

**COMPARATIVE BLACK LITERATURE AND
RACIAL ENCOUNTERS:
TRAUMA, IDENTITY, AND THE LITERARY
REIFICATION OF RACE**

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this dissertation is to converge and apply Elijah P. Anderson's concept of "Nigger Moment," as delineated in his 2011 work, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, as a particular category of trauma, experienced exclusively by Africana men, women, and children, with William E. Cross' theory of racial socialization called "Nigrescence," to Comparative Black Literature (CBL). While experiences with racism in both individual and structural forms have played a fundamental role in analyses of Africana literature, a focus on the incidence of these "Moments," as they contribute to the subject's "Nigrescence" (the series of racial encounters both within and without the group that precipitate the subject's exploration of their racial identity) through an intersectional lens applied to CBL, allows the analyst or critic to observe how the means by which the "Moment" is experienced, in what context it is experienced, and how the identity of the literary subject(s) manifest patterns of Africana identity formation within fiction and non-fiction narrative, and, ultimately, Africana individuals. Ultimately, I will explore the pedagogical implications of applying the "N-Moment" to Comparative Black Literature within a multi-cultural and multi-racial classroom in the interest of social cohesion and positive identity formation. This will be done by outlining the various dimensions of the N-Moment within classed, gendered, and migrant contexts, as they apply to Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom*, Jessie Redmon Fauset's *There is Confusion*, Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye*, James Baldwin's *Another Country*, Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *Americanah*, and Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

Dedicated to
Cali May Viscuso

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CHAPTER ONE

COMPARATIVE BLACK LITERATURE AND RACIAL ENCOUNTERS: TRAUMA, IDENTITY, AND THE LITERARY REIFICATION OF RACE

Introduction

While working on his project on race and Northern Philadelphia's public spaces, Elijah P. Anderson observed a peculiar phenomenon he referred to as the "Nigger Moment." Anderson's informant, pseudonymously referred to as "Shawn," had recalled a personal encounter with racial profiling, wherein Shawn, an African American graduate student at a prestigious law school in Washington, D.C. then, had been mistaken for the suspect of a shooting that had taken place in the neighborhood nearby. In all, seven patrol cars arrive at the scene, blocking traffic from either direction. Shawn is frisked repeatedly while his groceries, schoolbooks, and laptop are spilled across the pavement. Shawn is never informed by the police why he has been detained, though he hears a nearby police radio barking out a suspect description which fit Shawn perfectly – "Black male, five-foot-eight, blue button-down shirt, khaki tan dress pants, brown dress shoes."¹ Ten minutes pass before the officers on the scene receive word that the actual suspect had been apprehended blocks away – a white male. Shawn is then released. As the officer who had initially stopped Shawn takes down his information, Shawn notices that a bystander has approached the officer and overhears him offering to follow Shawn home to ensure the officers that Shawn would not get up to any "funny business." The officer declines, though Shawn is stung by feelings of outrage and humiliation with the realization that it was this neighbor, who Shawn had been acquainted with for roughly three years, who had called the police on him in the first place.

Five years later, despite insisting to Anderson that he had moved on from the embarrassment and shame of this experience, Shawn reveals,

Never does a day go by that I don't think about what happened back then. That incident was traumatic for me, and now I feel somewhat jaded. It has taken me a while to get over what happened. The incident was part of my education as a young Black man. Now, I'm not so quick to trust [white] people, and the incident continues to color my view and my feelings of what is and is not possible for a young Black man.²

Anderson's "Nigger Encounter" roughly equates to what John Dewey referred to as a "mis-educative" experience and what William E. Cross identified as a racial "Encounter." In 1938, about twenty years removed from his seminal work of education theory, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote *Experience and Education* to account for the intervening establishment of progressive schools attached to the University of Chicago that largely instituted his ideas, his own reflection on the successes and failures of these institutions, and the criticism his theories received from others in the field. *Experience and Education* offered vital analyses of what were known as the "traditional" and "progressive" models of education at the advent of the 20th century, as well as solutions to correct the detriments of each moving forward. Central to this reevaluation, as its title suggests, is the role of experience in the education process. Ultimately, Dewey concludes that "a theory of experience" is required for adequately addressing and correcting the ills of both the "traditional" and "progressive" systems of education, wherein the quality of experience, the social factors which shape experience, and the generative power of experience are accounted for. Within this framework, though, Dewey urges the reader to keep in mind that possibility and ramifications of "mis-educative" experiences, or those occasions which serve to stunt or distort the learning subject's growth from further experience.³ He clarifies that, while the experience may initially be

enjoyable, in the long term in may produce “callousness and insensitivity,” leaving “the possibilities of having richer experience in the future” mitigated.⁴ Finally, simultaneous or concurrent experiences may be so disconnected from each other and/or the learning subject’s lived reality that they may “dissipate” the learning subject’s energy and leave them “scatter-brained.”⁵

Several decades later, Cross first articulated his theory of the racialization process he referred to as “Nigrescence” in his 1971 *Black World* article “The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience.” In that article, Cross argued, given that, “[o]bviously, Blackness is a state of mind,” the racialization and racial socialization processes of African American men and women were the byproduct of a five-stage process he called “the development of a psychology of Black liberation.”⁶ Cross enumerated the stages of this process in the following manner: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and commitment. While it is not the objective of this study to utilize the total cache of Cross’ “stages,” his concept of the “Encounter” is useful for our purposes.

According to Cross, the racial “Encounter” constitutes [S]ome experience that manages to slip by or even shatters the person’s current feeling about himself and his interpretation of the condition of Blacks in America. The encounter is a verbal or visual event, rather than an ‘in-depth’ intellectual experience.⁷

Racial “Encounters,” argues Cross, are two-step processes: (1) the experience itself and (2) the reinterpretation of the world under the influence of the “Encounter.”⁸ The latter stage involves the now racialized subject’s relearning of life and self under the auspices of this novel racial identity, which necessarily means a reflexive accounting of the subject’s past and present ontology and epistemology vis-à-vis quotidian experience. The present study does not share Cross’ assumption that an “essence of Black peoples’

psychology” exists, nor his conceptualization of “Nigrescence” as a transition from a previous racial frame where the subject placed “*low* salience on being Black,” to one where there is “*high* salience for race.” This understanding of racialization and racial socialization is rejected not only for the spuriousness of race essentialism, but also for the socially damaging consequences such presumptions may engender for individuals, groups, and society in general.⁹

Instead, Cross’ racial “Encounter” is appropriated in light of Dewey’s concept of “mis-educative experience” and Anderson’s concept of “Nigger Encounter;” expanded to include the class, gender, sex, and immigration contours which shape experience and provide the context for the subject’s identity formation; and applied to Comparative Black narrative and character analysis. By doing so, I argue that Africana literature provides a vital tool for understanding the roles of racialization and racial socialization in the process of identity formation in Africana men, women, and children, within literary expression.

Purpose of Study

The objective of this study is to conceptualize racial “Encounters,” hereafter referred to as “Encounters,” as a particular genre or category of trauma, experienced exclusively by Africana men, women, and children, and to functionalize it as a tool of Africana literary analysis. While experiences with racism in both its individual and structural forms have played fundamental roles in analyses of Comparative Black Literature, these “Encounters” seem to manifest with great consistency in both the means by which they are imposed, and what they mean for the trajectory of the subject’s development, such as: fundamental shifts in thought and/or behavior patterns, relations to

self and others, and interpretation of justice and oppression. In other words, experience with the “Encounter” holds a degree of predictive and explanatory power in the analysis of individual and communal Africana lives and thus identity formation. Observing the ways in which the “Encounter” is experienced, in what context it is experienced, and the intersectional identities of the subject(s) allows the analyst to connect the experience to the individual and/or community in order to predict or explain patterns of identity formation within fictional and nonfictional narrative constructs. Thus, from a pedagogical perspective, teaching the literary manifestation of the “Encounter” critically creates opportunities for teachers to embed self-worth, social cohesion, and agency within their students.

Additionally, from both a sociological and literary perspective, the fact that these Encounters seem to hold a degree of ubiquity in the lives of Africana men and women allows the analyst to focus their analytical lens upon how this phenomenon manifests, functions, and develops in the lives of the subjects. By integrating the “Encounter” as a significant component in the manifestation of identity for an Africana man, woman, or child, data derived from the observation of such occurrences provide concrete premises for developing pedagogical correctives to these “Encounters” that resonate with the perspectives of Africana subjects. Thus, the “Encounter” has implications not only for Africana literary theory and criticism, but psychology, history, and pedagogy as well.

My purpose in applying this concept to Africana literary analysis and criticism, specifically narrative and character development, lies in the relationship between art and reality. Thomas Engeman has argued that “[l]iterature best reveals the possibilities of human knowledge and action; art must be a guide for ‘ordinary’ experience.”¹⁰ Writer

and critic, Ralph Ellison similarly wrote in his 1967 essay “A Very Stern Discipline” that “writers and poets help create or reveal hidden realities by asserting their existence.”¹¹ The functionality or praxis of both fiction and non-fiction literature, then, plays a dual-purpose: (1) to represent or reveal realities, or potential realities, to the reader; and (2) to provide possible solutions to the conundrums the reader may experience in their lives through concrete and/or hypothetical means. For example, Fatoumata Keita argues in “Conjuring Aesthetic Blackness” that Toni Morrison, throughout her oeuvre, placed her characters in “the most dreadful and repellent stories of blackness,” to set the foundation for their redemption/restoration from racial trauma.¹² As Keita’s title suggests, Morrison constructs an “aesthetic of blackness,” in order to frame her celebration of blackness and its beauty in the face of existential negation; delivering her readers, vis-à-vis the example of her characters, to racial, sexual, and class liberation, redemption, and rebirth.¹³

It must be understood that what Ellison meant by “create or reveal hidden realities by asserting their existence,” was not the creation of problems from whole-cloth, then insisting on their reality.¹⁴ Instead, art can be said to communicate an interpretation of lived reality, while the artist, “invents images to capture the world’s *complex* reality.”¹⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois touched upon something similar in his discussion of what he called the “Sorrow Songs.” He explained that, since the period of enslavement, song had provided the African American man, woman, and child a means to exorcise weariness from their souls, articulate their pain through symbols and spoken word, and express “a faith in the ultimate justice of things.”¹⁶ In other words, “sorrow songs” created space for agency and spiritual transcendence, even during the daily toil of slave labor.

By exploring how the “Encounter,” as a category of trauma, manifests in the narratives of Africana fiction and non-fiction, the analyst or critic is able to understand and uncover patterns in the way(s) Encounters occur and affect the sufferers. The characters within an Africana narrative provide the context necessary for situating Africana experience at the center of analysis. Through their development, they hold the cultural and historical resources necessary for the creation of productive, useful imaginings of the future.¹⁷ By situating the Africana subject at the center of analysis, diagnosis, and prescription, rather than at the periphery, the cultural, social, historical subject is armed with the philosophical and theoretical tools necessary for liberation. In other words, by focusing the analytical eye on the occurrence of these “Encounters,” we identify a vital space wherein the Africana cultural, social, historical subject may be transformed into an active, democratic agent in the creation and molding of the conditions under which they live their lives and the future they wish to seek.¹⁸ Therefore, the “Encounter” provides a method by which “the heroic action of ordinary folk in a world of radical contingency” may be critically analyzed and articulated in pursuit of “active networks of power-sharing” to protect liberty, promote prosperity, and enforce accountability through literary pedagogy and study.¹⁹

Through the utilization of this concept in both fictional and nonfictional works, the manifestations, developments, and consequences of this phenomenon can be identified, understood, and corrected pedagogically. Fiction and non-fiction narratives provide both concrete and hypothetical representations of reality from which to draw, therefore allowing the phenomenon to be studied critically and compared with each other to develop more constructive theories of social or cultural correction and change.

For example, Katherine Henry discusses in “Slaves to a Debt” the potency of the jeremiad, as “a ritual of social inclusion and exclusion,” in American political and social discourse.²⁰ The American jeremiad, according to Henry, was most effective as a “myth of consensus”: a narrative from which there is no dissent; where dissent, in fact, is written into the narrative as “lapse” or “trial” and “proof of its sanctity.”²¹ This rhetorical tool is typically utilized against existing values, behaviors, or practices which the speaker considers shameful, or would like to be so, through direct confrontation. The speaker thus inverts or recasts the “honor world” – shared codes of conduct and honor – of the audience which upholds a particular hierarchy of power and privilege.²² We see this maneuver utilized, for example, in the speeches of Frederick Douglass – most prominently in “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Through this speech, Douglass sought to reorient the American public’s “honor world” against itself, and away from the marginalized, by pointing out the hypocrisy of those at the center of power; the same could be said of David Walker’s *Appeal* written a few decades earlier and its invocation of American and Christian hypocrisy in regard to African Americans. The strategy of these men, to quote Henry, was to “define the sin [slavery/racism] broadly and spread the shame widely; to implicate, potentially, everyone in the nation’s shortcomings.”²³ Henry links the anti-slavery jeremiad directly to “the remarkable consensus in mainstream US opinion” that explicitly racist expressions are shameful and thus “the honorable thing to do is to denounce them.”²⁴ Applied to the analysis of the “Encounter” in Africana fiction and non-fiction literature, the student-analyst observes the methods and means by which their predecessors confronted or were succumbed by the “Encounter,” and are able to

learn through the development of the character or figure's narrative how they might best meet or prevent the "Encounter" in their own lives.

Furthermore, harvesting these examples and analyses from the fictional or lived experiences of Africana men, women, and children themselves, as agents within their own stories, we center our investigations on them as the subjects of their own experiences and interpretations. Finally, critical analyses of the ways in which Africana writers and analysts have dealt with, or propose to deal with, "Encounters," allow for the refinement and communication of strategies against racism trans-generationally, trans-racially, and trans-culturally.

Theory and Method

Elijah Anderson defines the "Encounter" – or in his case, the "Nigger Moment" – as "a time in the life of every African American when he or she is powerfully reminded of his or her putative place as a black person."²⁵ This "Encounter" of disrespect and humiliation is typically shocking, often occurring in trusted social space(s) and public environments wherein such behaviors and experiences are, justifiably or unjustifiably, unexpected. Spaces and environments where the conventions of public intercourse are otherwise unhostile and comfortable. "Emotions flood over the victim," explains Anderson, "as this middle-class, cosmopolitan-oriented black person is humiliated and shown that he or she is, before anything else, a racially circumscribed black person after all."²⁶ Regardless of the subject's social standing, income, occupation, or appearance, he or she is vulnerable to the "Encounter's" impositions. All pretensions to the contrary fade away, and the subject's position as second-class citizen is reified and reinforced. Anderson notes that the "Encounter," "turns on the issue of social place," meaning that

(a) the “Encounter” manifests within spontaneous social interactions between individuals, groups and individuals, and groups and groups; (b) play off of the particularities of the situation(s) in which they occur; (c) derive from one or more conventions of racial ideology and/or custom; and (d) reinforce the convention’s salience in both the perpetrator and the perturbed.²⁷

Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes made similar observations in their work on the Black middle-class titled, *Living with Racism*. They found that their subjects generally expected their entry into the middle-class, and thus their efforts achieved in the process, to differentiate them from the Black working-class, traditionally held to be idle, ignorant, and lascivious.²⁸ For those unaccustomed to explicit racial harassment and discrimination, this experience can be disorienting, confusing, and indeed threatening. Feagin and Sikes write that “the frustration and pain expressed in these accounts suggest that serious instances of hostility and discrimination can indeed be life crises.”²⁹ In other words, they manifest existential dilemmas for the victim(s) who question the place in society, their relationship to individuals within it and even their relationship to themselves.

