] Competing black desires in spaces of white institutional

domination further complicates the purpose and relative safety of inside, spaces and challenges the potential power of double consciousness for black peoples in a continuous state of "fugitive" movement away from the potential peril of stasis.

In Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) the psychic epidemic "Jes Grew" personifies the black spirit, energy that cannot be pinned down. Distinctly black, it can reform anywhere as it searches for its calling. Reed uses Hurston's description of birth of a new *lwa* in *Tell My Horse* as an epigraph and a definition of Jes Grew, "Some unknown natural phenomenon occurs which cannot be explained, and a new local demigod is named" (11). The twenty-first century needs the phenomenon that will enable not only *entre nous* speaking but the kind of comprehension Du Bois missed when with the other members of the Veil. He writes in *The Souls of Black Folk* that the people gathered in Tennessee at the start of the last century "had a half-awakened common consciousness" that "caused [them] to think some thoughts together; but these when ripe for speech, were spoken in various languages" (257). Each generation begins again the search for a common set of signs and a black speaking and sounding understandable in this latest struggle to make sense of the changing same of black identity formation in relation to the white world. The post Civil Rights era now punctuated by the election of the first black president still has to "find its speaking."

The relationship between the black worker and artist and white institutions and their representatives is one of the oldest and most unequal in the Americas. Without family or any other structure to fall back on, Hurston endured these imbalances and in many respects succeeded. Hurston needed black people. She needed the understanding and support of her

black peers for the work she tried to do under the most difficult conditions. To say this, and thus engage in my own telling on the difficulties of intraracial relationships in white institutional spaces, does not lessen the overall fact of racism and the lack of access in a country dominated and framed by whiteness. As one of many black diasporic immigrant women to fall into "a cradle of Negroism" upon arrival, I follow in Hurston's wake. I continue to engage in and negotiate my own telling on the black folk of the U.S. and the black diaspora that meets in black cities and towns across the United States. As stated earlier, the Haitian Creole proverb, "Nou léd, nou la" when translated into English reads, "We are ugly, but we are here." Blacks in the diaspora continue to wrestle with just how to be black and beautiful, black and free, black and rooted. The centrality, still, of enslaved women's bodies and their sounds and soundings to black Atlantic narratives of place and belonging does not fit the contemporary Western ideological mold. The simultaneous recognition and rejection of the soundings of violation, as a basis of what black people share, continues to hamper black diaspora *entre nous* speaking. We continue to do what Baby Suggs Holy, in *Beloved,* asked newly escaped and freed blacks tried to do in the clearing: to love the black bodies that enslavement and its ongoing legacy made synonymous with ugliness (94). Because the U.S. occupies a special place in black identity formation in the diaspora in the Americas, we need to return to those spaces where "we left our markers" if not to stop "the stampede white-ward" then to, this time *entre nous*, understand the changes to blackness that we are signing on to.

Afterword

I wanted not dogmatically but inquiringly, to find out the function of a minority group like ours, in the impending social change. W.E.B. Du Bois

In the last chapter I returned to the spectacle of the black woman's body laboring in the Caribbean, indistinguishable from a beast of burden. Witnessing black women's dehumanization in Haiti and Jamaica enabled Hurston to return in *Their Eyes were Watching God* to U.S. black women's laboring struggles over the course of several generations. Hurston's own trajectory as a black woman of little means—but with just enough power as a U.S. citizen to allow her to be treated with more respect and given more access in the Caribbean—made recognition of these women painful. Their in-credibility as human subjects seemed warranted and yet the "join" that Hurston came searching for could not happen without her claiming what they shared and what made their/her reduction possible. What was the *entre* and what was the *nous* and why fight to claim the "it" (real and imagined) that some black people, "successful" in mainstream white spaces, wanted to move beyond?

Du Bois also experienced the troubling prospect of conceding in the *entre nous* his own reduction and vulnerability in postslavery freedom without full human recognition and without means for economic self-sufficiency for the masses. He did not foresee that type of recognition happening in the immediate future so devoted the rest of his life to black economic stability and establishing a "join" with the black Atlantic, Africa, and people of color around the world. Du Bois believed that progress meant that those who accessed higher education, political

power, or social prominence needed to use their power to make it better for the black masses. In the imagined post-racial climate, the black majority, still feeling "it," still singing, speaking, and dancing "it" are being left behind. The post Civil Rights era makes *entre nous* speaking between those "successful" black people inside white institutional spaces and those still in majority black spaces and in poverty and unable to access those spaces nearly impossible. Like Du Bois and Hurston, contemporary black scholars and artists still have to do the subversive work of re-establishing the *entre nous* speaking and sounding for the sake of advancing the causes of the black majority as human rights issues. Full access by an exceptional few members of the group only proves the rule: that systematic racial injustice remains the norm.

I argue that each generation has to reconfigure what "joins" black people in the diaspora in the Americas and on the African continent. *Entre nous* is a privilege that black people needed to give to themselves because of the hostility towards black humanity, but as a concept it also concedes an ideological powerless against the changing-same of the dominant culture that is difficult to accept. To accept that people of African descent need an *entre nous* space because of the events that led to the creation of the black diaspora raises questions that black cultural production in the West has tried to respond to in one form or another. The complexities of conceding to a black *entre nous* space when confronting black difference and otherness, as Hurston's writing reveals, can act as a starting point to address what might impede the development of meaningful diasporic *entre nous* exchanges. An early defacto assent among captive African people for an *entre nous* speaking and sounding was needed to come to terms with the sudden fact of a black "us," while being divested of their basic human rights. A *nous* existed that needed to be protected and that *nous* was recreated throughout the

black Atlantic and in each subsequent migration. This resistance to psychic erasure and enforced in-credibility frames my use of black sounds and soundings that today's academics, artists, and cultural producers rely on to enter into white mainstream spaces.

Interestingly, in the post Civil Rights era any visible black *entre nous* recognition, particularly with the black majority, forecloses certain types of intellectual and cosmopolitan cache. In *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois concluded that "anti-Negro bias consciously or unconsciously formulated to protect [white] wealth and power" made it imperative for him to change his tactics and what he believed possible between the races on a grand scale (296). Black people would have to contend with this entrenched "anti-Negro bias" far into the future. Psychic and physical survival for black peoples without what Du Bois called a "Zion" of their own, "a place where they can go today and not be subject to worse caste and greater disabilities from the dominant imperialistic world than they suffer here today" depends on multiple versions of the understanding forged by their ancestors while under constant surveillance in hostile spaces (*Dusk* 306). Thus, Du Bois returned to a line of thinking, organizing, and resisting that many black Southerners, like Hurston, were already familiar with and practicing. In "the proscenium box" or on the "big road" or the *gran chemen* (in Haitian Creole), not forgetting and recognition of the changing-same of blackness and whiteness become acts of subversion.