For Anderson, the Post-Civil Rights Era provided the context necessary for the “Encounter” to emerge. The gains made throughout this period allowed African Americans the ability to move about more freely through America’s political, social, and economic life. *Brown v. Board of Education* dismantled *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1954, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 liquidated the remaining legal barriers obstructing African Americans from enjoying their full legal rights as American citizens. This new environment, however, came with itinerant “dilemmas and

contradictions of status” which embroiled social relations between white and Black Americans.³⁰ Put simply, the newfound freedoms of African Americans, and the shifting social relationships they implied, incensed some whites, and confounded others. In either case, a broad base of whites was unable to accept, or outright rejected, African Americans’ recently elevated social status, as tenuous as it may have been.

However, Anderson overemphasizes the role of both the post-Civil Rights period in the occurrence of the “Encounter” and the Black middle-class’ penchant for this experience, at least to a certain degree. The historical ubiquity of the “Encounter” is exhibited in the so-called “slave narratives,” as well. For example, the “Encounter” may be read into the narrative of Solomon Northup, a free Black farmer and musician living with his wife, Anne, in 1850’s New York. After being drugged, kidnapped, and sold into slavery, Northup proclaims to his captor, Burch, that he is indeed a free man of Saratoga, NY, with a free wife and children, and that he will exact just recourse with the reinstatement of his freedom. Burch denies Northup’s freedom, insisting that Northup had absconded from a Georgian plantation, having been procured by Burch legally as a consequence. Northup meets these accusations with persistent claims to his freedom before receiving a vengeful beating by his prisoner for the transgression. All the while, Burch exhorts Northup’s unfreedom with each heaving blow of the paddle and lash. Throughout the exchange, Northup notes the ferocity and inhumanity with which Burch visits the whip upon his back, reminiscent of Alex Haley’s “Kunta Kinte” in *Roots*, pausing infrequently to inquire about Northup’s freedom.³¹

The event is an exercise in dislocation for the Africana subject. Northup perceives himself as a free subject, and is indeed a free, though circumscribed, subject within the

Northern American frame, whose identity as a free Africana man is disrupted in the physical act of abduction and Burch's lash. In other words, Northup is confronted, in dislocative³² rupture, with his true position in American society by the literal hands of a white slaver who is seeking to impose his will (the diminution of the Africana subject to object), not only through the physical confinement of the Africana body, but through the epistemology and ontology of the Africana psyche. Similar situations may be observed throughout the so called "slave narratives."³³

Likewise, the scope of Anderson's concept is class-, gender-, and sex-exclusionary. He collapses a phenomenon, ubiquitous across the history of an entire race, into the singularity of the Black middle class, as if this group were representative of the race as a whole. No mind is paid to the intersectional intricacies of class, gender, or sex, let alone to Africana migrants to the US. Surely the *manner* in which the "Encounter" is experienced matters as much as the *position*, the *situation* from which it is experienced. Do we dare assume, as Anderson seems to, that by virtue of their class position, the middle-class Black man or woman has some unique expectation of, if not the entitlement to, dignity, respect, and consideration as they navigate their lives as raced human beings? Does not the working-class Black man or woman share in this expectation, this desire to be treated with respect, dignity, and honor, and are they not, too, affected when these expectations fail to be met? E. Franklin Frazier demonstrated over six decades ago in *The Black Bourgeoisie* that this, in fact, was the seminal issue in the Black middle-class' orientation towards members of its own race. Bell hooks illustrated, four decades ago in *Ain't I a Woman?*, that we cannot condense the complex, gendered nature of white supremacy into a single, universal narrative of *racial* oppression, per se, as though

Africana men and women experience and interpret experience in the exact same ways.. More recently, Shirley Moody-Turner and James Stewart have argued in “Gendering Africana Studies” against the subordination of Africana women’s and working-class issues to race, or vice-versa, and for the necessity of placing them at the center of analysis. The nuance that sex and gender bring to the category of racial oppression is well-established and necessary to explore in any project concerning white supremacy.³⁴

The individual racial subject’s experience with the “Encounter,” however, is not self-contained, isolated from the context of the community. It circulates rapidly throughout Africana communities, serving to fortify “preexisting suspicions and distrust of the wider white society.”³⁵ Carol Stack made a similar point in *All Our Kin*, framing these social networks as a “survival strategy” developed within Black, specifically urban, communities to safeguard themselves and their children, and to mitigate the effects of the racist behaviors of some whites from without the community.³⁶ Stack observed, however, that these networks did not always lead to positive outcomes for the residents of the community. In fact, these networks served both as resources of social capital as well as to stifle social mobility and interaction. In other words, individual experiences with the “Encounter,” and its communication and expression throughout the community’s social networks, serve to reinforce preexisting ambivalence, cynicism, or contempt for the broader (white) society among Africana individuals and collectives in ways which impede social cohesion and security.

Consequently, Trauma Theory is particularly instructive for our understanding and conceptualization of the “Encounter.” Anna Gottlib has defined trauma as, “a
13udacity13e force that unmakes our worlds, leading to a kind of world-loss.”³⁷ Carolyn

Yoder and Kate Schick contend that when trauma, in this case, the “Encounter,” has been experienced by a society, community, or group, the “Acting Out” of this trauma may manifest in the mythologization of the event(s), its effect(s), and its meaning(s). These bodies or collectives, Yoder suggests, tend to engage in the rationalization of their trauma through three narrative models: (1) the “Heroic-Soldier” (i.e., memorialization, devoid of any analysis of the event[s]); (2) “Good v. Evil” (i.e., the portrayal of self as the “innocent victim” and the other as “evil”); and (3) “Redemptive Violence” (i.e., knee-jerk reaction; multiplying upon the harm inflicted unto self).³⁸ Dominick LaCapra argues that these mechanisms manifest as a response to the collective’s “disarticulation” of its identity, memory, or meaning, fragmenting itself into isolated, atomized pieces for the collective’s individual agents to “rearticulate” an identity, memory, meaning from the process he refers to as “Working-Through.”³⁹ This process, LaCapra argues, may only be accomplished through active engagement vis-à-vis self-examination and/or struggle: the first to analyze the problem(s), understand their causes, machinations, and effects; the second to digest and assimilate the event(s) into the individual’s or collective’s “life story” or identity through *critical* expression vis-à-vis creative, religious, and/or spiritual means. Ultimately, the individual’s or collective’s perception(s) of itself is altered by the traumatic experience, as well as by how the individual or collective chooses to digest and communicate their experience(s) of it.⁴⁰ Gillian Rose states the matter clearly when she says, “the impotence and suffering arising from unmourned (sic) loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions.”⁴¹

Trauma may also be induced structurally through ongoing states of destitution (e.g., civil war, extreme poverty, homelessness, etc.)⁴² An individual's or collective's struggle for security and survival imposes pressures or conditions upon those experiencing the structural trauma leading them to view the society at large with cynicism, ambivalence, or contempt. For example, Feagin and Sikes found that their informants generally did not utilize government housing enforcement protections out of a distrust in the government's and society's willingness to protect their interests.⁴³ In other words, these individuals, operating and navigating within racist structures, learned from, and were conditioned by this experience to distrust the society's institutions, even those from which they might benefit. Feagin and Sikes (1994) identified three structural elements at play in these situations: first, in some cases, informants reported being pushed out of their neighborhood through discomfort-inducing exclusion; second, real estate, as an industry, was found to be generally segregated, compounded by the circumscription of opportunities for social capital, contributing to the failure of African Americans' upward social and economic mobility; and finally, many reported having been met with harassment and violence upon their arrival in a community, causing them to flee and abandon their homes in fear.⁴⁴ Viewed in light of Elijah Anderson's work, there are behavioral and psychological responses to both individual and structural experiences of the "Encounter" which mirror each other in orientation: the subject's cynicism, ambivalence, and/or contempt for whites and white society are reinforced and become ossified in ways which undermine both social cohesion and the material interests of the subject(s).⁴⁵

In the context of the “Encounter,” “Acting Out” and “Working Through” hold significant pedagogical implications for the teaching of all children, but particularly for those of white and Black backgrounds. The study of literature, in light of the “Encounter,” provides an optimal medium through which children may learn to deal with, or “Work Through,” these issues from the comfort and controlled environment of the classroom, rather than through the spontaneity of everyday life. In the classroom, Africana children will not only be introduced to the “Encounter” through the concrete and hypothetical examples of literature but will also be prepared to deal with these situations in their own lives and to interpret, digest, and “mythologize” them constructively through “critical expression,” as defined above.⁴⁶ In effect, the Africana student-analyst learns to re-invent himself or herself in the aftermath of potential trauma in reliable and restorative self-mythology. Not a magical, triumphalist sort of storytelling that Yoder warns against,⁴⁷ but one that creates meaning from the experience that reorients the individual’s or collective’s relationship to itself and/or other, recreates his or her “Life World” – his or her values, self-perception, and collective consciousness – and builds resilience and self-esteem.⁴⁸ Alternatively, white children will learn how their behavior may affect others, both long- and short-term, in respect to race. Anna Gottlib notes in “Trauma Unmakes the World of the Self” that a person’s willingness or capacity to perpetrate trauma onto another is largely to do with the former’s ability to recognize the latter as *human* through thought and action. With greater empathy and respect, bolstered by positive reinforcement and the examples provided by the literature, white and Black students gain understanding of each other’s (potential) experiences as well as preparing them to confront the spontaneity of the “Encounter” from a position of agency

and resourcefulness. This pedagogically reinforced respect and “Working Through” will also serve to build social cohesion among members of the community, both inter- and intra-racially, as they grow into well-rounded, socially responsible adults.

“Location Theory” offers constructive methodological insights for developing analytical and pedagogical strategies of “Working Through” (potential) trauma. As Molefi Asante conceptualizes it in *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, “Location Theory” argues that “[a] phenom, that is, any situation, event, text, or personality, must be studied and analyzed in relationship to psychological time and space.” Which is to say that the analyst must demonstrate an appreciation for their subject’s place, in search and pursuit of agency,⁴⁹ where “subject place” equals the historical, cultural, and social position from which the subject views and interprets phenomena and experience. This “position” is constructed through the historical, cultural, and social circumstances which give the subject’s own experiences, cultural perspective, and references meaning.⁵⁰ Identification and appreciation of the subject’s “Location” requires the analyst to assume an “auto-locative stance,” identifying their own position in space and time, relative to their subject.⁵¹ In the context of teaching the “Encounter” through literature in the classroom, the student-analyst is allowed the opportunity to engage with this formative experience critically, within a controlled environment, where they may learn from it in ways which promote agency and healthy regard for themselves and those around them. In other words, by preempting experience with the Encounter in the classroom, the teacher may control for how the “Encounter” can be interpreted – toward dislocation or construction.⁵² The student-analyst comes to learn themselves as a racialized subject, within a racial society, among other racialized subjects. They will learn, through

representations of the “Encounter” in fiction and non-fiction literature, to place themselves at the center of their own story, history, or experience so that they may interact with the society and fellow subjects on equal terms.

Christel Temple (2007, 2018) provides vital methodological insights for the application of the “Encounter” to Comparative Black Literature in her works *Literary Spaces* and *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise*. To quote Temple directly,

The philosophy of the comparative exercise is the understanding that there are commonalities, as well as differences, in authors’ creative approaches to recording life phenomena through literature and that the process of itemizing the facets of a written work is a complex intellectual exercise that has the power to amplify the diverse meanings of collective human experience.⁵³

Comparative analysis of fiction and non-fiction narrative, in light of the “Encounter,” allows the student-analyst to track not only the ways in which individuals and communities have experienced, interpreted, and critically and creatively expressed the “Encounter” within the context of the US, but globally as well. Molefi Asante wrote in *African Pyramids of Knowledge* that Africana methodology must account for the breadth of Africana cultures across the continent as well as the diaspora in order to embrace the representation of an “African wholeness.” He argues elsewhere that this may be accomplished through the investigation of what gives meaning, through the arts and history, to Africana “cultural character,” in pursuit of a humanistic, pluralistic, non-hierarchical perspective.⁵⁴ For this inquiry to be successful, he argues that the analyst must pay attention to how “principal myths” create “place” for the Africana subject(s), and to what extent the “myth” is central or marginal to the Africana subject’s narrative.⁵⁵ Focusing on the “Encounter” as one of Asante’s “principal myths,” the student-analyst

gains a greater appreciation for the formative experience of racial confrontation from the standpoint of the racial other, both globally and locally. Furthermore, Comparative Black Literature, in light of the “Encounter,” allows the student-analyst of all racial and ethnic backgrounds the opportunity to explore with greater context and meaning the linkages of Africa and its diaspora to the rest of human history through the legacies of conquest and enslavement, marginalization and segregation, imperialism and decolonization.⁵⁶

Christel Temple proposes a basic framework for this sort of study: “The classic, though complex, comparative formula is to study and then critically analyze three literary works, from three different geographical regions, that represent three different languages, and sometimes even three separate genres.”⁵⁷ These three texts are chosen according to “a specific commonality” of theme or topic which binds the works together – in this case, the “Encounter.” Meaning is derived, then, from the author’s treatment of character, setting, plot, conflict, narrative, and so on.⁵⁸ Within more complex analyses, specific theoretical frameworks of literary criticism (e.g., Africana Womanist, Marxist, post-modernist, etc.) may be utilized for the interpretation of text. More importantly, though, the analyst or student should identify and compare the treatment of common themes in fiction and non-fiction across space and time, with attention paid to the intersectional identities of the subject(s). Temple suggests grouping “excerpts representing the global Black literary tradition” into broad categories of theme in order to explicate the nuances of “microtheme” embedded within the text’s narrative and symbols.⁵⁹

Accordingly, albeit with a bit of modification, the proposed work will be broken into three sections wherein the “Encounter” will be analyzed as, first, a function of intra-

racial class dynamics in Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* and Jessie Fauset's *There is Confusion*; then, the "Encounter" will be set within the context of gender and sexuality as represented in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and James Baldwin's *Another Country*; third, the "Encounter" will be analyzed as a function of Africana migrant identity formation in Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *Americanah*, and Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. A final section will focus on the pedagogical implications of teaching the "Encounter" through Comparative Black Literature.

Analyses of these themes, however, should not be devoid of historical, geographical, or cultural context. The innate internationalist approach to literature that *Comparative Black Literature* requires, though, should not be understood as an enterprise that takes the Africana global community as monolithic. The scholar or student of the global Africana literary tradition must demonstrate, to quote Lloyd Brown, a "kind of complex awareness which can emphasize perceptual parallels without minimizing or obliterating socio-political or ethno-cultural differences."⁶⁰ In this sense, the concept and methodology of the "Encounter," paired with Comparative Black Literature, is situated squarely within the Africana (Black) Studies enterprise of the study of Cultural Production, as articulated by Maulana Karenga in his *Introduction to Black Studies*:

As a humanities discipline, Black Studies shares with other humanities disciplines a concern for and commitment to creative production. It shares with literature, art, music, and dance a definite concern with ongoing issues of aesthetics, i.e., the nature of the artistic enterprise, *art as social and personal message and meaning*, standards of creativity, *issues of artistic freedom and social responsibility*, questions of critique, of deconstruction, of dislocation, cultural hegemony, representation, *transcendence*, border crossing, text, subtext, *marginality and centrality*, and *recovery* and reconstruction. Likewise, *it shares concern about race, class, and gender articulation*, language use and misuse, and *its ability to reveal the nature and structure of social relations*, as with signs, literature and other art forms as contested terrains.⁶¹

Part of what is proposed by this work is a transdisciplinary approach to the study of Comparative Black Literature. By integrating historical, sociological, and literary knowledge and frames of perception, the analyst-student brings greater light to the creative enterprise and its ability to transform, reshape, and reorient the lives and “lifeworlds” of everyday people. This requires an analysis which appreciates the cultural, historical, and political contexts within which a work is produced.⁶² Christel Temple, like Cornel West, emphasizes the importance of historical specificity in the interpretation and instruction of Black literature.⁶³ Thus, all works of literature, whether fiction or non-fiction, are set within an historical, cultural, and political frame, and must be read alongside primary source material in order to avoid the projection of contemporary biases, presumptions, etc. onto our readings and interpretations. This process is then further complicated by the consideration of class and gender by multivariate structures of experience and limitation. West (1999f) refers to this as “radical historical conditionedness,” or how possibilities and potentialities are created, seized, or missed by historically, socially, politically, and economically situated individuals embedded within circumstances not of their own choosing but which nevertheless delimit the choices available to them, thus forming and informing their identities in tandem with their traditions and situations.⁶⁴ It is for this reason that Shirley Moody-Turner and James Stewart argue that, for an Africana analysis to be successful, the student-analyst must demonstrate an appreciation for, and elevate, the stories and perspectives of everyday people.⁶⁵

Literature provides a snapshot of the lived or hypothetical experiences of average Africana men and women in ways which understand them as historically situated subjects

who act within materially grounded structures that enable and constrain them. Cornel West (1999d) argues that the student-analyst must observe the playing out of subjects within “antecedent structures and traditions: historically and materially determined.”⁶⁶ In this way we may understand racism as “a complex cluster of structured social practices that shape class relations and create a crucial dimension” to the lives and experiences of individuals which transform in meaning over time, predicated on cultural, social, political, and economic evolutions in the past, present, and future.⁶⁷ What is understood as “history” in this sense is the interplay and process of human relations and social activities, both structured and unstructured, in the making and molding of our collective realities toward, alternately, progress and regress.⁶⁸ The study of literature, then, grounded in historical and sociological analyses, provides concrete and/or hypothetical bases, rather than abstraction, through which the analysis of Africana men, women, and children’s lived experiences may be conducted and solutions developed. By doing so, Comparative Black Literature, through the application of the “Encounter,” transcends Historicist notions of historical contingency, or the rigorous attachment of interpretation to temporal and geographic context, which pays no mind to the how or why of change and conflict. As does it transcend the postmodernist and deconstructionist preoccupations with rhetoric, power, and knowledge without attention paid to the concrete examples of empowerment or what may be gained through resistance within the Africana literary catalog.

Finally, it is this quality of Africana literature that makes it conducive to multicultural and multiracial pedagogy. W.E.B. Du Bois once wrote,

[t]he function of the university is not simply to teach bread-winning or to furnish teachers for the public schools or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all, to be

the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.⁶⁹

In other words, a truly human-centered pedagogy is a process of what Martha Nussbaum called “cultivating humanity,” or the creation of a citizen, from pupil, whose primary loyalty lies in other human beings through the recognition and elucidation of their common bonds of ability, problematics, and interests.⁷⁰ Study of the “Encounter” within Comparative Black Literature provides a context where the multicultural, multiracial classroom may conduct a critical examination of itself and its traditions through dialogic intercourse between teacher and student, and between student and student. Such an atmosphere of engagement cultivates what bell hooks refers to as a “democratic consciousness”: finding “unity in diversity,” opposing “unwarranted privileges,” interrogating decision making rationally, and questioning “illegitimate powers.”⁷¹ From the perspective of Comparative Black Literature, the student-analyst participates in critical engagement both with the text as well as with their peers in the processes of mutual understanding and self-actualization. The Africana pupil is introduced to the transformative power of the “Encounter” within the controlled context of the classroom. The non-Africana student is exposed to the potential harm their behavior may cause to others. And the classroom thus manifests a shared sense of community through non-competitive though critical dialogue and learning from their peers, teachers, and texts.⁷²

Both teachers and students must take care to properly historicize themselves and their subjects, as well as engage in “rigorous self-critique.”⁷³ The former to facilitate what Paulo Freire called “Authentic Reflection”: the consideration of people as subjects in relation to the material, historically contingent world, rather than as abstract, isolated, independent, unattached objects.⁷⁴ The latter to enable the student to understand

themselves and their Encounter in time relative to the historical process of change or “becoming,” in light of the “Encounter,” as well as to establish and maintain trust in the process of critical, constructive dialogue.⁷⁵ Noam Chomsky suggests that the phenomenon of human language reveals to us that the species is inherently social, creative, self-conscious, free, and with reason. Thus, by studying the manifestations of human creativity, the function of these creations, the assumptions undergirding them, and their foundations, we may learn the innate principles which humans need to nourish their full potential. Chomsky continues,

there is no inconsistency in the notion that the restrictive attributes of mind underlies a historically evolving human nature that develops within the limits that they set; or that these attributes of mind provide the possibility for self-perception; or that, by providing the consciousness of freedom, these essential attributes of human nature give man the opportunity to create social conditions and social forms to maximize the possibilities for freedom, diversity, and individual self-perfection.⁷⁶

To be successful, the teacher must encourage active engagement from all students with what bell hooks calls, “Dialectical Exchange”: the dialogic process of considering and re-considering one’s position(s) in conversation with others of similar and disparate persuasions.⁷⁷ This process provides the “Encounter” with a sense of vitality for students and teachers alike, allowing both the African and white interlocutor to make sense of it. James Baldwin, in “Notes for a Hypothetical Novel: An Address,” a meditation on the meaning of being American, proposed that to identify the problems which puzzle a society and its people, and the solutions they create to address them, reveal something of the society and people’s character, sense of self, and their values, ethics, morality, and attitude. From this point of view, race represents a significant and perpetual problematic for Americans and their identity, specifically “because it means something, it fulfills something in the American personality.”⁷⁸ In order to uncover such “problems,” and thus

solve them, the subject-analyst must first, identify the problems that society perceives itself to have; second, observe the methods by which the society seeks to solve these problems; and finally, self-reflect to identify both one's individual self and its biases and tendencies, as well as one's self in relation to the society as a whole, to understand their place within it. Applied to the context of Africana literature, creative expression, in this case the narrative, provides "the means by which the totality is glimpsed."⁷⁹

James Baldwin's methodology rests on the theory that, in order to have honest conversation or analyses, one must get to know his or herself, as their interlocutor must know something about his or herself, in order to communicate meaningfully. Paired with bell hooks' "Engaged Pedagogy" and Freire's "Authentic Reflection," Baldwin's method of communication provides a powerful pedagogical tool for the study and analysis of the "Encounter" in the process of Comparative Black Literature. As mentioned above, a fundamental component of knowing oneself, a character, interlocutor, or historical figure, in relation to his or her own historical Encounter, is to adequately situate them as an historical subject in time and space. Fredric Jameson offers a four-level process of literary and historical analysis meant to elucidate a coherent story of the past, present, and future: First, the "Literal," which retains the historical referents of events and happenings, and textual referents of books and works, understanding history as a "narrative" which has been mediated and re-mediated through language, text, and interpretation. Second, the "Allegorical," which provides an interpretive, "genealogical construction" of the past or text, characterized by "nonsynchronous development," wherein history and the text constitute a "synchronic unity of structurally contradictory or heterogeneous elements, genetic patterns, and discourses."⁸⁰ Third, the "Moral," wherein the analyst performs an

ethical or psychological reading of a text, where “representational structures” allow individual subjects to imagine their “lived relationships to transindividual realities” (e.g., the concept of “human destiny”).⁸¹ And finally, the “Anagogical,” or political reading of the text wherein “the collective meaning of history” characterizes the individual subject(s) within a transindividual reality (e.g., fate, plot, story) of a community, class, group, or subject.⁸² Taken together with Cornel West’s position that ethics are a communal affair, or “a group response to particular historical circumstances,” Jameson’s method provides literary and historical analysis, specifically of the “Encounter” within Comparative Black Literature, with the theoretical tools necessary for practicable theory and pedagogy rooted within Africana peoples’ own historical, political, social, and cultural Encounters; or, to quote West’s critique of Fredric Jameson, a “more sophisticated theory aware of and rooted in the present historical and political juncture.”⁸³

In the context of racial oppression and intersectionality, Audre Lorde argued in “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” that it was necessary for oppressed groups to overcome their tendencies toward identifying with and becoming hyper-focused on their own, isolated form of oppression, eschewing the intersectional, “different,” means of oppression through which other groups have been marginalized. Therefore, one must become aware of oneself within these social structures, particularly where one’s interlocking identities are situated relative to others.⁸⁴ Ignoring these potential differences, argued Lorde, disallows a cogent, cohesive struggle against oppression across racial, gender, age, and class lines, perhaps most importantly the separation(s) between the interests of the oppressed and those of their oppressors.

Scope of Study

In theory, due to its place within narrative and, specifically, identity formation, the “Encounter” may be applicable to verse, narrative, and lyrics, as well as what Molefi Asante refers to as “orature.”⁸⁵ However, these genres of Africana narration fall outside the scope of the present study. This is not due to any qualitative differences between narrative media. There is, in fact, evidence to suggest that the presence and communication of the “Encounter” through song lyrics exists in similar forms as fiction and non-fiction narrative.

For example, “Crooked Officer” by Houston rap group, the Geto Boys, articulates the aftermath of a similar experience with police brutality and surveillance as Anderson’s “Shawn,” and the communal social networking highlighted by Carol Stack and Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes. In the first verse, Scarface describes his, “grudge against you blue suits/Black suits, white suits and state troops,” explaining, “That’s the way you made us/Send a nigga to the penitentiary is how you play us.”⁸⁶ Throughout the rest of the verse, the emcee articulates the connection between police brutality, the over-policing of African American neighborhoods, mass incarceration, and the rage and frustration felt by the sufferer and his or her community. Scarface proclaims, “I’m sick of you hoes trying to run mine/I’m coming with a gun line running after one time/... I’m letting freedom ring/From the hole in my Glock, for fuckin’ off Rodney King.”⁸⁷ In other words, hypothetically, “the next time I see a police officer, I’m going to give them the same chance they gave Rodney King.” Scarface, in a single verse, weaves together vigilante justice, police brutality, mass incarceration, the publicization of Black death, and communal bonds of African American communities across the US.

Similarly, one might look at KRS-One's rap, "Sound of da Police." In the second verse, KRS establishes a connection between the overseers of the plantation to police officers, "off patrolling all the nation."⁸⁸ The song is a commentary on "Stop-and-Frisk" policing policies in 1990s New York City, police brutality generally, and systemic racism told from the point of view of an African American man within an urban African American community (South Bronx, New York City). Like Scarface and the Geto Boys, KRS invokes vigilante justice as a corrective to the NYPD's abuse of power in his neighborhood: "The police them have a little gun/So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with a bigger one/(Whoop-whoop!) I hear it all day/Just so they can run the light and be upon their way."⁸⁹

These are but a few of the great breadth of Africana musical and lyrical commentary one may draw upon for analyses of the "Encounter," artistically rendered through song. Future analysts and theoreticians may find significant material in Marvin Gaye's *What's Goin' On?*, Bad Brains' self-titled debut, or Noname's "Casket Pretty," as well.

"Orature," oral history, or mythology will also not be covered by the present analysis, but for methodological reasons. To incorporate orature would require the resources, time, and permissions necessary for an ethnographic study. An ethnography of Africana orature, folklore, oral history, etc. could be carried out in two fundamental ways, both requiring direct engagement with the subject(s) in question. One may choose to engage in a comparative study between regions, such as the Georgian lowlands and Harlem, NY, or South-Central, Los Angeles and the 5th Ward of Houston, TX. Such a study would focus on the symbols used by the subject(s) to narrate their experience with

the “Encounter,” the sociohistorical context of the region in which they reside, and how the subject(s) chooses to communicate their experience(s) of the “Encounter” with both members of their community and the interviewer(s). This process would require intimate knowledge of the cultures under study, the explicit and continued consent and cooperation of the individuals and communities in question, as well as partnership with a member or members of the target group.⁹⁰

A second method, outlined by Molefi Asante in *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, also ethnographic, would require the analyst(s) to immerse him or herself into the social or cultural context of study; the participation of at least two researchers to collect similar data, one of which must be from the social or cultural context being studied; the assessment of at least two evaluators for the data collected, at least one of which must be from the social or cultural context being studied; finally, and perhaps most significantly, the utilization of what Asante refers to as the “nomothetic model” of research “must find its reason to be the harmonizing mission,” a “cooperative and integrative function of human experiences.”⁹¹ In other words, the researcher seeks to “make the world more meaningful to those who live in it and to create spaces for human understanding.”⁹² Additionally, the researcher must also be sure to maintain a habitual critical orientation toward his or herself throughout the duration of the study in order to mitigate the risk of personal, professional, social, or cultural biases seeping into the interpretation of the data collected. Interpretation, then, must first provide coherent explanations to Africana peoples’ lived experiences, then situate the Africana subject as an historical agent within their own and in global context, and explain the behavior of Africana people within the context of their own reality.⁹³

Literature Review

To speak of the “tradition” of African literary criticism, as Christel Temple does in *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise*, is to speak of a scholarly enterprise which coalesces around a centrifuge of shared themes, forms, and sensibilities focused on the lived realities of Africana people. These social, historical, political, psychological, linguistic, narrative, and conceptual truths of Africana life constitute a tradition of critical engagement with the experiences of Africana people, perpetually in the process of interpreting and communicating “African-derived phenomena” through the past and present in ways which aid Africana individuals and communities in the creation of their future.⁹⁴ The work is “comparative” in the sense that it is assumed that Africana literary expression and narrative consists of a continuity, or “tradition,” in themes, rehashed through contemporary lenses; which is to say, a means to “chart” the relationships of global Black literature “across cultural and linguistic lines.”⁹⁵ In this way, the “Africana literary enterprise” necessarily implies a critical and pedagogical engagement with Africana cultural expression.⁹⁶

Temple identifies seven intersecting themes of Africana literary analysis: (1) heritage experiences, (2) knowledge recovery, (3) classical African philosophy and ethics, (4) contemporary problem-solving, (5) cultural self-determination, (6) global African unity and cooperation, and (7) stabilizing cultural identity through narrative forms that intersect with the practical.⁹⁷ Temple challenges us to pursue these themes through “African, African-derived, African-centered, Diaspora, and Western/European history, traditional culture, popular culture, and current events,” narration and discourse.⁹⁸ Additionally, she contends Pan-Africanism constitutes a foundational

principle of any Africana approach to literary analysis.⁹⁹ In other words, the analyst of Comparative Black Literature presumes the unity, commonality, and cooperation among Africana people who, by definition, are geographically, physically, culturally, consciously, psychologically, and/or politically of African descent.¹⁰⁰ Temple is primarily preoccupied with formulating an approach to Comparative Black Literature that demonstrates and explores “the similarities and differences among the agents of global African experience.”¹⁰¹

Melvin Dixon, in “Toward a World Black Literature and Community,” similarly conceived of a Comparative Black Literature which reflected a sort of global “racial community” and explored a cache of global Black literary themes, imagery, and heroics across space and time. He believed that Africana writers established community in and through their work by exploring their subjects as defined in their relation to ethnic, national, and regional identities, while observing their individual conflicts with society.¹⁰² The trouble, however, with Temple and Dixon is that they do not pay any mind to the manner or meaning, cross-culturally, of the “Encounter.” Embedded within their analytical frameworks is the presumption of inherently raced individuals, undercutting a vital aspect of Africana identity in their coming to understand themselves as raced and the evolving process of racialization from a sociological or historical perspective. There is no merger between the historical development of race as an economically motivated biological to a sociocultural concept and what the individual experiences of coming to know oneself as raced has meant to and for Africana people across space and time.