The screams, the blues lament of ancestors handed down through the generations, and the drum breaks that allow for self possession and spirit possession keep reinvesting the in-credible black body circulating in whiteness as property with personal and group meaning. Much like in *Beloved*, the elsewhere, the escape from the black body's signification in the West

occurs in the breaks and in black cultural production that transfers the debilitating weight of "it" to an inanimate object like the "bit" or anthropomorphizes a rooster. Joining the breaks that black diaspora people have used to become credible human subjects, while existing in spaces where the history of enslavement simultaneously renders them in-credible, has been the work of this dissertation and is, I argue, the work of this century's scholars.

[1] I take the term "sounding" from Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* and modified it into "sounds and soundings". I will be using this phrase throughout my dissertation.
[2] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: OxfordUniversity Press, 1988), 174.
[3] "Postscript: The Board of Directors on Segregation," *The Crisis,* May 1934, 149.
[4] Amy Helene Kirschke. *Art in Crisis: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Struggle for African American Identity and Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 223. Kirschke says, "Du Bois was advocating a type of economic, political, and social separatism, 'voluntary segregation,' that was an affront to the integrationist philosophy of the NAACP" (223).
[5] "I am looking for the join" is a quote from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988) that Homi K. Bhabha references in *The Location of Culture* (1994).
[6] "I am looking for the join" is a quote from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988).
[7] Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 7.
[8] In the recent 2010 midterm elections, President Obama reached out to Yolanda Adams, a black gospel singer with a radio program, to call on black voters to get out and vote. Part of the last-minute appeals to black voters as presented in the ads featured on WBLS 107.5, an urban (black) station, was a call to stop the attack on "your president."
[9] In *Zong!*, M. Nourbese Philip not only foregoes the linear narrative telling of what happened to the captured African of the slave ship Zong, she uses floating words arranged asymmetrically on the pages. After years of research and critical work on how to render the horror of humans being disposed of in order for the financiers of the slave ship to recoup their losses via insurance money, Philip came up with the format for *Zong!*, what many might call "nonsense"; unintelligible words and sounds. Houston A. Baker calls the sounds white people use to create minstrelsy "nonsense" in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*.
[10] *In Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (2005) and in other works, Michael A. Gomez provides the history of the African Diaspora beginning with the African continent. Though the black diaspora is a serious area of study at many universities, I want to bring to the field a more focused interrogation of black-diaspora exchanges. I put forth that even in the linguistic particularities of each space with African descended people there are similarities, often overlooked or dismissed, that need to be addressed.
[11] *Kongo* and *bosal* in French-based Creoles, *bosales* in Spanish; all refer to the newly-arrived Africans and later to those of African descent who retained African origin marks. They are still used to degrade and put down uncosmopolitan uncivilized black people. Congo, the name of an actual African nation, made synonymous with "the heart of darkness," became a slur for being too African, too dark and unschooled in the ways of the West. Bosal means wild; untamed.
[12] That question also applies to me as well. I am in the business of critiquing black cultural production in ways that the masses of black people will not read. Nonetheless, I write my understanding of black people's sounds and sounding in the hope of adding a new perspective, a different way of thinking about the post Civil Rights era and the challenges facing young black people today.
[13] This is the rhetorical question that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. poses when attempting to sum up Du Bois's dilemma with poor and working-poor black people and most notably with their representation in fiction. In *The Signifying Monkey*, Gates says, "By 1923, when [Jean] Toomer published *Cane*, the concern over the nature and function of representation, of what we might profitably think of as ideology of mimesis, had focused on one aesthetic issue, which Du Bois would call 'How Shall the Negro Be Portrayed?' and which we can boldly, I admit, think of as 'What to Do with the folk?'" (179).
[14] The partial quote "lords of sound" comes from Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) in her opening description of the Eatonville porch sitters at sundown. They are the ones who "pass judgment" as Janie returns from burying Teacake.
[15] Zora Neale Hurston. *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper &Row, 1990), 125.
[16] "I'm afraid," says the farmer, "that you have got yourself into a tight place (144)" (Baker 32). Baker quotes Booker T. Washington in *Up From Slavery* commenting on exchange with a "a white farmer . . . on the day before his Atlanta talk [on how] he will have to please an audience composed of white northerners, white southerners, and blacks" (32.)

[17] Hurston took ten years off her age so that when she came to Harlem in 1925, she was in her mid-thirties.
[18] In *Signifying Monkey*, Gates says, "By 1923, when [Jean] Toomer published *Cane*, the concern over the nature and function of representation, of what we might profitably think of as ideology of mimesis, had focused on one aesthetic issue, which Du Bois would call 'How Shall the Negro Be Portrayed?' and which we can boldly, I admit, think of as 'What to Do with the folk?'" (179).