Darwin Turner attempted to answer a similar question – “When did African Americans become African Americans?” – in his pursuit of establishing a global Black literary tradition with his “Introductory Remarks about the Black Literary Tradition in the United States of America.” In the process, he identified a few keen insights for future analysts: highlighting the exclusion of African American literature from western literature; identifying the “trap” of comparing African American literatures to white literatures in ways that diminish their quality and value.¹⁰³ But Turner ultimately failed to locate African American literature within a broader, historical Africana literary project, nor, consequently, did he adequately identify the “becoming” of African Americans as a raced people by focusing so narrowly on the context of the United States. Race has shifted according to social, cultural, and economic contexts throughout space and time. Noel Ignatiev, for example, demonstrated in *How the Irish Became White* the ambiguous racial status of Irish immigrants in the late-19th century US which had strong ideological and conceptual ties to the United Kingdom’s historical exploitation of the Irish in Europe. Racial differentiation within Europe did not apply only to the United Kingdom, however. Influential French historian, Henri de Boulainvilliers, writing during the early-Enlightenment, divided the French into two distinct races: (1) the indigenous Gallo-Roman race; and (2) the French aristocratic race he claimed as the descendants of the Germanic Frank invaders of the Roman Republic whose preeminence over the former by writ of conquest.¹⁰⁴ The Brazilians recognize at least twelve separate racial categories predicated upon physical features, social class, education, and dress – all independent of the individual’s racial ancestry.¹⁰⁵ However, Brazilian terms for various races are ambiguous and hold no generalizable agreement on the meaning of these terms across the

regions of Brazil, or even among individuals. With such a variety of conceptualizations of such an integral phenomenon as race, it is inexcusable for any theory or method of Comparative Black Literature to fail to consider the concept's global magnitude by hyperfocusing on its manifestation in a single region, at a single time.

Kenneth Warren produced a provocative argument in his controversial, *What was African American Literature?*, which posits that literary achievement “on behalf of the race” ceased to exist with the disestablishment of Jim Crow segregation in the US. While he properly historicizes, to an extent, the emergence of what became a coherent African American literature, his periodization is premature and dismisses the voluminous production of the so-called “slave narratives” as “the existence of writers from an ascriptive group” versus “the conceptualization of works by multiple authors from this group as *a literature*.”¹⁰⁶ The central premise of his argument is that the conditions which produced African American literature, i.e., Jim Crow segregation, dematerialized in the 1960's, thus modern iterations of what might be called an “African American literature” are nostalgic and/or essentialist, portraying or seeking to retain a monolithic racial identity which no longer holds substance or meaning. This is pure sophistry. To imply that African mythology and storytelling failed to survive the Middle Passage, and thus could not have been adapted to the conditions of slavery in the New World flies in the face of the evidence. Christel Temple's *Black Cultural Mythology*, and Henry L. Gates, Jr. and Maria Tatar's edited work, *The Annotated African American Folktales*, meticulously document the abundance of structural, symbolic, and character ties between African continental and diasporic folklore and mythology.

Additionally, Kenneth Warren's concept of what constitutes an "African American literature" is prohibitively static and inconsistent in its application. He argues that Jim Crow, *de jure*, segregation provided the socio-political context that gave coherence to what can be called an "African American literature" as a "challenge to the enforcement and justification of racial subordination and exploitation represented by Jim Crow."¹⁰⁷ Can this not also be applied to enslavement and the so-called "slave narratives"? Were not Olaudah Equiano, Solomon Northup, Mary Prince, and Frederick Douglass, all writing their memoirs of enslavement with the explicit objective of dismantling it? By Warren's own logic, i.e., African American literature emerging as a "challenge to the enforcement and justification of racial subordination and exploitation," the abolitionist pamphleteers, like David Walker, and aforementioned memoirists produced their work both to shed light upon the evils of slavery while also seeking to unify the will of their fellow African American country men and women against it. Warren's account presumes that *de jure* segregation took root in the period between Emancipation and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Meanwhile, the legal enforcement of racial segregation extends as far back as the settling of the continent. The first documented case against miscegenation occurred on 17 September 1630, when the Virginia Assembly ruled against Hugh Davis for having sexual relations with a Black woman. He was sentenced to lashings of the whip before a mixed-race audience for having "defiled" his body. In fact, throughout the 17th century, the colony of Virginia passed a slew of laws proscribing Black and enslaved life which lasted into the 19th century. From this perspective, Jim Crow segregation may more accurately be interpreted as an evolution in American law to suit the context of post-emancipation. Likewise, the

shift in critical expression among African American writers, from memoir, pamphlet, and poetry to works of narrative fiction, signals a creative transformation in the means by which African Americans chose to relate and communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with racial subjugation, rather than a novel manifestation. Why should this transition not be understood, as is understood in the western context, as one between eras within a broader tradition?

Louvalerie King and Shirley Moody-Turner, in their work titled *Contemporary African American Literature: The Living Canon*, challenge Warren's notion of African American literature as merely a response to the racial oppression of the late-19th to mid-20th centuries by disputing the degree to which African American literature has engaged the political arena at all. They argue that writers such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Wallace Thurman perceived the realm of race as a force of delimitation for the production of their work. Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for example, though focused on the lives of African Americans in rural Florida of the 1930's, dealt very sparsely with the theme of race *qua* race. Her project was more preoccupied with the delimitations of American gender norms, following the life of Janie Crawford as she navigates various romantic relationships with men who consume her self-confidence and identity as an independent, self-determining woman. King and Moody-Turner, however, embrace this thematic variability and argue that African American literature is characterized by a variety of aesthetics and strategies in authors' wrestlings with questions of race, gender, identity, etc. More importantly, specifically in their response to Warren, King and Moody-Turner are concerned with establishing a continuity of tradition within African American literature which connect

individual creativity and “group practices” (e.g., the influence of past actions, customs, and practices refashioned by contemporary creativity and circumstances).

While they argue that African American literature indeed constitutes a tradition of writing about and by African American people distinguished for its history of shared concerns, themes, tropes, and situations, they never actually delve into the deeper history of Africana experience and its influence on the development of a distinctly African America creative expression over time. Nor do they organize African American creative literary expression into epochs contingent on political, social, or cultural evolutions throughout African American history. Additionally, like Warren, King and Moody-Turner are preoccupied with the context of the US and express no interest or consciousness of a more global tradition of Africana literature attentive to the shared themes, assumptions, values, etc. of Africana people of the continent or diaspora.

Significance

Comparative Black Literature, in order for it to hold significant, practicable analytical power, must be international in scope. Tropes, situations, concerns, and themes must be located within a global frame, in light of similarities and differences across time and space, for cultural, social, political, and historical meaning to be actualized. Such an approach provides a means by which to “chart” the relationship(s) of global Black literature according to continuities of tradition in theme, rearticulated through contemporary contexts.¹⁰⁸ Temple, citing Anthony Thorlby’s “Comparative Literature,” argues for Comparative Literature’s inherent international scope and purpose. It is both nonhegemonic and pluralistic in perspective, with a capacity to “reveal ‘deeper organic relationships and kinships’” across world civilizations. Bernth Lindfors added, in his

1994 work *Comparative Approaches to African Literatures*, that Comparative Literature was humanistic in character, extending beyond the particularities of any one cultural group and eschewing theoretical or ideological rigidities.

Any theoretical framework of Comparative Black Literature must derive from the analysis of concrete conditions, situations, etc. in which individual agents make decisions and choices for their survival. Following this logic, literature must provide concrete realities to abstract forms. This is why analyses of literature must always begin with the construction of cultural, historical, political, and social context. West writes that “the radical conditionedness of human existence and the ways in which possibilities and potentialities are created, seized and missed by individuals and communities within this ever changing conditionedness, including our inescapable death, illness and disappointment.”¹⁰⁹ The “Encounter” provides optimal opportunity for the reification of these “radically conditioned” realities of Africana men and women, from both the historical and sociological frame.

But Comparative Black Literature theory must also be committed to the explanation of why and how change occurs, in light of the socially and culturally constructedness of it, historically constituted. Temple explained in *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise* that one of the fundamental objectives of Africana literary analysis is “to generate ideas and tools to improve the lot of African heritage groups and humanity through an openness to activism, programming, education, community development, and policy initiatives generated from a synthesized Africana curricular expertise.”¹¹⁰ The Africana Studies scholar, specifically the literary critic or analyst, achieves these aims through the critique and historicization of texts in an effort to

comprehend the conflicts or phenomena brought to light within them. In other words, the text is approached as a repository of information for the reader to retrieve the tools and resources necessary to address contemporary problems. Therefore, Africana literature and comparative analysis empowers individual subjects to make informed choices in how they will interpret and manifest change in light of the “Encounter.” Africana literature provides specific examples and accounts of abstract structures while highlighting the multifaceted human struggles for identity, power, status, and resources. As Molefi Asante makes clear, Africana people must be perceived and perceive themselves as historical agents with the capacity to dictate and direct their own lives if communal harmony, i.e., social cohesion, is to prevail.¹¹¹ However, as educators, we must be sensitive to the consequences of social change as rupture. James Baldwin wrote in 1961, Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, *the loss of all that gave one an identity*, the end of safety. And at such a Encounter, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will now bring forth, one clings to what one knew, or though one knew; to what one possessed or dreamed that one possessed.¹¹²

CHAPTER TWO

THE CLASSED ENCOUNTER IN CLAUDE McKAY'S *BANANA BOTTOM* AND JESSIE REDMON FAUSET'S *THERE IS CONFUSION*

Introduction

Analyses of intra-racial class dynamics among Africana people have received an abundance of attention in academic social science, history, and theoretical literature for nearly a century, but have been largely ignored in the literary fields. This work has found that middle-class Africana men and women expect, by virtue of their status, to be differentiated from the Africana working-class and the behaviors and vices believed to characterize them. In this case, “class” refers not just to one’s socioeconomic position or material interests, but also to the signifiers connoting those positions and interests.

For example, Joe Feagin and Melvin Sikes observed in their 1994 sociological study, *Living with Racism*, the correlation between class and race in the attitudes of middle-class African Americans in the aftermath of the “Encounter.” An interview with a professor of African descent revealed that the individual expected her status as a professor, while on campus or among a group of other African Americans, to mediate how she might be perceived by both the poor black and the general white publics. Describing her “unmediated life” outside of these spaces, the professor intimates that her “casual clothing” and “real old ugly car” fail to communicate her class status while in public spaces, thus

when I’m in the grocery store, I’m part of the mass of large black women shopping. For most whites, and even for some blacks, that translates into negative status. *That means that they are free to treat me the way they treat most poor black people, because they can’t tell by looking at me that I differ from that.*¹

We can infer from this anecdote that the professor, who we can safely assume is of middle-class background based on her occupation, expects a greater degree of deference and courtesy from the white public than one would expect a poor African American man or woman to receive within similar circumstances. For the victim – in this case, the professor – the meritocratic veil is lifted to reveal that the color of her skin and choice in wardrobe disentitles her to the respect and consideration she believes that she has earned by virtue of her class status and profession. On the other hand, a degree of dissociation and resentment is engrained in her relationship to poorer African Americans, and white people generally, who have indirectly circumscribed her from being treated as an equal in white bourgeois society.²

This association between class, or the “performance” of status, as Erving Goffman might have termed it, and one’s race is overlaid with a second layer of consideration: racial “authenticity.”³ This phenomenon has been a significant factor tempering intra-racial relations between middle-class and working-class African Americans since the late-19th century. The idea of “racial authenticity” means that one’s “blackness” may be measured according to one’s performance of a set of behaviors, tendencies, beliefs, mannerisms, and/or inclinations, which thus determine one’s “proximity” to an “authentic blackness” (i.e., that one may be said to be “more” or “less” black based on a series of observable characteristics).

One’s “proximity” to blackness depends, largely, upon the orientation and status of the observer, and the context of the raced-classed interaction. Elijah Anderson explains in, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, that these orientations, which “appear to govern racial conduct in the black community and how individuals define themselves and others,” tend

to fit into two broad categories – ethnocentrism or cosmopolitanism.⁴ “Ethnocentric people,” Anderson explains, “emphasize loyalty to their own group, which is defined by ascribed characteristics, such as skin color, while cosmopolitans emphasize individuality and achievement.”⁵ Predictably, these sentiments are manifest in each party’s orientation towards each other, as well as towards the white world. For example, Anderson says that the black middle-class

do not want to come off as bold and boisterous... In their actions they make the claim that they are individual members of an economic class, not representatives of a racial caste. At the same time they buy into racial particularism as a defense mechanism.⁶

Likewise, African Americans must carefully regulate the language they use within certain contexts. For example, Feagin and Sikes observed a black middle-class informant who had struggled through school due to his English teacher’s dissatisfaction with his use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in his writing assignments.⁷ The experience was enough for the young man to declare that “it kind of, in one sense, made me not want to be black, and, in another sense, wonder what was black English.”⁸ One’s language also functions as a socio-linguistic signifier of class and racial “authenticity” within racial groups. On the one hand, for example, early in the Harlem Renaissance, what were called “dialect poets,” Claude McKay among the more well-known, were perceived by the more conservative intellectual elites of the artistic movement (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois and Jessie Redmon Fauset) as undermining the place of black culture, and thus black people themselves, within American society. For figures like Du Bois, Charles Johnson, and what David Levering Lewis refers to as the “Ministry of Culture” (the editorial boards of the NAACP magazine, the *Crisis*, and the National Urban League magazine, *Opportunity*), who had sought to “[reshape] the images and [repackage] the

messages out of which Mainstream racial behavior emerged,” works like Wallace Thurman’s *The Blacker the Berry* were functionally disclosing the inner tensions between African Americans and the white world.⁹ They believed that by utilizing “bad English,” intra-racial class tensions, and what we now know as “colorism” in their writing, African American authors would be tacitly reinforcing preexisting stereotypes among whites, thus diminishing the power of this new image of racial authenticity that Du Bois, Johnson, and Fauset had been carefully cultivating in the early-20th century.¹⁰ However, presumably without knowing it, on the more conservative end of the Harlem Renaissance intelligentsia, constructing an image of blackness focused on the assimilation of white bourgeois values (e.g., temperance, chastity, intellect, etc.), the black working-class was effectively disregarded from the so-called “Talented Tenth’s” vision of an “authentic” blackness.

There were some exceptions, however. Women within the African American Baptist church, from roughly 1900 to 1920, began challenging racist representations of African Americans in the white (and Black elite) public. Their approach cut two ways. On one hand, they condemned what they considered “idleness and vice” among lower-class African Americans, and “hedonism and materialism” among the white and Black elite.¹¹ While they retained the familiar discourse of their peers, racial uplift through behavioral management, they committed themselves to an active political program of petitioning and boycotting to oppose racial oppression structurally. To quote Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham from her seminal text, *Righteous Discontent*,

[u]ltimately, the rhetoric of the Woman’s Convention combined both a conservative and a radical impulse. Although the black church offered women an oppositional space in which to protest vigorously social

injustice, this space remained, nonetheless, situated within the larger structural framework of America and its attendant social norms.¹²

Meanwhile, out of resentment, envy, or some other source, *the black working-class* may interpret *their middle-class counterparts* as inauthentic if *they* fail to perform a series of prerequisite behaviors, attitudes, and values they deem definitional to a black authenticity. Within this frame, upward mobility, a taste for music or artforms regarded as “too white,” or interracial courtship may be perceived as inauthentic performances of racial purity and are thus grounds for disqualification from certain socio-racial perquisites and may even result in social ostracism.¹³ Just as Anderson had observed the propensity of middle- to upper-class African Americans to “codeswitch” according to the context in which they found themselves, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, in *Racism Without Racists*, found that lower- and working-class African Americans had a tendency to “call it as they see it.”¹⁴ He posits that this attitude towards social pleasantries reflects a broader socio-historical transformation in race relations between the necessities of “stage Negroes” of the Jim Crow era – more a strategy of survival than a social etiquette – and the performativity of tolerance by whites in the era of color-blindness.¹⁵ Bonilla-Silva suggests that this tendency toward curt honesty among working-class African Americans is “usually pointing out contradictions between the way things *ought to be* and the way things *are*.”¹⁶

Class tensions may also arise among members of the same socioeconomic status. Elijah Anderson observed during his work for *Code of the Street* a division within the black working-class between “decent” families and “street” families – the informants’ own terms for themselves. Each category connotes a set of values, behaviors, orientations, and attitudes Anderson claims are characteristic of each group, though

characteristic behaviors and attitudes of either group may be exhibited by the other, circumstances permitting.¹⁷ In other words, while “decent” individuals and families share many of the same values as the white middle-class, the open demonstration of these values matter very little in the context of the “street,” and may even prove detrimental, particularly for adolescent boys.¹⁸ Members of either group may coexist within the same family and do reside within the same neighborhoods, therefore, a significant degree of “performance” is exhibited within the black working-class who are seeking to navigate themselves and their children through the sociocultural context within which they reside. Sometimes, these tensions rise to direct conflict between residents when the proper etiquette is not demonstrated, or a “decent” individual gives into the challenges or provocations of a “street” individual. In such cases, much as the black middle-class man or woman’s proximity to the white world is demonstrated through status symbols and “proper” behaviors, the “street” individual or family deems the “decent” individual or family to have “sold out” or “act white” if they are not careful to perform the adequate degree of deference necessary to conceal either their upward mobility or desires to leave the neighborhood.¹⁹ To borrow from Anderson, “Even the most decent child in the neighborhood must at some point display a degree of commitment to the street.”²⁰

In the context of the Caribbean, however, social stratification intersects far more with hierarchies of color than in the US. Kotti Ramesh and Kandula Rani explain that, for the West Indian, assimilation to whiteness as well as one’s skin tone indicate one’s ranking in the racial-social hierarchy. Therefore, non-whites are incentivized to “become whiter” (i.e., assimilating to “white” culture and/or choosing a white or lighter skinned partner) as a result.²¹ Consequently, mixed-race individuals, or those presumed to be

mixed-race, begin to view the darker-skinned black masses as a threat to their own social position, while darker-skinned, lower-class blacks reciprocate with envy and suspicion of their lighter-skinned neighbors.²²

Such social dynamics play out similarly in the US through aesthetics and accepted moral conventions, particularly as they were expressed within late-19th and early-20th century African American politics. For example, many black women, predominantly those within the emerging middle- and upper-classes, took from enslavement, among many other things, the hegemonic sexual morality of puritanical Protestantism as a symbol of their “up-standing,” “respectable” citizenship – Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham referred to this in her seminal text, *Righteous Discontent*, as “the politics of respectability.” Social status and one’s humanity thus became thoroughly enmeshed within the interstices of race, class, and sex, both from within and without African American society, despite African American, particularly Baptist, women’s efforts to project egalitarianism, self-respect, and Americanness.²³ This did not happen immediately, of course, but over a number of years of assimilation to (nominally) free American life. Bell hooks says in her opus, *Ain’t I a Woman?* that,

[w]hites saw the sexual activity of the manumitted female slave as further evidence to support their claim that black women were sexually loose and innately morally depraved. They chose to ignore the fact that the great majority of black women and men attempted to adapt the values and behavior patterns deemed acceptable by whites.²⁴

This was no less true for white women than for white men. By the late 19th-century, black male suffrage was on its way to becoming institutionalized in America, leaving thousands of suffragettes irate at the prospect that former slaves, and the sons of slaves, might be enfranchised before themselves. In fact, hooks cites the *National American Woman’s*

Suffrage Convention, held in New Orleans, LA, 1903, where the argument was made that the enfranchisement of women “would insure immediate and durable white supremacy.”²⁵ Furthermore, white women’s clubs were generally averse to allowing African American women to join their ranks. In fact, it wouldn’t be until the early-20th century when African American women would be granted access to membership in white feminist organizations – and still the issues of race were relegated to a lesser priority than issues of gender inequalities and patriarchy. To quote hooks once more, “White women saw black women as a direct threat to their social standing – for how could they be idealized as virtuous, goddess-like creatures if they associated with black women who were seen by the white public as licentious and immoral?”²⁶

Black women could not find solace for their woes in the arms of Civil Rights organizations like the NAACP, either. While black women were accepted as members of the NAACP and the NUL, their issues and status within these organizations were limited, or even ignored. Such was the case that by the mid-1920’s black women abstained from women’s rights advocacy, choosing instead to focus on black liberation – the two struggles were seen as irreconcilable due to mass public perception that to institute equality of the sexes would be a bridge too far, i.e., too radical a position to uphold. Therefore, many black women, largely at the behest of powerful black men, chose to dissociate themselves from the feminist movement and commit themselves fully to black liberation. What they failed to foresee, as hooks has made clear, was “the strength of black male resistance to the idea that women should have equal status with men,” an attitude assimilated and carried over from white Protestantism and Victorian Romanticism. Hence, as Fauset’s biographer, Carolyn W. Sylvander, notes, despite her

conservative, “almost Victorian literary habits,” Fauset explored themes atypical of those accepted by the bourgeois literary elite at the time: e.g., female promiscuity, sexual exploitation, “race-mixing,” as well as incest.²⁷

Historical Context

As the era of Reconstruction came to an end, African Americans in the North and South found themselves occupying two radically different Americas. Of the roughly 9 million African American men and women living in the United States by the turn of the 20th century, merely a tenth resided in northern states, mostly living in cities.²⁸ With greater access to social services than the bulk of the African American population in the South, who were completely barred from participating in American life outside of their own communities, and access to universities and white American capital, the African American middle class, to a limited extent, was able to develop foundations. “In this segregated world,” claimed E. Franklin Frazier in his opus, *Black Bourgeoisie*, “especially in cities, a class structure slowly emerged which was based upon social distinctions such as education and conventional behavior, rather than upon occupation and income.”²⁹ This “black bourgeoisie,” was noted for its assimilation to American middle-class values and adjustment to industrial society.³⁰

The schools that these men, women, and children had access to were largely built from northern white capital investment and Protestant mission organizations’ philanthropy, though the Freedmen’s Bureau contributed extensively as well. As a result, the emerging African American middle-class had been inculcated with industrial training, dissuasion from “religious emotionalism,” and the austere, chaste values of the Protestant church. Thus, weaned from their so-called “folk” cultural traditions, now considered

immoral and “common,” this new cultural, social, economic, and political vanguard ossified into a certain African American bourgeois chauvinism which presumed that their newfound status entitled them to act as representatives for the interests of the African American working-class. Frazier argued,

Having become less isolated and thus more exposed to the contempt and hostility of the white world, but at the same time cherishing the values of the white world, the new black bourgeoisie with more money at their disposal, have sought compensations in the things that money can buy. Moreover, their larger incomes have enabled them to propagate false notions about their place in American life and to create a world of make-believe.³¹

This orientation sat at the center of the perspectives of those considered to be, for a time, the vanguard of racial uplift ideology at the turn of the 20th century: Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. While the pair are traditionally seen, with good reason, as representatives of an ideological polarity in early 20th century racial thought, what they held in common was the view that poor, post-Reconstruction African Americans had developed certain cultural, moral, and intellectual pathologies which prevented them from developing into an economically, socially, and politically significant force in American society.³²

For Washington, slavery had embedded in the African American man and woman a resentment of manual labor, going so far as to claim the following:

The great responsibility of being free, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children, seemed to take possession of them. It was very much like suddenly turning a youth of ten or twelve years out into the world to provide for himself.³³

In place of manual labor, claimed Washington, African American men and women sought out assistance from the Federal Government of the United States, “very much as a child looks to its mother.”³⁴ And with the money these men and women managed to earn,

argued Washington, they spent thoughtlessly on fancy clothing and buggy cars, adding “when people of my race reached a degree of success, they were inclined to unduly exalt themselves; to try and ape the wealthy, and in so doing to lose their heads.”³⁵ In his attempt to define a pathway forward for Post-Reconstruction African Americans, Washington denigrated the value of intellectual pursuits and professions, feeling that their education, “they thought entitled them to special distinction;” that, “[h]ad we started in a fine, attractive, convenient room [at Tuskegee], I fear we would have ‘lost our heads’ and become ‘stuck up.’”³⁶ Paradoxically, Washington simultaneously believed that access to the ballot should be safeguarded by intelligence tests and the ownership of property, “for a while at least,” while those same two prerequisites were being systematically denied to African Americans across the South and to a lesser degree in the North.³⁷

Du Bois, on the other hand, had the privilege of longevity to develop his views on education and racial uplift that Washington did not.³⁸ While Du Bois never veered too far from his now infamous “Talented Tenth” thesis, which he held onto throughout the Harlem Renaissance and into the 1930’s, a more thorough examination of his thought reveals a far more complex position than he is typically given credit for.³⁹ As early as 1904, Du Bois had taken to task the biological explanation for racial disparities in educational and economic attainment *en vogue* among eugenicist social scientists at the turn of the twentieth century. In “Heredity and the Public Schools,” written just five years removed from his towering work of sociology, *The Philadelphia Negro*, written in 1899, he argued that intellectual and economic growth were encumbered by the physical, “spiritual,” and social “surroundings” of the community or individual.⁴⁰ Thus, what was necessary for the African American man or woman to thrive was the restructuring of

American society in the interest of elevating African American socio-political power and freedom, which had been stunted by enslavement and crystallized in the failure of Reconstruction, in order for them to acquire the independence of thought, initiative, and “expanded consciousness of manhood” necessary for racial growth.⁴¹ “Ignorance,” he claimed, is the byproduct of an environment that has stripped African Americans of self-respect, borne out by an ignorance of the world, its possibilities, and their place within it.⁴²

By 1916, Jim Crow segregation, negligent economic opportunities, the boll weevil regional infestation, white supremacist terrorism, and the WWI industrial boom motivated a mass exodus of African Americans from the rural south to northern, midwestern, and western cities – primarily New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles. There they found an economic and political base built from both African American northerners and southern migrants who had established themselves through entrepreneurship and the clergy. While the vast majority of Harlem’s new tenants were working-class men and women from the Caribbean and the American South, native African American northerners at the forefront of these institutions leveraged their social and cultural influence over their new constituents to propel their own goals and interests, as well as enforcing assimilation through their hold over the community’s network of cultural and intellectual production.⁴³

At the forefront of Harlem’s intelligentsia was Du Bois, who, as the inaugural editor of the NAACP nationally syndicated magazine, the *Crisis*, sought to institutionalize his thesis of the “Talented Tenth” into praxis by publishing articles and anecdotes which emphasized the accomplishments, as opposed to the struggles, of

African American men, women, and children. Du Bois and his staff's stated objective was to instill a "positive self-image" within the African American public and to propagate the achievements of African Americans to the white middle-class.⁴⁴ "They saw art and letter," claims Nathan Huggins in his history of the Harlem Renaissance, "as a bridge across the chasm between the races."⁴⁵ The belief undergirding this hypothesis being that black and white artists had risen above superstition, prejudice, and fear towards a higher form of culture held to be the true measure of civilization, which for Du Bois and the "Talented Tenth" necessarily meant *European* culture.⁴⁶ Thus, Harlem's intellectuals, like Du Bois, the National Urban League's (NUL) Charles S. Johnson, and *Crisis*' Jessie Redmon Fauset, placed a significant emphasis on artistic, musical, and literary production they saw as the key to acquiring legitimacy in the minds of the white American public.⁴⁷ To borrow from Huggins again, "The assumption was that the moral weight of good would win once evil was exposed."⁴⁸

On how Harlem, specifically, was able to attract the degree of cultural and social influence and attention that it did, David Levering Lewis argues, in his own history of the Harlem Renaissance, that there "were changes, seemingly centered in Harlem, in the character of Negro protest and thought," instigated by the Red Summer of 1919, a period of socialist agitation following the Russian Revolution, the mistreatment of African American troops returning from the first world war, and the reconstitution of the Ku Klux Klan outside of Atlanta, Georgia.⁴⁹ As a result, the African American public began turning away from the Washingtonians and their program of patience and accommodation, determining that they had failed to adapt to the changing economic and social conditions of the South. Southern agriculture had been losing ground to Northern

manufacturing as the means of gainful employment for African Americans for decades. The Great Migration had also quickened the pace of urbanization in Northern cities, both circumstances which Washington and the Tuskegee machine had ignored (and in some ways instigated). Perhaps most of all, though, African Americans resented the failure of Washington's program to stave off the rising rate of violent hate crimes against them, at least in any meaningful sense. Meanwhile, the NAACP, which had been established in New York City by May 1910, offered a more radical and intellectual alternative to Washington's prescriptions.

Furthermore, migration from the West Indies had brought the militant nationalism of Marcus Garvey to Harlem in 1916, further invigorating the tenor of African American activism in New York and elsewhere. In Garvey African American Harlemites found self-assertion, racial pride, and anti-integrationism, while Du Bois and his "Talented Tenth" saw a threat to "respectable" African American leadership.⁵⁰ While President Woodrow Wilson had presented a vision of nationalism predicated upon ethno-linguistic lines in his "14 Points" speech to Congress in 1918, Garvey had appropriated the language of nationalism to project the principle of self-determination to African people worldwide. By the 1920's, nationality had become a universal signifier for "humanness," much like reason and the arts had been in the 18th and 19th centuries, thus the grounds for marginalized peoples' entitlement to an equal share of the social rights and privileges granted majority populations had been laid.⁵¹ For Garvey, this entailed the utilization of history as a source of legitimation, collective memory, and destiny in building a black national identity and character, with Africa as a symbol of shared "blood relations" that bound African people the world over as kin.

Du Bois, for a time, largely accepted the nationalist narrative, but framed it within the lens of “double consciousness.” He highlighted the length of time lived in America, as well as the labor exploited to build it, as the rationale for African Americans’ entitlement to being perceived as legitimate Americans. On the other hand, the contradiction between America’s ideals of a democratic nation and Jim Crow segregation obstructed African Americans’ enjoyment of full citizenship. Therefore, Du Bois turned to Africa as the source of African Americans’ “racial origins,” thus providing a foundation for a modern African American (“Negro”) identity and a convenient repository for the, in Anthony Dawahare’s words, “many desires unfulfilled under industrial and urban capitalism.”⁵²

As a regular contributor to the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s (UNIA) *Negro World* magazine, Claude McKay had been enchanted by Garvey’s self-determination and “blood and soil” talk, believing, at the time, nationalism to be “the open door to Communism.”⁵³ Eventually, however, after months of trying to convince Garvey and his acolytes to integrate a class analysis to their program, McKay broke from the UNIA, chastising them for what he thought was their reductive understanding of Africa and their condescension of the continent’s indigenous peoples.⁵⁴ What McKay took with him, though, was his affinity for Jamaican folk culture, which he drew upon liberally in his early writings, as well as Garvey’s nationalism, which McKay believed affirmed Africana identity through the celebration of blackness and black life. For McKay, Jamaican, as well as African American, folk culture served as the pure essence of a blackness that bound one to their ancestors and thus to their historical homeland – Africa.⁵⁵ The critical orientation of black nationalism allowed McKay, in his rejection of

“Modern civilization,” to construct an essentialist binary between “natural” Africa and the “industrial” or “capitalist” US – “the white man’s world of wonders,” he called it.⁵⁶

But, perhaps most of all, McKay perpetually wrestled with the dialectical binary common among Afro-Caribbean writers of the “native” versus the “adopted,” a critical orientation which Kotti Ramesh and Kandula Rani situate squarely in the context of West Indian colonialism and consequent colonial syncretism.⁵⁷ They argue that McKay understood colonialism, racist brutality, and subsequent negation of identity as a process of peripheralization of the Africana world relative to Western culture and society.⁵⁸

McKay, himself, was the byproduct of Jamaica’s peripheralization. Both of his parents were second-generation Jamaican nationals, his father hailing from the Ashanti people of western Africa. As a child McKay’s father would recite old Ashanti folk tales to his son which may have played a role in his affinity for the continent later in his adulthood. McKay also attended British colonial schools which served to indoctrinate him and his peers into British culture. McKay would, in fact, demonstrate a consciousness of this process much later when he claimed that the British school system intended to have Afro-Jamaican students believe “that they were little black Britons.”⁵⁹ Most significantly, they were socialized into Britain’s rigid social class structure. The curricula of these British colonial schools attributed most contributions of global civilization to the West, and they excluded the contributions of Africana peoples entirely.