[19] This is the rhetorical question that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. poses when attempting to sum up Du Bois's dilemma with poor and working-poor black people in *Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179.
[20] Gerald C. Hynes, "A Biographical Sketch of W.E.B Du Bois" Online: http://www.duboislc.org/html/DuBoisBio.html
[21] Nicolas Veroli, "Materialism and Imagination," *Journal of African Philosophy*, no. 2 (2003), 5. I will argue later that many black people could not make the shift either but for different reasons than many in the white world.
[22] Houston A. Baker, Jr. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), xvi.
[23] Toni Morrison's powerful phrase adds another level to black in-credibility as subjects in the West.
[24] He wrote "The Souls of White Folk" (*Darkwater* 1920) as well as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).
[25] "Certainly no clamor for a kiss" ends Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988).
[26] I will use this phrase, *sound[s] soundings*, coined by Houston A. Baker Jr. throughout my dissertation in the way that he uses it in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1989).
[27] I take the phrases "the intensity of feeling" and "different registers of address" from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). I will be returning to *The Black Atlantic* throughout this chapter and in other parts of my dissertation. Gilroy's timely and useful naming of the Black Atlantic, his original and still compelling exploration of that space and its geographical ideological contours serves as one of the theoretical frames I use to reconsider the black Atlantic, Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston in the twenty-first century. My second phrase comes from Toni Morrison's groundbreaking theoretical work and in her novel *Beloved* when she describes "the thoughts of the women in 124" as "unspeakable thoughts, unspoken" (199).
[28] Paul Gilroy. *Postcolonial Melancholia (The Welleck Library Lectures)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) 36.
[29] Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man* (New York: Signet Books, 1952).
[30] W.E.B. Du Bois. *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999), 169.
[31] W.E.B. Du Bois. *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*. (New York: International Publishers, 1968) 228.
[32] These Klan members compromise what Historians like Eric Foner and others call the First Klan formed originally by former Confederate Army soldiers in 1865. Soon after, all manner of disgruntled or threatened whites joined the former soldiers. The Klan entered into the national consciousness giving violent voice, both politically and ideologically, to the whiteness of the United States as a nation despite the national recognition of black people as legal citizens. Some actions were taken to curtail the violence of this configuration of the Klan. In 1870 the federal grand jury ruled that the Klan was "[a] terrorist organization." The United States v. Cruikshank in 1875 overturned the Force Act of 1870 by ruling that only state governments and not individuals could be subjected to the Force Act. The Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 was also dismantled in 1876. These two "correctives" all but ensured the end of Reconstruction by severely limiting black federal protection from those acting under the aegis of white supremacy. This marks the first period of the Klan's rise and fall. The second epoch of the Ku Klux Klan would coincide fittingly enough with the cinematic release of *Birth of a Nation* in 1915 and really take its iconic symbols from the film.
[33] Manning Marable, "Reconstructing the Radical Du Bois," Souls, Vol. 7, no. 3. 1-25. This description of certain scholars' disgust with Du Bois and his supposed failings could also be applied to Barack Obama and how he is being judged in the first two years of his historic presidency.
[34] I return to the "one drop rule" later in my dissertation. U.S. race policy dictated that one drop of black blood made the subject black. Blackness went beyond skin color and hair texture in the United States. Visual proximity to whiteness and white parentage did not alter one's status as black and hence someone who could legally be enslaved. Throughout my dissertation I use this definition of blackness that begins with an African body and morphs into the trace or traces of that original African body and what was historically done to that body.

[35] Michelle Cliff uses this term in *No Telephone to Heaven.*
[36] Manning Marable, "Reconstructing the Radical Du Bois," Souls, Vol. 7, no. 3, 1-25. To follow Early's prescription to the fullest would have left Du Bois and all others who would choose to get lost in "dusty libraries" in the same position as Ralph Ellison's protagonist in *Invisible Man* (1952)—living underground and in his own private hell.
[37] Bill Strickland, "Du Bois's Revenge: Reinterogating American Democratic Theory . . . Or Why We Need a Revolutionary Black Research Agenda in the 21st Century," Souls, Vol. 10, no. 1 (January 2008), 33-41.
[38] I am paraphrasing a quote from Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988). Naylor says, ". . . Sapphira Wade don't live in the part of our memory we can use to form words" (4). I will return to this text in the chapters that follow.
[39] Houston A. Baker, Jr. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 17.
[40] E. Franklin Frazier, "The Du Bois Program in the Present Crisis," *Race: Devoted to Social, Political, and Economic Equality*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1935-1936), 11-13.
[41] *Between Camps* was also published in the U.S. as *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* in 2002. *Postcolonial Melancholia* was also published in the U.S. as *After Empire* in 2004.
[42] In chapter three of my dissertation, I will discuss in further detail Barbara Johnson's famous essay, "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston."
[43] Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man, (New York: Random House, 1952).
[44] Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928), and to a much lesser extent *Banjo* (1929), deals with these conflicts. In *Home to Harlem*, the Caribbean blacks are called "monkey chasers" by U.S. blacks and he depicts a few verbal and physical intraracial altercations. When Zora Neale Hurston staged her famed Bahamian Fire dance with Bahamian dancers they were discriminated against by U.S. black performers.
[45] This is a reference to a line from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958). In the play, Lena tells her daughter, Beneatha, "When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever he is" (129).
[46] These are favorite topics of rap songs. Rapper Drake and R&B singer Tre Songz are two of the latest to sing about "the money, the clothes, and the cars" and the desire for "just want[ing] to be successful."
[47] This supposed post racial era also occurs two hundred and six years after the creation of the first black nation in the Western hemisphere. As a highly-raced space with a highly-raced people, Haiti and Haitians are still reeling from the effects of a global racism.
[48] Tania Friedel, *Racial Discourse and Cosmopolitanism: Twentieth-Century African American Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Ifeoma Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
[49] Henry Sylvester Williams is an early founding father of Pan-Africanism. He coined the term (Levering Lewis 248).
[50] In the PBS documentary about the recently deceased Lena Horne and in many of the newspaper accountings of her life she described how Hollywood wanted her to pass as "an exotic Latina" in order to be more marketable and be featured in more work, presumably with white actors. She resisted such calls throughout her career. She stayed black and paid the price for her choice.
[51] This theme will be taken up by August Wilson in his play, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (1988*)*. The protagonist's conscription into forced labor at the hands of Joe Turner steals more than his labor and only the work of a root worker can help him in his recovery. Also Lawrence W. Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (1977) provides the main reference point for John Henry as black folk hero used to signify "[t]he continued displacement of black workers and farmers by machines throughout the [end of the nineteenth and most of the] twentieth century" (424).
[52] Here I am thinking of the unexpected power of rap in the Arab and African world, as well as in parts of Europe, like France, even after conscious rap has gone underground in the U.S. The recent protest and revolution had a rap soundtrack in addition to the traditional music of the region. Black soundings of Hip Hop entertain on the one hand, but also double as strident protest music. The words are different but the beat and rhythm unmistakable.
[53] One of the starling examples of the science community's failure to alter the discourse of race and practice of racism is the failure to use the fact that the first line of immortal cells came from a poor U.S. black woman, Henrietta Lacks, who worked and died a sharecropper. Gilroy discusses the use of the HeLa cells in *Against Race/Between Camps* without noting how science in the 1950's, and for generations to follow, bowed to racism. Even in mass information sites like Wikipedia, Ms. Lacks' race is not mentioned in her publicly maintained entry. It would seem in these instances race and its significance can be omitted from the official record. I can only wonder

how the understanding of race might have been successfully challenged with the revelation of Ms. Lacks' race during the middle of the twentieth century. Based on race and racism would whites have refused the polio vaccine that her black cells helped to test and refined? Would they have refused all the countless other products developed with the cells stolen from her body? Those cells created the first bio-commercial industries in the U.S. and in the world.