McKay’s immersion into British culture did not end in school, though. His brother, Uriah Theophilus McKay, and later McKay’s mentor, the English gentleman, Walter Jekyll, introduced Claude to western philosophy and British literature, respectively. Evidence for this influence is sprinkled throughout McKay’s earliest

writings. When he had first started writing poetry, McKay had modeled his writing style and structure on the prose of Shakespeare and the Victorian poets. It was Jekyll, however, who first encouraged McKay to write his poetry in Jamaican patois, like those found in his first two books of poetry, *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*, both published in 1912. However, he soon ceased the use of dialect in his prose due to considerable pushback from critics who compared him against “real” poets like Byron, Browning, and Tennyson; his Jamaican audience, who had come to appropriate the ethnocentric colonial view; and later, initially, the Harlem intelligentsia.⁶⁰ Despite these obstacles, McKay never once relinquished his affinity for Jamaican folk culture, nor his belief that it was lower-class Africana men and women who retained what he called the “healthy primitive values” of his race. To quote Ramesh and Rani, “It was only they [lower-class Afro-Jamaicans], he thought, who could withstand the leveling onslaught of Western Civilization.”⁶¹ It is for these reasons that Ramesh and Rani, and P.S. Chauhaun argue that McKay must be read, principally, as a colonial writer, “who happened to stop over in Harlem on his lifelong quest for a spiritual home.”⁶² His sensibilities and understanding of the relationship between race and class were fundamentally at odds with the standard conventions and objectives of the early-20th century black literati and intelligentsia.

Occupying the obverse wing of the Harlem Renaissance sat Jessie Redmon Fauset, literary editor of the NAACP’s the *Crisis* magazine who introduced McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and others to a national US audience. With the mentorship of Du Bois and the likes of Charles S. Johnson promoting her on the national stage, Fauset became a key voice of Harlem’s “Talented Tenth,” brokering cultural power to African Americans by early-1924. Fauset had been the literary editor of the *Crisis*

since 1919, molding the vision of the movement toward the promotion of African American achievement and excellence (the generation's "authentic voice" as Du Bois would dub it), and with the success of her seminal novel, *There is Confusion*, Fauset contributed to the burst of creative output produced by Harlem's intellectuals between the mid-1920's and early-1930's.⁶³ Set within Philadelphia's African American elite, *There is Confusion* explores the lives of three young African Americans seeking to find their place within the emergent black middle-class. Ostracized by the black working-class and rejected by the white middle-class, "Joanna" and "Peter," with their working-class friend, "Maggie," navigate the prejudice and discrimination of Philadelphia and New York in the early-20th century, in efforts to discover who it is that they are.

With her novel, Fauset sought to explore the questions of how one's social context and cultural background shape one's character, the possibilities for one's upward mobility, and the relationship between one's individual goals and communal goals.⁶⁴ These were questions, in fact, that Fauset wrestled with in her own life. She had been raised in a well-to-do neighborhood of Philadelphia, PA, attending prestigious elementary and secondary schools where she would be the only African American in class. Later, she'd graduate from Cornell University, Phi Beta Kappa, in 1905, where racial circumstances were similar.⁶⁵ Returning to Philadelphia after graduation, Fauset was denied teaching work in the city on account of her race and was forced to seek employment elsewhere. After searching for a year, she was able to find work as a French and Latin teacher at the M Street High School in Washington, D.C., where she worked from 1906 until 1918 when she enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania to earn a master's degree in French in 1919. As a byproduct of such an upbringing, Fauset

developed what has been called a “bourgeois aesthetic,” meaning the focus of her work was the promotion of the family unit, importance of religion (specifically the black church), and cultural refinement.⁶⁶

Analysis – *Banana Bottom*

Claude McKay’s fourth novel, *Banana Bottom*, offers a unique context within which the Encounter may be observed from a classed perspective. The structure of class in Jamaica, unlike in the United States, is thoroughly intertwined with colorist racial hierarchies. While lighter skin corresponds with a higher degree of social and cultural capital in the US, the color of one’s skin in Jamaica necessarily disqualified oneself from holding positions of power and privilege. Dark-skinned men and women occupied the lowest rung of Jamaican society, allowed only to work as peasant farmers in the countryside or as servers, porters, domestics, etc. in the cities, and were utterly disincentivized from pursuing intellectual development in colonial schools as a consequence. Lighter-skinned men and women – the lighter the better – could work as managers, colonial administrators, or join the civil services, which all required some form of higher education to obtain. Whites, naturally, occupied the highest rung of Jamaica’s socio-racial hierarchy, entitled to any job one so chose, with the freedom to ascend or descend at will. McKay makes this race-class social structure clear towards the end of *Banana Bottom*:

And Bitá was black – to be precise she was the quiet restful colour of dark blooming brown. But officially and generally that was called black, and that made a great difference in Jamaica, where there had been established a tradition by which all the little white-collar jobs were considered the special plums of the light-brown natives who came like a dam between the black masses and imperial authority.⁶⁷

While McKay's earlier work elided such topics, by the 1930's he began to take more seriously the matter of race and self-definition. The characters in his novels and short stories struggle with inferiority complexes and self-contempt within personal relationships and internal conflicts. For example, the short story, "Brownskin Blues," follows a dark-skinned Harlemit named Rascoe who leaves his dark-skinned wife, Bess, for a "light-yellow, highly-powdered" woman named Teresa Lundy he meets at a Cabaret as Bess sings. As though to disabuse us of any illusions to the contrary, Rascoe makes clear that he is leaving Bess due to her "ugliness," which he directly attributes to her dark complexion. Having invested all her self-affirmation in her relationship to Rascoe, Bess resolves to bury her woes in mounds of cocaine and to bleach her skin raw. Color, status, romance, and self-worth are so thoroughly intertwined for Bess, that when her marriage to Rascoe is finally over – Bess' Encounter – she is stripped of all the value she had invested in the interplay between color, class, and romance, and thus, without a self-defined, self-respecting identity.⁶⁸

By 1933, McKay had developed his ideas regarding color, class, and identity exponentially, manifest in his novel *Banana Bottom*. McKay's main character, "Bita Plant," occupies the space between European colonial culture and values, and Jamaican folk culture and values. Bita's foster parents, Malcolm and Priscilla Craig, who are white British colonials, attempt to inoculate Bita from her Jamaican folk culture, presumed to be an innate quality of Bita, in an "experiment" that Mrs. Craig envisions will remove the primitivity from Bita's Africanity and instill European (English) civility.⁶⁹ Precipitated by Bita's rape by the local musician, Crazy Bow Adair, the Craigs send Bita away to England to finish out her elementary education and attend university. In all, Bita spends

seven years away in England before returning to Jamaica to live with the Craigs at their mission in the town of Jubilee. As the narrative plays out, Bitia relearns her appreciation for her home in Banana Bottom, frequenting the town's markets and attractions as well as the locals' social events, which Bitia describes as a "surging free big feeling" as though she has "descended for baptism."⁷⁰ We witness Bitia navigate her homeland, to the chagrin of her foster parents, almost as an outsider as she explores romance, friendship, and camaraderie in the small mountainside town of Banana Bottom.

Bitia quickly learns that she does not fit the narrow mold of an "intermediary" laid out before her by the Craigs. Therefore, with the help of her English mentor, Squire Gensir, she resolves to eke out an identity for herself that both embraces English "civility" and her "natural" affinities for Jamaican folk culture.⁷¹ Bitia's final break from this mold occurs in her choice to marry Jubban, the dark-skinned farmer and drayman of the Craig 59udacitn, rather than the Craigs' chosen suitor, Newton Day, a light-skinned, educated preacher who detests the folk culture of Banana Bottom.

The narrative plays out within the context of a tension among competing cultural interests tugging at Bitia's subjectivity, precipitated by both the main character's rape and subsequent sojourn to Europe – each incident denoting Encounters of the story's narrative arc. The local musician, Crazy Bow Adair, who rapes Bitia in her adolescence, represents the legacy of colonialism and slavery in Jamaica, punctuated by the character's madness which connotes the confusion of colonial subjectivity. Adair is a 3rd generation descendent of the Scottish immigrant who purchased the town of Banana Bottom, married a dark-skinned Jamaican woman – "the blackest of them all" – and freed all the slaves living on the land.⁷² With this black woman, Adair's unnamed ancestor is said to

have peopled the town of Banana Bottom with his mixed race progeny, all “hardy peasants,” which McKay refers to as “[a] variegated multitude.”⁷³ Due to these circumstances, certain white colonists perceive the people of Banana Bottom as decadent degenerates, despoiled because of their mixed-race ancestry, in need of European civilizing.

Adair was raised from an early age to be educated “for an official job” in “the bigger life of the island.”⁷⁴ Bita’s family, the Plants, were the first to acquire acreage from the divided Adair estate and are close neighbors of Crazy Bow’s family, Crazy Bow himself dropping into the Plant home to eat dinner or play music on a whim. The villagers of Banana Bottom have become quite complacent in their agrarian peasant station and generally do not believe anyone from the colony could rise to greatness in any meaningful sense. Therefore, when dark-skinned Bita is sent away to school in England it becomes something of a phenomenon in the small town that a woman from among them could be presented the opportunity for higher learning and thus higher status on the island. In fact, Bita’s going away instigated a sentiment amongst the Banana Bottom peasantry which served to psychologically reject themselves for the opportunity at upward mobility that Bita’s rape had afforded her; to quote McKay: “And there was not a dark family in Banana Bottom...that did not wish one of their children had been in Bita’s shoes and had been instead the victim of Crazy Bow.”⁷⁵ The colonial, colorist structure of Banana Bottom, and the trauma visited upon its people, have led them to interpret sexual violence and trauma as an opportunity for escape from their condition – a model, if only a psychological one, for the dark-skinned people of Banana Bottom to emulate.

Additionally, not only are the actions of Crazy Bow coveted by the Banana Bottom villagers for the access they afford Bitá, but they are excused as a function of his insanity and Adair family lineage, which the villagers hold in high esteem. In effect, this affair is representative of a confrontation with the structural Encounter within the context of colonialism, wherein the colonial subject comes to revere the “civilized” nature of the West, which they believe may be appropriated and used to their own advantage while their own “primitive” socio-cultural mores are perceived as complacent, regressive, or even degenerate. What’s more, in this instance, is that this orientation takes place to the detriment of the native’s own cultural perspective and even their safety. As Fanon pointed out in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the colonial subject thus depends upon its oppressor, the colonizer, for identity and positive cultural and social structures, which serve to raise the status of individual subjects as they conform to the conventions of Western manners and behavior, whether they are conscious of the cost to themselves or not.⁷⁶ In the case of Crazy Bow, his whiteness vis-à-vis heredity elevated his social standing in Banana Bottom as a function of his proximity to the white ideal. We learn, additionally, that it has become customary among the young women of Banana Bottom to dole off their children, usually born out of wedlock, to more well-off adoptive parents on the island in order to give them a chance to live a better life than the women, themselves, are able to eke out.⁷⁷

On an individual level, Bitá’s rape by Crazy Bow functions as a psychological fissure separating Bitá from her native Jamaican folk culture. Crazy Bow represents both the island’s “primitivity” and colonial confusion, while the act represents the violence of colonialism thrust upon the colonized. The imposition of rape upon Bitá creates a chasm

for the Craigs' colonial European values to fill. While Bitá's spiritual, hereditary connection to Jamaica may serve to mitigate the trauma of her rape, it cannot resolve the syncretic violence that has been visited upon her. McKay, himself, seems to suggest that Bitá's sojourn to Europe allowed her to reaffirm her appreciation for Jamaican folk culture that otherwise would have remained destructed as a function of her rape. While at market, Bitá

mingled in the crowd, responsive to the feeling, the colour, the smell, the swell and press of it... She had never had that big moving feeling as a girl when she visited the native market. And she thought that if she had never gone abroad for a period so long, from which she had become accustomed to viewing her native life in perspective, she might never had had that experience.⁷⁸

However, we come to realize as the narrative plays out, that Europe will leave an indelible mark upon Bitá as the "intermediary" subject that Priscilla Craig had intended to create all along. Therefore, it may be argued that Bitá's having been sent away to Europe, itself, constitutes a Encounter within Bitá's character development.

We must remember that Bitá is a dark-skinned peasant from a very respected family of Banana Bottom. Her father, Jordan Plant, was a "leading peasant" who had "acquired the best acres of any small proprietor of Banana Bottom," was a church leader, and the "preferred friend" of Malcolm Craig, grandson of the mission's founder. Even before her education in Europe Bitá was regarded as "surely destined for nice bringing up."⁷⁹ Upon her return to Jamaica, Bitá becomes increasingly more conscious of her new status, which plays out in her relations with the Craigs, romantic interests, and platonic acquaintances on the island, creating a seemingly impervious distance between herself and the islanders by virtue of her "intermediary" position as a dark-skinned, educated peasant.

For example, among Banana Bottom's prospective bachelors, Bita is something of a challenge to conquer, or a prize to be won. One of these charismatic suitors, Hopping Dick, tries his hand at courting Bita by holding her groceries and flirting on her way home from the market, proclaiming, "There's more big-foot country gals fit to carry pines [pineapples] than dunkeys (sic) in Jamaica."⁸⁰ While Dick's sentiments may be taken as simple coquetry, we are disabused of such an understanding when we find out that "a group of his set" is watching him "open-mouthed," as he begins to walk "more ornamentally, ostentatiously absorbed in conversation with Bita."⁸¹ To be sure, Dick is just as amazed at himself for having the courage to approach a woman "of Bita's standard," something which he would never have done alone.⁸² Later, Priscilla Craig confronts Bita for having entertained Dick's advances, insisting "'He's not a fit person for you to be seen in the street with, Bita... You know there are certain things we just can't do, simply because they reflect on the mission.'"⁸³ Interestingly, it is at this point that Bita begins taking special care of her appearance, donning dresses with "bandana colours" and wrapping her hair in traditionally patterned scarves, signaling her break from Priscilla, and thus imposed "Englishness," that will develop throughout the narrative.⁸⁴

Likewise, Tack Tally, a "hurry-come-up" recently returned to Banana Bottom from his work on the Panama Canal, expresses his desire for Bita – to "get under her thatch" as he terms it – to a collection of friends in town.⁸⁵ Panhead Flamme, an acquaintance of Tack, rebukes his friend's ambitions pointing out Bita's "shingle class" status; "And shingles them harder to get under than thatch, says Panhead, connoting one's ability to afford a house with a shingled, rather than a thatched, roof. In response,

Tack declares, “*You* are right mi man... Thatch is easier to get than shingles. But sometimes it’s better too.”⁸⁶ The encounter emphasizes Bitá’s class status and the unattainability of her affections by the underclass due to both her proximity to “Englishness,” which necessarily raises her class status in this context, as well as the bourgeois values that are presumed to follow from such a position, namely, austerity and chastity. This is then taken as a surrender on Tack’s part by his friends, for he has thus acknowledged, then, that his newfound Panamanian wealth has not risen his class status concomitantly – he is, after all, dark-skinned Jamaican – leading him to harass Bitá as she swims in the lake later on in the novel.⁸⁷ Put differently, Tack and Panhead function as the “ethnocentric people” mentioned above in our discussion of Anderson. While Bitá has, at the very least, entertained Tack’s advances, demonstrating her “cosmopolitan” orientation, Tack and Panhead dismiss her as a possible mate on account of her presumed failure to adhere to the norms expected by the Jamaican, ethnocentric underclass represented by Tack and Panhead.