[54] Du Bois did strategize with Martin Luther King, Jr. and offer him support. By this time Du Bois's leadership was not particularly wanted and his outspoken collaboration with communists was also not particularly welcomed by the current black leadership.

[55] The idea for putting "styling and crisis" together came to me while talking to my teenage nephew in Roslindale, MA. As the hip aunt, I told him his pants cannot go below where his butt cheek ended and I gestured with my hand where that space was. He said, "I know" and nodded his head. We looked each other in the eyes the whole time he talked and I saw that he understood. I did not say more than that because he assured me visually that he understood what I have to write out and explain textually. Understanding the line between styling and crisis as a black in-credible teenage boy was paramount to his survival. To go beyond a certain point in his styling, in his oppositional response to white conformity, to white rejection might take him to a space and place where he might not come back or I, the hip aunt, could not bring him back. All black people with young black people in their lives have to decide how best to help them negotiate the line between styling and crisis. At the start of the twenty-first century black cultural production may have tipped over into all-out crisis and very little style. With the current dress code worn by some, not the ones playing with their relegation to the margins; they signal the crisis of people fully giving in to their immobility and their status as the fucked ones. After taking down your pants, what else is left that can remotely be called styling?

[56] In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot makes the point that the Haitian Revolution was "unthinkable" as it happened and made its erasure and omission from Western iconography and thought possible.

[57] Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 17.

[58] Both *Beloved* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* deal with the idea of "self-sufficiency." In *Beloved*, Sethe's self-sufficiency (and Baby Suggs' abundance) causes resent within the free black community. Morrison says, "Just about everybody in town was longing for Sethe to come on difficult times. Her outrageous claims, her self-sufficiency seem to demand it . . ." (171). In *Joe Turner*, the displaced Herald Loomis learns that his song is the song of self-sufficiency despite losing what he thought most mattered.

[59] This scene is taken from *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* by August Wilson, cited earlier. While Herald Loomis was "looking for the join," for the one face that could provide him with an understanding of his place in the world after violently losing ownership of himself, by reuniting with his wife, Mrs. Loomis resolved her own loss and her state of being in-between past and present by "killing" her husband, moving on with the help of her Christian faith and Bynum the root worker to find her daughter.

[60] On Kurt Anderson's "Studio 360" British actor Alfred Molina recounts a moment from his rebellious youth when his father told him, "No matter how English you feel, they will always remind you that you are not." As an older man, looking back, Molina said, "And he was right." To be cast as more than a Spanish waiter, he changed "Alfredo" to "Alfred" something he would not dream of doing now. Although both his parents were European, Spanish and Italian, he was an immigrant and treated that way. In the U.S. immigration struggles and feelings of outsiderness are usually directed towards people of color.

[61] In fact, many of Du Bois's historical work compiling the African History helped to serve the decolonization movement in Africa. He provided, not just for U.S. blacks but for Africans and their descendants in the diaspora reference books that refuted claims that Africans had no history or created nothing of value. His *The Negro* was reedited into Africa and the World as one example. He also went to the newly formed Ghana to work on an Encyclopedia of the Negro.

[62] Taken form Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*.

[63] Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier is credited with beginning what eventually gets labeled as Magical Realism but when he first writes *The Kingdom of this World* (1957), he called what he did Marvelous Realism. Marvelous Realism and not Magical Realism is usually associated with Haiti and what other black writings that combine the otherworldly.

[64] The *it* that the *bit* obscures is what makes Ralph Ellison's protagonist, in *Invisible Man* (1952), invisible.
[65] In his *Betrayal* Houston A. Baker, Jr. calls the black masses "the black majority" and I use both terms throughout my dissertation.
[66] Hurston's classic collection of U.S. black folklore is entitled *Mules and Men*. In her most famous novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Nanny, Janie's grandmother calls black women the mule of the world. Later in the novel, Joe Starks, Janie's second husband, forbids her from attending a mock funeral for a dead mule. Also the work that ended Hurston's and Langston Hughes' professional and personal relation is a play entitled *Mule Bone*.
[67] The creation of the Hip Hop art form, as we know it today, took place in the Bronx, a receiving center for black migration and others of African descent. Without the U.S. meeting space in the Bronx, all the elements necessary for the formation of Hip Hop would not have come together.
[68] Instead of "The One," Neo, in the *Matrix Trilogy*, I suggest, as the final installment does, that a series of Ones and Neo's are needed. Warchowski, Andy, Warchowski, Larry. *The Matrix*. U.S: Warner Bros., 1999.
[69] The partial quote "lords of sound" comes from Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) in her opening description of the Eatonville porch sitters at sundown. They are the ones who "pass judgment" as Janie returns from burying Teacake.
[70] Du Bois switches the gender focus from female to male. Du Bois understands the role that black women have played in black families but at the same time he, as a patriarch and male of his time, wanted to make more room for "great black men." He reveals his own struggles with gender even as he outwardly supports women's rights and women's issues.
[71] For example, Haitians turned these sounds from the ancestors into the mystical, powerful language of Guinen, Africa. These words and sounds become ways to speak to and reach the spirit world.
[72] Aunt Hester cannot stop the master's abuse but Douglass will when he triumphs over Covey, the slave breaker. From this moment on Douglass is psychically no longer a slave. He fights back and wins. Douglass becomes a "man."
[73] Hartman does not include the conundrum presented by St. Domingue/Haiti, where these issues would have first become apparent in the West, in her observations. The slaves and freedman and freedwomen of St. Domingue "transitioned between modes of servitude and racial [color] subjection" after the "grand event" of revolution (6).
[74] In Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), the younger women of Nana Peazant's family call her tin can filled with her collected effects "her scraps of memories." Nana will later take contents from the tin to make "a hand" to protect the family as they migrate north for better opportunities.
[75] *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1984) is the title of one of Paule Marshall's novels. Her novel *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) also returns to the meaning of the African connection to New World blacks in the late twentieth century. Several writers have taken up this theme of "other places" and other times, most notably Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988).
[76] Du Bois will contrast Miss Smith's dedication and professionalism with a younger white Northern woman who ventures south for personal gain and opportunity. Not invested in a higher calling Miss Taylor has no qualms reporting the events of the plantation to her brother for his business interests in the cotton market or pursuing and marrying the Creswell plantation heir for the status and chance to play plantation mistress. For her this teaching job in the South represents a stepping-stone to high society. The future Mrs. Creswell does not believe in equality of the races like Miss Smith and on first arrival is shocked to be in such close proximity to black people. In these scenes, Du Bois reveals many late nineteenth century Northern shortcomings on race that helped the South to "rise again."
[77] The swamp that Du Bois uses to contrast Miss Smith's school for emancipated children and young adults recalls Harriet Beecher Stowe's swamp in *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). Stowe's swamp, though feared by some, provided refuge and safe cover for escaped slaves. The magic, conjure, of the swamp was also present in *Dred*. In *The Quest*, the swamp, under Elspeth's control before and after emancipation becomes a space where she colludes with the white men to facilitate the rape and concubinage of young black girls.
[78] The building of institutions as a New World concern and a source of frustration for blacks in the black diaspora when I took a course called "Haiti Today" at UMass Boston. One of the professors, Alix Cantave, kept returning to the lack of proper institutions in Haiti—institutions to do the work of nation-building and the prerequisite

infrastructure to make those institutions run in ways comparable to the U.S. and other Western nations. I identify Alix Cantave's initial concern with Du Bois's earlier thinking on black institutions in the U.S.

[79] I take this partial quote from *Our Sister Killjoy: Or, Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* by Ama Ata Aidoo.

[80] This partial quote is from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

[81] Du Bois's characterization of Elspeth evokes some comparison to Sycorax from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. As Caliban's mother, she is not a character in the play but is recalled by the child in the form of an invocation. Though Du Bois was familiar with conjure women and men, I feel he deliberately calls Elspeth a witch and makes her monstrous. Instead of protecting her daughter, it is suggested she encouraged her violation by white suitors or that is how Du Bois writes it. Zora herself says she tried to run but could not stop them from doing to her what the white men, Creswel,l the plantation owner's son, in particular, did to all the black girls. In M. Nourbese Philip's essay, she questions the excising of Sycorax in the New World. She asks, Why we can claim the resistance of Caliban (Zora) and not the resistance of Sycorax (Elspeth)?

[82] "Twoness," "warring halves," "dogged strength," and "double consciousness" are all taken from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

[83] In *The Black Nation Novel: Imagining Homeplaces in Early African-American Literature* (2008), Davidson identifies Zora as "leader of the domestic Black nation" (127). In her assessment, she follows the critique of Herbert Aptheker whom she cites and Arnold Rampersad's work on Du Bois's literary works in *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (1976). I do not make as strong a case in my dissertation for a "Black nation" per se as much as I do for black psychological spaces of being within whiteness and how black spaces are created in language, music, spirit, and in turning New World spaces into black places. I question what happens when these internal spaces of blackness lose their power to give spaces relegated as black and therefore negative by dominant society their own meaning and spiritual vitality.

[16] This phrase comes from Gwendolyn Brooks poem "Motherhood: in *Blacks* an anthology of her work.

[85] I changed the spelling hoodoo to Hodou in order to comply with the changed spelling of voodoo to Vodou. The spelling change for Vodou occurred to distinguish the beliefs and practices and cultural matrix of Haitians from the demonized "voodoo" of Europeans and European Americans. I propose doing the same for Hodou in the U.S.

[86] Today, the deference paid to surface equality, the desire for a post racial, postmodern society, belies the extent of the racial, gender, and class inequalities that persist in U.S. society.

[87] I do not examine or even consider in any real way the sounds that white people made during these mob scenes or the sounds they made when beating the slaves. As Douglass recounts in his first narrative, the master's curses and insults mirror the intensity of his whipping of Aunt Hester. Thus what I identify as black sounds and soundings had and continues to work through white aural violence and black terror in order to produce a sound that we can hear as soul.

[88] I will continue to explore this bind of showing and telling and not showing and telling in the next chapters and how I believe Hurston tried to circumvent the white need for such black visual and verbal spectacles. Harriet Jacobs, before her, used the desire for the display of her highly sexualized enslaved body to shame her callous or indifferent onlookers.

[89] I take the phrase, "How long is long? Not long" from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech to his embattled Civil Rights constituents about the nature of the black struggle.

[90] I take this phrase from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* where she describes Beloved as "looking for the join" when she finally speaks about her desires and what has brought her back to 124 Bluestone Road. Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) says, "Sethe, Beloved and Denver perform a fugue-like ceremony of claiming and naming through intersecting and interstitial subjectivities; 'Beloved, she my daughter'; 'Beloved is my sister'; 'I am Beloved and she is mine.' The women speak in tongues, from a space 'in-between each other' which is communal space. They explore an 'interpersonal' reality: a social reality that appears within the poetic image as if it were in parentheses—aesthetically distanced, held back, and yet historically framed. It is difficult to convey the rhythm and the improvisation of those chapters, but it is impossible not to see in them the healing of history, a community reclaimed in the making of a name" (24-25). I couple all that the sequence between the women attempts to resolve with my own call for *entre nous* black spaces as a way of making sense of the "white folk's jungle" growing

ever more “tangled inside free black people." This specific section about “the white folk’s jungle” was brought to my attention by my colleague Kimberly Hebert when I was teaching at Tufts University and it stayed with me. The poetic style that Morrison employs to speak the past in the present and to name the communal, spiritual desires of the women of 124 Bluestone Road continues to resonate in my own work. Bhabha uses “looking for the join” as a subheading in his introduction and the last sentence of that introduction. I will continue in this vein to use Morrison’s powerful imagery of “looking for the join” throughout my dissertation.

[91] In *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, Haiti and Haitian plays an important role in Du Bois’s genealogy. His grandfather, Alexander Du Bois, escaped the racism of his white uncles by going to Haiti and living there from 1821 to 1830. Du Bois’s father, Alfred, was born in Haiti and the possibility exists that his grandfather may have married into a Haitian family in Haiti. His grandfather also returned to Haiti again in 1861. In addition to his personal connection to the island nation, Du Bois makes a point of providing a history of important legal and historical moments in black Atlantic history all centered on the time his grandfather is in the Caribbean. For instance, when the elder Du Bois arrived Jean-Pierre Boyer was president and under his reign, 1820-1840, united all of Hispaniola under Haitian rule. In considering the possible reasons his grandfather left in 1830 Du Bois says, “England soon recognized the independence of Haiti; but the United States while recognizing South American republics which Haiti helped to free, refused to recognize a Negro nation. Because of this turmoil, grandfather may have lost faith in the possibility of real independence for Haiti” (*Autobiography* 66). He goes on to describe the world his grandfather encountered in the U.S. upon his return: “. . . David Walker had published his bitter *Appeal* to Negroes against the submission to slavery, in 1829; Nat Turner led his bloody Virginia slave revolt in 1831; slavery was abolished in the British West Indies in 1833; the rebelling slaves of the ship *Amistad* landed in Connecticut in 1839, and their trial took place in New Haven [where Alexander Du Bois settled]. Riots against Negroes occurred in New England cities, in New York and Philadelphia in this decade, and Negroes held conventions in Philadelphia” (*Autobiography* 66-67)