Bitá’s rejection of Herald Newton Day, the light-skinned understudy of Malcolm Craig and the heir-apparent to the mission’s ministry, most directly reveals Bitá’s perspective on romance and compatibility. While Day is perceived by the Craigs, particularly Priscilla, as a natural fit for their foster-daughter, Bitá does not share in their enthusiasm for the young man. In fact, his fate is sealed during the long carriage ride he takes with Bitá wherein he reveals that, in preparation for the ministry, Day had “thought that perhaps only a white woman could help me,” whereas Bitá has “been trained like a pure-minded white lady,” and is thus an acceptable choice for a wife.⁸⁸ Her initial reaction to this sort of talk is rather tempered. “I don’t know about that,” Bitá says, “But

whatever I was trained like or to be, I know one thing. And that is that I am myself.”⁸⁹

Later on, however, she elucidates her sentiments in an exchange with Miss Lambert, organizer of Banana Bottom’s Harvest Festival and head of the town post office. In regard to Hopping Dick, Miss Lambert warns, ““Take care, Bitia, that man don’t forget himself and think it is more than a piece of pleasantry. He’s not our class, you know.””

To which Bitia responds,

‘But we can’t discriminate in a place like this where all are enjoying themselves together...If the people want to enjoy themselves with us, so much the better. If we are not too proud to take their money we shouldn’t be too proud to play with them....’⁹⁰

Bitia explicitly demonstrates here a solidarity with the town’s lower-class folk, compounding her implicit preference for their company and values throughout the novel, to this point. Furthermore, in her final rebuke of Herald Day, Bitia makes clearer to the young minister her consciousness of race. The following conversation takes place between Day and Bitia on their way to Gensir’s house regarding the place of religion in Banana Bottom, then shifts to Gensir’s orientation to the topic:

‘I know all about those over-educated persons who don’t take the Bible literally. The Higher Criticism, you know. A disease of scholarship. But at bottom you will find them good Christians. I am broadminded and can talk to the squire without mentioning his weakness.’

‘But supposing I should have the same weakness from too much contact with Squire Gensir?’ said Bitia.

‘You’re joking, Bitia, talking that way. You’re not a white person to go crazy from education.’

‘Mr. Day?’ cried Bitia.

‘This is not the first time you’ve used that ‘white person’ phrase to me in that invidious sense. Let me tell you right now that a white person is just like any other human being to me. I thank God that although I was brought up and educated among white people, I have never wanted to be anything but myself. I take pride in being coloured and different, just as an intelligent white person does in being white. I can’t imagine anything more tragic than people torturing themselves to be different from their natural unchangeable selves. I think that all the white friends I ever made

liked me precisely because I was myself. I hope I shall never hear any more of that nauseating white-and-black talk from you.’⁹¹

In this exchange, Bitá has taken a large step in *Working Through*, rather than *Acting Out*, the race-classed trauma imposed upon her as an adolescent, emerging into a more robust, pluralistic consciousness of reality, while rejecting exclusionary or self-deprecating paradigms. We also witness the “whiteness as education” correlation in Day’s denunciation of intellectualism. Education and intellectualism are framed within the structure of “whiteness” and perceived as outside of, and in a sense as inferior to, the realm of both religion and “blackness.”⁹²

The Banana Bottom townfolk, however, have become alternatively envious and intimidated by Bitá and her newfound status, as mentioned above. She has thus become a threat. McKay punctuates this point using a folk song repeated throughout the first third of the novel by the townfolk: “You may wrap her up in silk, / You may trim her up in gold, / And the prince may come after / To ask for your daughter, / But Crazy Bow was first.”⁹³ The repetition of the song both reinforces the tension between European “civility” and Jamaican folk culture in Bitá’s development, as well as provides a means for the Banana Bottom underclass to assert their agency against the negation that Bitá’s new colonial subjectivity represents. This is not, however, the case for all Banana Bottomers.

Further along Bitá’s journey of self-discovery, the protagonist attends a “tea-meeting” – more akin to a “dance” in the US or a “soiree” in France than “taking tea” in England – at the request of Squire Gensir. After expressing hesitation – citing her new “position” and the threat of Mrs. Craig’s being “shocked to death” – Bitá decides to attend. In an effort to not get caught, Bitá and her friends, Belle Black and Yoni Legge,

the latter whom tells her parents that she would be sleeping at Bitá's which, McKay informs us, "Pap Legge could not object because, as the most cultivated native girl of the region, Bitá was just the person he preferred Yoni to be with" – Yoni was herself, after all, a dignified "sewing-mistress" now and could not dare be seen at such events.⁹⁴ We learn later at the Plant residence that Yoni does not share in those more envious Banana Bottomers' feelings towards Bitá:

'I jest love tea-meetings...It's so chupid you can't do one thing nor another 'causen you l'arnin' little naygar chits to sew. It's bettah to be able to do what you feel like all the time and don't care nothing about what nobody says...'⁹⁵

Belle Black, the third member of Bitá's party, agrees,

'I got to follow mi feelings them, honey...I sings in the choir all right, but I'd rather not to sing than no gwine a tea-meetings and dances. Ain't nobody loosing and tying mi petticoat string them but meself when I get ready.'⁹⁶

These Jamaican women demonstrate their preference for self-identification, authenticity, and their own traditional folkways than those foreign institutions imposed upon them from without, however much, though, like Bitá, they may find value in them.

McKay emphasizes the importance of Bitá's having attended the tea-meeting through Priscilla Craig, who, after learning of Bitá's little tryst to Banana Bottom, chastises Bitá, interpreting her behavior as a slippage on her part back to her "natural," "atavistic" ways of "her race."⁹⁷ While Priscilla comes to excuse Bitá's transgression on account of Squire Gensir's presence at the tea-meeting, she reveals the first signs of disquietude regarding the success of her civilizing mission, and the first tear in the bond connecting Bitá to the Craigs and their English bourgeois value structure.

While to this point Bitá has demonstrated affinities for traditional Jamaican folk life, the shadows of her Encounters return during an interaction with Squire Gensir regarding the nature of freedom and native Jamaican life. In response to a jocular remark by the Squire concerning his reputation, Bitá says, “You’re so certain of yourself. And besides, you have your class and your colour – open sesames for you everywhere. It’s grand. You’re a thousand times freer than we.”⁹⁸ To which Gensir replies,

‘I may be freer than you...Because you passed through the same system of education as myself. Something to fit you into a rigid pattern. But I don’t think I am as free as the peasants here in their daily life – I’m not as naturally free as they are.’⁹⁹

Bitá, then, proceeds to disabuse the Squire of his romanticized view of peasant life, pointing out the peasant work life and lowly means of gratification – “an empty lonely life” – which she contrasts to the Squire’s privileged life of travel and access attendant to his race and class. The conflict is left unresolved; though, it does serve as a landmark for Bitá’s journey toward greater consciousness African subjectivity. As discussed above, Gensir’s point that, despite the Jamaican peasant’s lowly status and daily toils, they are free to be themselves – an “unconscious freedom in their common existence, their natural instincts” – is reiterated by Bitá almost verbatim in her conflict with Herald Day that ultimately ends their short-lived, arranged relationship.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, as the conversation continues, the vestiges of Bitá’s European learning reveal themselves when the discussion turns to Obeah, which Bitá calls “a low practice,” “an awful crime,” and “Beastly.”¹⁰¹ Whereas Gensir retorts stating that

‘it’s just our [Europeans’] civilization that makes it a crime. Obeah is only a form of primitive superstition. As Christianity is a form of civilized superstition.... Your folklore is the spiritual link between you and your ancestral origin.’

While the squire certainly perpetuates colonial paradigmatic inferiorization of the colonial subject in his language, he challenges its rigid absolutism by pointing out the similarly situated superstitions of his own people, with cosmopolitan overtones. Bitá appears unmoved by this line of argument. However, by the book's midpoint, she begins to come around to Squire Gensir's way of thinking. Bitá prefers to spend her time in Banana Bottom over Jubilee – “It was so much pleasanter and freer” as opposed to “the staid atmosphere of the mission” – participating in dances and festivals, and, ultimately, choosing the dark-skinned, folkish drayman, Jubban, as a spouse over the “educated” and “cultured” choice presented to her by the Craigs, who ends up folding under the weight of his contradictions and disappearing into obscurity (and obscenity!)¹⁰² Finally, there is the religious revival held by the flamboyant preacher, Evan Vaughan, which Bitá attends with Squire Gensir and Teacher Fearon. The service suddenly breaks out into a traditional African spiritual observance and enchants Bitá, to the chagrin of Evan Vaughan. “Those bodies poised straight in religious ecstacy,” describes McKay, “and dancing vertically up and down, while others transformed themselves into curious whirling shapes, seemed filled with an ancient nearly-forgotten spirit...”¹⁰³ Bitá, at this point, has come nearly full circle in her development as an African agent from the early stages of her *Working Through* which rejected her native values and customs outright, treating her countrymen and their ways as novelties to be appreciated rather than to assimilate into.

Bitá's final detachment from the life and values that the Craigs have attempted to impose upon her occurs at the climax of her and Priscilla Craig's relationship. The pair are embroiled in yet another entanglement over Bitá's relationship with Hopping Dick, wherein Priscilla presents Bitá an ultimatum: “You must choose between this man

[Hopping Dick] and your future welfare... You will have to decide *now*.”¹⁰⁴ The choices function as proxies for Jamaican folk culture (Hopping Dick) and European values (the Craigs’ mission and paternalism). In addition to the colonial sub-text of the exchange, there are clear undertones of class as well: ““They [the townsfolk] can say nothing except that I am friendly with Mr. Delgado,” says Bitá. ““And that is enough for a man of his reputation and a girl in your position,”” responds Priscilla, ““You are not like Belle Black. She can be friendly with such a man. But *you are like my own daughter*. Could you imagine a girl like Miss Adler acting as you? And you are much more cultivated in every way.””¹⁰⁵ Priscilla is trying to create psychological, social, and emotional distance between Bitá and her countrymen on account of her raced-classed position, which Bitá resists according to her pluralistic, universalist orientation.

The choice is ultimately taken away from Bitá, though, and presented to Hopping Dick who decides to forgo their relationship on account of their class disparities. “But for all his vanity,” McKay tells us,

he had never entertained the slightest possibility of Bitá becoming his wife... How could one in his station dream of marrying a girl like Bitá who had been brought up to refinement and accustomed to large comforts and nice things. He couldn’t take her to live with his mother in their little two-roomed house. And how would he provide for her? He who was still indirectly supported by his father... No! He wouldn’t attempt to spoil Bitá’s life at the mission for anything in the world.¹⁰⁶

Bitá remains reticent in her orientation, though, desiring not a man of higher status, refinement, or of lighter complexion, but a man of the country, hardworking, and in touch with his spiritual (McKay would say, “natural”) self. Hence, Bitá chooses the drayman, agriculturalist Jubban, who saved her from the ravenous intentions of the “bastard near-white son of a wealthy country gentleman, enjoying all the privileges of his birth and

position,” Arthur Glengley.¹⁰⁷ The interaction is itself the final mediating factor (the final Encounter) of Bitá’s realization as a “Negro gal,” thoroughly immersed in raced-classed sub-text. Glengley had attempted to force himself upon Bitá, where, in response to her resistance, he declaims, ““But fer all you ejication an’ putting on you nuttin’ more’n a nigger gal.””¹⁰⁸ In fact, rather than the physical violence of the debacle, it was Glengley’s derision of Bitá as “only a black girl” that seems to trouble Bitá the most. She expresses dismay for any “decent Negro girl anywhere” unfortunate enough to have been dehumanized in such a way. It is in this moment that Bitá learns the inescapability of Jamaica’s race-class social structure; her place within it as an educated, rather well-to-do dark-skinned Africana woman; and takes Jubban as her partner in resistance.

The novel, through Bitá, acknowledges the irrevocable mark of colonialism upon the colonial subject, within the framework of a race-class social structure. However, it demarcates a positive pathway forward toward self-realization and self-definition for the Africana subject which, though placating to the irreducibility of colonialism, emphasizes Africana agency against Eurocentric negation.

Analysis – *There is Confusion*

Jessie Redmon Fauset’s first novel, *There is Confusion*, explores similar themes to McKay’s *Banana Bottom*, particularly the class-race relationship relative to the Encounter. The novel deals with the influence of history on the present, the possibility of free will considering heredity and environment, folk culture as a basis for an Africana identity, and the limiting roles placed upon black women and their ability to overcome them. Fauset explores these themes through her three primary characters – Joanna

Marshall, Peter Bye, and Maggie Ellersley – which I will argue serve as three potential models for developing Africana agency.

Rather than focusing on the lives of Jamaican peasants, though, Fauset's characters emerge from the upper-middle and lower-class black communities of early-20th century New York City and Philadelphia. Throughout the novel, narrative themes play out as series of choices presented to the main characters as they grow up in their respective places, or "stations," in life, following them from childhood to young adulthood. The novel, rather brilliantly, strikes a balance between the limiting social structures within which individuals live out their lives and the choices presented to these individuals and how they play out for them from a long-term perspective. Fauset pays close attention to the society at large and how it molds and discriminates black individuals, as well as the role of the black community's internal dynamics and conflicts themselves in their potentially self-limiting habits and expectations.

Fauset's female characters, both Joanna in the upper-middle class and Maggie in the lower-class, confront the social forces which repress their agency as Africana women and subjugate them to the delimiting phenomena of patriarchy and classed-racism. In Joanna's case, her ability to book dancing gigs and thus build a career from her talents is explicitly encumbered by racism pervading the club and theater scenes of Philadelphia and New York City. Maggie on the other hand is persistently judged and valued according to her class position and the company she keeps, most significantly by Joanna whose letter functions as the Encounter that redirects Maggie's narrative towards loneliness and suffering, rather than ambition and upward mobility. The narrative of Fauset's third main character, Peter, is affected most directly by what we would call

“Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome.” While Fauset and her peers did not have the language of PTSS to draw upon, she demonstrated a thorough understanding of the phenomenon through the character of Peter Bye.