[92] The Bizango sect and a few others are feared by Haitians. They terrorize the Haitian countryside and capture people not already where they are suppose to be after a certain time in the evening. In *Tell My Horse* (1938) Hurston will mention this group or one like them, first in passing and later will trying to investigate the group herself. The Bizango are accused of being cannibals and not true Vodou practitioners. They are often thought to be descendants of African tribes who did ritual killings. These traces remain as well. Others have argued that the Bizango acted as a policing force in places where there was very little evidence of the state of Haiti at work.

[93] Christina Sharpe titled one of her courses “Memory for Forgetting” and provides some of the thinking for my usage of forgetting.

[94] Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Perennial Library, 1990), 125.

[95] Rap and Hip Hop culture is a perfect example of the phenomenon of “Jes Grew” that Ishmael Reed describes in *Mumbo Jumbo* (6).

[96] This reworking of the legacies of enslavement, the words that black people used to voice their experiences, is what makes Paul Gilroy’s work, as well as the work of Philip, Cliff, Reed, Morrison, to name a few, on the black Atlantic so compelling. “What White Publishers Won’t Print” is an essay Hurston wrote about the pressures on her as a black writer. Barbara Johnson cites this essay in her own inquiry on Hurston.

[97] “Ride the rhythm” is a reggae saying for extending a particular beat.

[98] Harlem, “the black Mecca,” is rapidly being gentrified and its black and brown residents pushed out. In the areas surrounding Columbia University, the Riverside Church, the Manhattan School of Music, a whole area has been transformed. Now it is the black and Latinos not of the bourgeoisie who look out of place in neighborhoods that use to belong to them.

[99] Gloria Cronin paraphrasing Kathleen Hassall says, “[Hurston] was Gates’s signifying monkey, a figure in disguise and a trope for the indeterminate” (18).

[100] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

[101] In Haiti, people believe a human being can die of “chagrin,” *chagren* in Haitian Creole. I would also suggest that Hurston died of some form of chagrin.

[102] For a brief moment when Barack Obama gave his “Race” speech, it seemed as if the U.S. might begin (again) this type of dialogue about race. Instead, race became the most taboo subject for the Obama administration and for the nation although like most repressed subjects it keeps bubbling to the surface.

[103] President Obama had to unspeak or retract the racism he attributed to Officer Crawley for arresting Henry Louis Gates in his home in the summer of 2009. President Obama also negated former President Carter's assessment of the unprecedented racism the current president was experiencing.

[104] It is my sense that Hurston, an initiate of many black diaspora religions, revealed in the way that a two-headed doctor, a root worker, or mambo would reveal. The *langage* of these black men and women, their secret power words, is also in the process of slipping out of *entre nous* black linguistic reality.

[105] Harriet Jacobs wrote under the pseudonym, Linda Brent. The questions that arose then about her authorship, and the lingering doubts that remain, makes her in-credibility even more intriguing. Not reproducing the sounds whites associated with black speaking in writing, meant that Jacobs and Douglass spoke the same English as whites and could employ it in the same manner that they did. To have none of the accepted signs of black difference, while in whiteness, is still problematic. In the twenty-first century one of the signs of black modernity, while in whiteness, is to be "beyond race" and beyond *entre nous* black spaces.

[106] Mary Helen Washington quotes Alice Walker describing *Dust Tracks on a Road* as "oddly false-sounding" and said of the autobiography that Hurston "deftly avoided self-revelation" (Intro 20).

[107] Long after formal slavery ended, white people in the U.S., like their counterparts in Jamaica, St. Domingue/Haiti, and in the Dominican Republic, kept their titles and continued to deny these same titles to those perceived as their racial subordinates. In the Caribbean, a lighter group of people of African descent replaced many of the whites as the top ruling families. This comprador group took up the positions of the departing masters and insisted on being called by the titles of the former white power structure.

[108] "*Race," Writing, and Differenc*e (1986) is the title of a volume edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. In it Barbra Johnson's essay, "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston" appear.

[109] In his introduction to *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, Gates says Barbra Johnson's essay, "stands as a fitting commentary on the attempts of the essayist gathered here to draw upon the sophisticated theories and methodologies . . ." to address race (17). He goes on to say. " [O]ne important benefit of the development of subtle and searching modes of 'reading' is that these can indeed be brought to bear upon relationships that extend far beyond the confined boundaries of a text" (17). In the appendix of *"Race,"* Houston A. Baker takes Gates to task in his response to the edited volume. Baker says, "But at the same time that he calls for a vernacular model, Gates proclaims that he is gratified by commentators and scholars who are currently addressing issues of Otherness, difference, and race in sophisticated, analytical terms made available by scientific, social scientific, and expressive cultural modes of analysis in the academy" (383).

[110] Here again I can think of President Obama as an example of this post Civil Rights generation. A young boy from Louisiana asked him, "Why do they hate you? You're the president they're supposed to like." After an awkward pause the President Obama went on to deny that people hate him.

[111] Walker documents this reunification of text, body, and historical place in her essay, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" in the 1974 issue of *Ms. Magazine* and later in a collection of essays bearing the same title.

[112] Alice Walker writes about this fabled trip and how she chose this moniker in the previously mentioned essay collection. The phrase "is from one of Jean Toomer's poems" (Walker 307).

[113] In *Critical Essays on Zora Neale Hurston*, Gates's preface discusses the canon issues at length and how Hurston came to be at the center of those debates. Also in Gates's *Signifying Monkey*, he responds to the canonical exclusion of black texts and tries to provide the theoretical tools that made aid in bringing black texts into the foreground.

[114] Though the canon has expanded to include many writers of color, the standards for judging the merits of black scholarly work can take on racist and paternalistic overtones as in the accusation of then president of Harvard University, Larry Summers, against then Harvard professor Cornel West over his scholarship. Summers famously doubted the caliber of West's scholarship and the frequency of his production. The attack, that led to West's departure, also took aim at West's rap CD and his work on the popular *Matrix Trilogy*.

[115] This partial quote comes from M. Nourbese Philip's, *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*.

[116] In an April, 1998 *Boston Magazine* article both Gates and the editor of the magazine play with the "Head Negro In Charge" title and caused quite a stir among other black readers, academics. Some defended the title and others decried its racist connotations. Even without the public bestowing of the title Gates had become gatekeeper and white establishment go-to person on black literary or cultural production.

[117] The trilogy that he names in the preface to *Signifying Monkey* consists of: *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self*, *Signifying Monkey*, and *Black Letters in the Enlightenment*. Also Kim Hebert is working on a longer project examining Gates overall career.

[118] Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* disturbed and disgusted Du Bois. He did not approve of McKay's depictions of Harlem life. *Home to Harlem,* as a black diasporic novel, brought many people of African descent together in Harlem. In his Harlem, there were navy deserters, gamblers, prostitutes, Haitian students, and murderers all scrambling to make a life amid the violence and vibrancy of the city.

[119] Du Bois specifically tried to distance himself and what he envisioned for blacks from the white working class or the white immigrants in his early years in Great Barrington. Later in his life and career, he would champion the proletariat, calling for the workers of the world to unite.

[120] One such example can be found in Du Bois's novel *Quest of the Silver Fleece,* discussed in chapter 2 and referred to earlier in chapter 3. The black heroine, Zora, reading what the white plantation owner, Colonel Cresswell , will read as black male impertinence with his white daughter-in-law rushes in through the back of the house to put her body between the black man and the white woman and make it appear as if two blacks were just fooling around in the Colonel's house. She intervenes by allowing a lewd narrative of black female lasciviousness to cancel out the one of a black male lusting after white female flesh, for which the black would have been lynched. In this instance both the black man, Bles Alwyn, and the white woman, Mary Cresswell, disregard the strict codes that govern southern racial propriety, and need the black woman to save them from the customs of the land.

[121] The U.S. black struggle for full legal access, for full citizenship have helped blacks in the diaspora and those who relocate to the U.S. understand and frame their own struggles for freedom. All immigrants to the U.S., especially those of color, have benefitted from the U.S. black freedom struggles.

[122] Philip explains in the text that she is using the Jamaican Rastafarian phraseology to write "I-mage." The Rastas use of "I and I" to place themselves with God, a New World linguistic development, has resonances for all blacks. In the *Land of Look Behind*, Cliff also refers to the Rasta "I" to reposition her relationship with the Jamaican "Is land."

[123] Clarence Thomas goes beyond unspeaking blacks and blackness to plain self-hatred. Sonia Sotomeyer was the first Latina appointed to the Supreme Court. In one of her speeches, to Latino college students, she described herself as a "wise Latino" and how that made a difference, helped her take into consideration what her white counterparts might not. For this admission of difference she was castigated and forced to disavow race and the racism still rampant in the world she encountered everyday.

[124] As one of, if not the earliest, African writing in the Americas, Phillis Wheatley's importance as a black diasporic writer is often erased. Wheatley's in-credibility as a writing subject continues to haunt the black Atlantic. All writers who followed her, Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs, were in-credible subjects.

[125] I quote Philip Smith's note to the Dover Thrift Edition of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

[126] James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, first published anonymously, is an excellent example of using the black autobiographical form and all its claims of authenticity strictly for the purposes of fiction. Hurston uses the form to "speak her pieces" and constructs an autobiography that has some things in common with Johnson's fictional autobiography.

[127] I believe that Hurston gave herself over to the performance of blackness to achieve certain goals in her construction of a black literary and academic framework. She took her personal self out of the work she did—even when it was supposed to be of personal or autobiographical nature. For me Hurston never tells on herself or abandons her belief in a black culture that did not need to integrate to be whole.

[128] Along with the division that Hurston represented between Wright and others, Du Bois and Marcus Garvey come to mind. Later Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s approaches came to represent two supposedly different ways of dealing with white America as black people. In the twenty-first century President Obama, the first black man elected president of the U.S., has to maintain his difference from Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson. Obama famously distanced himself from the outspoken Reverend Wright to save his candidacy. The Wright repudiation is unspeaking a particular type of shared blackness to the highest degree.

[129] I would say that Gates is a good example of a black academic trapped in his own rhetorical performance for the benefit of the white institutions he has become wedded to. His inability to step outside of his particular performance affects the quality, depth, and visionary strength of his current scholarship. What he has produced

recently also highlights the degrees of his disconnect from the black communities he "tells" on. There are many others in academia who have also allowed the performance to take over or are in the process of breaking down under the weight of their performances.

[130] On a PBS program, Donna Brazile recounted how Colin Powell came to her aid after she responded to the Republican candidate, then George W. Bush, for wanting to take pictures with a black person but not wanting to help feed and provide for black people. She slipped and called him and his campaign racist. Gore distanced himself and she came under fire. She says during that difficult time Powell came to her and said "You can't talk to them like that!" Brazile said she would never forget how he helped her through that. She in turn, held back in criticizing Powell about his decision to make the case for the Iraq war before the UN.

[131] Karla Kaplan says, "On January 21, 1935" Hurston's Ph.D. funding "was essentially rescinded . . . on the grounds that she had not shown a sufficiently exacting plan of work, as required by the December 19, 1934 letter of award" (342).

[132] Harriet Beecher Stowe's Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) would popularize and immortalize this black southern child "jes growing." Ishmael Reed would use Stowe's phrase in *Mumbo Jumbo* as a contagion.

[133] The U.S. Occupied Haiti from 1915 until 1934 and would reoccupy Haiti two more times in the twentieth century.

[134] Faustin E. Wirkus and Taney Dudley Wirkus. *The White King of La Gonave: The True story of the Sergeant Marines Who was Crowned King on a Voodoo Island*. (New York: Double Day, 1931). William Seabrook wrote the introduction. His *The Magic Island* (1929) is based on the life of Faustin Wirkus.

[135] Aime Cesaire. *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. Trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

[136] Macus Rediker writes about the slave ship and the black identities that began forming on the Middle Passage. Different peoples from Africa suddenly had to act together if they were going to resist and revolt against capture and later against enslavement. I attended a lecture where he talked about this and he writes about it in *The Slave Ship*, (New York: Viking, 2007), 10.

[137] The group mentioned collaborated on a magazine they entitled *Fire!* The magazine sought to allow black artists to be artist by pushing the envelope on subjects like sexuality and how life was really lived in Harlem. Du Bois did not approve. All the copies of *Fire!!*, ironically, burned in a fire. Since it was self-produced, which meant they lost money, the magazine folded.

[138] Paule Marshall. *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1981), 31. "Beautiful-ugly is how Silla Boyce, the Bajan mother and the other Bajan women describe contradictory people, sights, and occasions. The father with big dreams but unable to realize them is called "beautiful-ugly" as well as the over top wedding that one of the mothers plans for her daughter to show case her success in the U.S.

[139] The title of the version she wrote in Haiti used a comma instead of an exclamation point in between the repeated phrase. The Haiti version reads, "My People, My People! while the one edited for publication three years later reads "My People! My People!"

[140] The early version and the revised have different punctuation marks.

[141] One of the reasons Hurston gives for not letting Joseph's baby sleep inside the house with her is that she is writing and a small baby will cry and disturb her (202). She provides a clue by mentioning the writing she was doing in Haiti.

[142] Francois Duvalier was a ruthless dictator of Haiti who ruled the country from 1957 until his death in 1971. His son, Jean Claude Duvalier, succeeded him in 1971. He was overthrown by the Haitian people in 1986.

[143] Hurston's fictional Nanny shares the same name with the maroon leader Nanny, Coromantee warrior and healer (Cliff 206).

[144] African students and Caribbean students as well as a few U.S. black ex-patriots were assembling in Paris.

[145] The U.S. Occupation renewed a relationship with Haiti from an earlier time. Frederick Douglass was U.S. Consul-General to Haiti (1889-1891) and advocated on Haiti's behalf during the Mole St. Nicolas affair. The U.S. tried to take over Haiti territory for the purposes of building a base. They insisted that the Mole was not Haitian soil while Haitians said it was. Douglass was fiercely opposed to this aggressive foreign encroachment on U.S. territory. As Du Bois himself notes in *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* (1968), U.S. considered black migration to Haiti, a black nation, as a possibly solution to slavery in the U.S. But many of those who left would change their minds. U.S.

blacks weighed all their options. He says out the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, "The relation of colored folk to the war was uncertain, and my father, Alfred, was eligible for drafting. The future of colored folks in the United States was a problem; then, too the rector of St. Luke's was Theodore Holly, who early in 1861 had led a migration of Negroes to Haiti, and painted a future for them there" (68). Du Bois's grandfather, Alexander, traveled to Haiti at the start of the war on business and avoid the war altogether. He traveled with a fair amount of "freedom" and when he saw the black émigrés in Haiti, he said, "Poor men and women, I am sorry, heart sorry for them. They put on an air of cheerfulness, which I am I am satisfied there is not one of them, but would give all they had in the world if they could stand where I did a few weeks ago" (69-70). I cite these passages to illustrate the various relationships that U.S. blacks had with other blacks in the diaspora. Though Haitian independence was admired and defended by U.S. blacks, going to live there to start over again proved challenging. Most who immigrated to Haiti returned to a slave holding-nation especially after the outbreak of the Civil War and the promise of freedom and civil rights for blacks in the United States.

[146] *The White King of La Gonave: The True Story of the Sergeant Marines Who was Crowned King on a Voodoo Island* (1931) is example. It was written by Faustin E. Wirkus and Taney Dudley Wirkus with an introduction by William Seabrook. In *Tell My Horse*, Hurston praises Wirkus and makes a trip to the island in honor of him. Once on La Gonave she described the island off Haiti's coast as the most peaceful place she has ever known and the reader is not sure if that is because of the Haitians or the legacy of the white king. In Chapter 17, she asks another white American, Dr. Restor, about his not being made "a king" like Faustin Wirkus since the Haitians respect him so much and he replied, "Haitians will make a good friend of a white man, but hardly a king. They just don't run to royalty" (247). By feigning to be shocked by his admission, Hurston lets him, this other former white American marine, debunk the myth of the white king. These instances of Hurston saying one thing to achieve another end are too inconsistent to have the desired effect. Hurston also developed a relationship of sorts with Seabrooks.

[147] Anthea Kraut, *Choreographing the Folk: The Dance Stagings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 12. Hurston would return to the Bahamian Fire dance over and over again throughout her career. She would gather the Caribbean dances and choreograph the dance that became the show stopper of her revues. During these shows at least on one occasion, Hurston took a stand for her dances when discriminated against by U.S. blacks for being Caribbean.

[148] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York; Plume, 1987), 213.

[149] In Edwidge Danticat's first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, she not only gives her heroine, Sophie, Caco as a surname but traces the family's history to those resistance fighters.

[150] The first U.S. Occupation of Haiti occurred in 1915-1934. The second, "Operation Restore Democracy," took place in 1995, and the third in 2004, a U.S. led coup that disposed of the democratically elected President Aristide.

[151] Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2008), Jacket.

[152] In her essay, "The Devil and the One Drop Rule: Racial Categories, African Americans, and the U.S. Census," Christine B. Hickman writes from a legal perspective that the "one drop rule" should remain as a defining feature of black people. St. Domingue instituted a one drop rule of its own to control the growth and power of the sang-mele. The revolt that would become the Haitian Revolution made all newly named Haitians black, thus cutting short the time needed for the "one drop rule" to really unite an enslaved people of various racial mixtures.

[153] In many ways the Haitian lwa Guedé encapsulates the notion of black diaspora that Hurston seemed to be working towards. She says, "[Guedé] belongs to the blacks and the uneducated blacks at that. He is a hilarious divinity and full of the stuff of burlesque. This manifestation comes as near a social criticism of the classes by the masses as anything in all Haiti. Guedé has another distinction. It is the one loa which is entirely Haitian. There is neither European nor African background for it. It sprang up or was called up by some local need and is firmly established among the blacks" (*Horse* 220). The books title comes from the phrase announcing Guedé's presence, "Parley Cheval Ou!" which Hurston translated as "Tell My Horse" and used as the title of her book (221). Her reading of the lwa has been disputed but it does reveal her attempt to identify what black people produced in this hemisphere and belongs to them. Though her efforts to reproduce this version of black diaspora twoness did not work, it holds some theoretical possibilities.

[154] The death of Michael Jackson and the responses to it instantly became a marker of blackness and a marker of the black Atlantic and the Diaspora it shares with the African continent. Though everyone mourned, Jackson's

passing registered on several levels for those living with and behind the Veil. In his passing he provided a moment, whether wanted or not, of recognizable blackness.

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