Taking each character at a time, we are introduced to Joanna Marshall as a young, ambitious child of an upper-middle class Harlemites family. She is associated most pronouncedly with her father, Joel Marshall, from whom she inherits her passion for greatness; interest in great men and women like William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth who overcame great obstacles to succeed; and a commitment to work and focus in order to see things through to their completion. Joel instills in his daughter a pride and dignity in her race telling her stories that emphasize how far African Americans had come since enslavement, noting particularly their wealth and cultural production to encourage Joanna’s dancing and singing. Joel underappreciates the extent to which race would affect Joanna’s life chances, “in this section” of the US, though. In fact, Joel downplays the role of race, claiming that “having some natural drawback often pushes you forward, that is if you’ve got anything in you to start with.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Joel perceives his Sunday service at Old Zion Church “as the outward and visible sign of an inward worth...Many a small boy unconsciously stored away a memory of the erect wholesome figure as a possible exemplar for future consideration.”¹¹⁰ We see this value system reflected in Joanna’s attitude towards others throughout the novel. Fauset informs us early on that Joanna is ignorant, even averse to “the matter of conforming to average appearance” and having a distaste for “shiftless” people, of any race, with no ambition to succeed.¹¹¹ Joanna is not entirely haughty, though. After a friend insinuates to her that her dreams of being on the stage seem to be a

longing to get away from her own people, Joanna responds, “You don’t think I want to forsake – *us*. Not at all. But I want to show *us* to the world. I am colored, of course, but American first. Why shouldn’t I speak to all America?”¹¹²

Joanna’s first Encounter comes as a spectator at the concert hall. She and her brother, Philip, walk up an aisle to their seats which they find are next to a white woman. The unnamed woman recedes from Joanna as she sits down next to her. Joanna’s takeaway from the experience, however, is positive. She intimates to Philip that once the woman heard Joanna humming along to the melody of the singer, she let down her guard and engaged Joanna in conversation regarding the tune being played. “Wonderful how music can make people forget” says Philip. “Even color,” responds Joanna, “Did you see that white woman next to me edge away when I sat down? But when she heard me humming after it was over, she leaned over and asked me if I knew the words.”¹¹³

Joanna later expands upon her view of race and race prejudice. Viewing the phenomena as more of a “nuisance” than indelible features of human interaction, she believes race prejudice as a trap within which prejudiced people are not of sound mind and not within their own control to escape. Much like the more conservative wing of the Harlem intelligentsia at the time, Joanna believes that superiority in the arts is the key to dissipating race prejudice. “But, Peter,” says Joanna, “he didn’t insult us. He can’t help this stupid prejudice...if there’s anything that will break down prejudice it will be equality or perhaps even superiority on the part of colored people in the arts.” Joanna continues with her pragmatic optimism,

‘Now my problem is how to master, how to get around prejudice. It *is* an awful nuisance; in some parts of this country it is more than a nuisance, it’s a veritable menace...First, I’m going to get my training up to the last notch, then I’m going to watch for an opportunity and squeeze in...Some

white people are kind, some of them are truly artistic that they'll put themselves to great trouble for the sake of art.¹¹⁴

The incident at the theater, however, was not the last time that Joanna would be confronted by the Encounter. Later in young adulthood, after finding some success as a singer, Joanna sought employment as a professional dancer with her instructor, the Frenchman Bertully, at her side. Manager after manager rejects her outright on account of her race. Fauset explains that "This was probably the first time in her life that she had been thwarted. She was like a spoiled child, bewildered and indignant at being suddenly brought to book."¹¹⁵ Joanna finds for the first time that her effort, hard work, optimism, in a word, her merit, has been for naught. That the veil of the color line has been brought to bear upon her, despite her talents. And what bothers her most is that these people were seemingly incapable of imagining her acceptance in the mainstream, and their unwillingness to take a chance on it.¹¹⁶ The incident allows Joanna, to an extent, to finally level with Peter and his experiences in medical school – how they've aroused his resentments against white people, driving him away from the profession and into music. This, however, Joanna rejects, insinuating that Peter is a coward and that what must be done is perseverance.¹¹⁷ She is rebuked and chastised, though, by her good friend Brian who tells Joanna that, due to her upbringing, Joanna does not fully comprehend the toll prejudice has taken on Peter's dreams, motivations, education, etc. That Peter's lack of self-motivation, sense of responsibility, and growing up poor are delimiting factors in Peter's life – a byproduct of his discrete historical inheritance rooted in slavery.¹¹⁸

Towards the end of the novel, Joanna, disillusioned by racism, has given up on the values of love and merit for a hope in change, and has abandoned her dream to dance for a new dream of heading a southern black school.¹¹⁹ That is, however, until she lands a

role as “Black America” in the play, *Dance of the Nations*, at the fictional District Line Theater in New York City. After the lead playing “White America” resigns due to Joanna’s being cast, the managers, with Joanna’s sister Sylvia’s suggestion, decide to cast Joanna as “Red,” “White,” and “Black America,” having her wear a mask in each role to conceal her identity (race). At the end of the show, the audience cheers for Joanna to take off her mask so that they might look upon the face of the dancer whose performance they had enjoyed so much. Joanna concedes, drawing robust, though delayed, applause. It is at this moment that Fauset notes the destructive nature of Joanna’s attitude toward those she had perceived as “lesser than.” She comes to see how separate the circumstances were for white and black Americans. How the people around her, for the most part, “had had means...to plunge immediately into the sea of preparation,” realizing “for the first time how completely colored Americans were mere on-lookers at the possibilities of life.”¹²⁰ This outlook eventually leads Joanna to quit her old ambitions altogether and to devote herself fastidiously to “domesticity” in support of Peter’s pursuit of medicine. Fauset explains – almost incomprehensibly, given the trajectory of Joanna’s story arc – that Joanna had come to realize her will to success had kept her from “her true self”: deferential submission to her husband’s authority and ambitions.

In one sense, Joanna’s story teaches the values of sacrifice, persistence, and humility. But in another, Fauset seems to have internalized the standard patriarchal convention of the time, specifically of the black elite in the early-20th century, that black women’s role in the fight for civil rights is to be loyal, subordinate accessories of black men. That the greatest they can aspire to be is – “her true self” – is the disparate partner of their men, rather than agents of change in their own right, with their own program of

uplift and excellence complimentary to that of black men. Africana agency cannot be fully realized without the complete inclusion of both Africana men and Africana women as equal partners in the pursuit of liberation. To do otherwise would be to subordinate Africana women, as a group, and their interests to the acquisition of a deeply flawed racial liberation.

Maggie Ellersley, on the other hand, an aspiring hair stylist and entrepreneur living in squalor with her mother, begins her narrative with her ambitions of becoming a businessowner constrained the threat that they might pose to the manhood of potential suitors. With her sights first trained on the young, charismatic Philip Marshall in her adolescence, Maggie later settles, with the intervention of Joanna Marshall, on the shady, mysterious, much older Henderson Neal. Maggie eventually finds out from her neighbors, siblings Annie and Thomas Mason, that Henderson is a habitual gambler and is perceived by those who know him as an unscrupulous, dastardly character in Atlantic City and Philadelphia. Maggie decides to confront her husband with the truth, which he does not deny, and resolves to break off their marriage, banishing Henderson to the streets. Up to this point Maggie has been rather obsessed with elevating her class status, or, as she would put it, longing for the company of “decent people.” Watching her mother’s need to labor for the squalid living conditions they are forced to live in, Maggie becomes motivated by resentment – towards her mother, her life, etc. She even demonstrates a liking for white aesthetics by seeking to emulate their “soft,” “manageable” hair and character.¹²¹

Maggie’s first attempt at escape occurs in grade school when she meets Joanna Marshall’s older sister, Sylvia. Maggie invests a great deal of her own self-worth into

how well she can mimic the hair style, dress, and mannerisms of Sylvia, attempting to live vicariously through the life of an upper-class friend in order to appropriate the privileges which may come through such a relationship. She eventually becomes a regular at the Marshall residence where other neighborhood children, like Peter Bye, come to congregate in their own efforts at escaping poverty in the arms of their class betters. It is at the Marshall house that Maggie learns to brush her hair nightly, bathe daily, and eat plentifully for each meal.¹²²

The lines of class distinction are drawn clearly in subtle references to Maggie's background from secondary characters. For example, Joanna's older brother Philip comments on Maggie's seemingly innate ability, presumably because of her class position, to deal with such people as Henderson Neal, who early in the novel and in the children's lives is presented with an air of mystery, even cynicism.¹²³ However, Maggie's Encounter comes with a letter sent by Joanna who seeks to erect a barrier between young Maggie and her brother, Philip, whom she has noticed are becoming quite fond of each other. The letter evinces Joanna's class consciousness and orientation towards the "78udaci" of her race:

‘I think you ought to know that such an arrangement [marriage to Philip] would not be at all pleasing to our family, nor would it be good for Philip. I've often heard my mother say that *only people of like position should marry each other*, and I hardly think that would be true in the case of you and Philip...My father is very ambitious for us and lately Philip has shown that he means to embark on a *real career*. You can see that a girl of your lowly aims would only be a hindrance to him. *Philip Marshall cannot marry a hair-dresser!*'¹²⁴

Joanna's commentary is thoroughly enmeshed within bourgeois values and social stratification. Yet, even in her grief from having received the letter, Maggie continues to

emulate the Marshalls as an up-standing family in the community and an example for her to live by, even as she abandons hope of ever being with Philip.

The incident causes Maggie to internalize her classed inferiority and to throw her into the arms of Henderson Neal who confesses his admiration for Maggie and his desire to provide her with a comfortable life. ““You poor idiot,”” Maggie thinks to herself, ““you simpleton, you fool, why should the Marshalls want you? They’re rich, respected!””¹²⁵ Therefore, Maggie renounces her entrepreneurial ambitions and trysts away to Atlantic City with Henderson Neal to begin her life as a married, working-class woman. However, the soiree proves tragic for Maggie, revealing to her the attitudes of black high society towards their “lesser” acquaintances. She finds these people looking at her as if to “appraise” her and her clothes. While Henderson is absent through most of the trip, Maggie finds it impossible to forge relationships with those around her, leading her to realize how much she had relied upon the Marshalls for access and validity. Furthermore, Maggie is disabused of her illusions that class status and surrounding herself with “decent people” would protect her from racism as she is turned away from Atlantic City theaters due to her race.

After their trip to Atlantic City, the couple moves to Philadelphia where Maggie becomes a homemaker and Henderson continues to disappear inexplicably for extended periods of time. As noted above, she later finds out through some friends that Henderson is a notorious “card-sharp” who has allegedly driven several men to suicide for debts owed to him. Maggie confronts Henderson, leveraging her childhood dream to be “decent” and throws him out of their apartment. Shortly thereafter, Maggie fishes through her coat pockets for the business card of a hairstylist she had acquired back in Atlantic

City and calls the number. We come to learn that through this act of self-assertion and self-rediscovery, Maggie has constructed a career for herself as an office manager for the company's three locations in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Maggie later runs into her old friend Peter Bye at a restaurant in Philadelphia where they are able to reconnect. Peter is attending medical school in Philadelphia, so the pair are able to spend a great deal of time together, even forging a romantic relationship as Peter and Joanna's long-time love affair crumbles. Maggie comes to notice that her relationship with Peter has begun to afford her a certain degree of social capital around the city, though she has, once again, become dependent on a social "better" for access and validation.

Through Maggie's friendship with Thomas Mason, Peter obtains employment as a musician, allowing him to quit medical school and commit to music full-time. But, finding that the profession garners little respect from either the black or white public, he decides to recommit himself to medicine once again, causing Maggie great consternation and ultimately ending their marriage. She takes a trip to New York City to stay with her mother for a time where her feelings of unworthiness and loneliness are resurrected once more.¹²⁶ This stay does, however, allow Maggie to reflect on the course of events that had led her to this point. She begins to regret her pursuit of distinction through her relationships with men and laments Joanna's intervention in her girlhood love affair with Philip. We learn that she did truly love Philip and would even have let distinction pass if it meant spending her life with him.¹²⁷

Maggie then resolves to enroll as an army nurse and is sent to the battlefield in Chambery, France. The work provides her with a sense of pride, purpose, and

independence, which leads to the resurrection of her ambitions as a hairstylist and entrepreneur. She even decides to renounce her lifelong commitment to bourgeois “decency,” choosing, instead, to establish a friend group of “simple kindly people whom she liked for themselves” rather than for whatever status they could provide her.¹²⁸ While in Chambery, Maggie runs into Philip, for the first time in an unspecified number of years, while he is laid up in the town infirmary. Philip has become morose and bitter, having come to the conclusion that his efforts at social justice have done nothing but damage his own personal life. He proclaims in an extended monologue the futility he views the effort for racial justice to be and how it destroys the lives of people like him:

‘Now as I look back, I think I realize for the first time what this awful business of color in America does to a man, what it has done for me. If we weren’t so persistently persecuted and harassed that we can think, breathe, do nothing but consider our great obsession, you and I might have been happy long ago...But do you know as a boy, as a young man, I never consciously let any thought of self come to me? I was always so sure that I was going to strike a blow at this great, towering monster. And all I’ve done has been to sacrifice myself and to sacrifice you. And the ironic joke of it is that in defense of the country which insists on robbing me of my natural joys, I’ve lost the strength to keep up even the fight for which I let everything else of importance in the world go. I’ve been simply a fool.’¹²⁹

To console Philip, Maggie intimates that her own life has been lived “exactly opposite” of his, seeking her own personal advantage by latching on to others rather than building a life of her own. Yet through her reflections she comes to the conclusion that ““Sometimes I think no matter how one is born, no matter how one acts, there is something out of gear with one somewhere, and that must be changed.””¹³⁰ In other words, through her experiences, Maggie has determined that pursuing higher class status, living life through the access of others, even hard work will never Allow one to overcome the barriers of racial and class hierarchies in America. That it is a sociocultural deficiency within all

people, and thus the society, which one can only hope to solve within themselves, as an individual, to ever make a significant change in the things one finds hideous in the world. Once Philip dies of his wounds, Maggie commits herself completely to her hairstyling dreams, consigning the help of Joel Marshall in the process. Maggie's story ends spending "many pleasant hours in consultation" with Joel Marshall over the growth and success of her business.

In Maggie we witness the alienation and suffering of poverty, and the individual will to overcome it, against all odds. Maggie humanizes our vision of poverty. Her life demonstrates that we don't always have resign ourselves to the choices we make or the chance "station" in life that we occupy. In many ways, both explicit and implicit, Maggie Ellersley is the foil to Joanna Marshall. While Joanna, being of the black middle-class, has her entire life made for her, without any want for security or reinforcement, Maggie subsists by the qualities of others and by the sheer strength of her social ingenuity. She learns from her experiences with men and acquaintances that, despite the inevitability of needing others to succeed in life, it is quality relationships and personal strength which progresses one forward. Maggie must learn and build strength through trials and tribulations, while Joanna exhibits these qualities as a matter of course, only to have them diminished with each passing transgression against her character.

Finally, Peter Bye, who has a remarkable knowledge of anatomy at a very young age and aspires to be a surgeon, is plagued by his family's legacy of enslavement and its patriarchs' orientations towards both white and black people – in fact, Peter's is the only family tree which we receive such a detailed account. The Byes are a white agrarian Quaker family residing in Philadelphia since "As far back as the last decades of the

eighteenth century.”¹³¹ Aaron and Dinah Bye were the emancipators of the black Byes, acting in accordance with Pennsylvania law, in 1780, among whom was Joshua Bye, Peter’s great-grandfather. Due to Aaron Bye’s “patriarchal instinct,” expressing particular kindness toward Joshua’s mother, Judy, there grew “an inexplicable attachment to the white Bye family.”¹³² Judy married Peter’s great-great grandfather, Ceazer Morton, who became Aaron Bye’s coachman thanks to Judy’s devoted loyalty. Ceazer, Fauset explains, “was a strange truculent character; he hated slavery, hated all white people, hated particularly the Mortons, hated ineffably Aaron Bye.”¹³³

Ceazer and Judy had Joshua, born into slavery, though he “had never known the institution in its more hideous aspects.”¹³⁴ It was for this reason that Joshua’s son, Isaiah, heard very little about the atrocities of enslavement, except that his father, Joshua, had continued working for the Byes after his emancipation. Fauset describes Joshua as “the genuine peasant type – the type, black or white, which believes in a superior class and yields blindly to its mandates.”¹³⁵ Isaiah grew up with his mother, Belle, telling him that black children had too many obstacles in front of them to truly achieve all that they could dream, but that one could “die much further along the road than when you was born.” Therefore, Isaiah curbed his ambitions according to his circumstances, yet he “accomplished wonders” by opening a school for black children, regardless.¹³⁶ Like his father, Isaiah grew to disdain white people “and their ways,” which allowed him to develop a strong race pride based on his own accomplishments and how far he and his family had come from their enslavement.

Isaiah’s son, Meriwether (not to be confused with the white Meriwether Byes) aspired to become a doctor, though he lacked the focus to truly “shine” while at school.

Meriwether grew up knowing exactly who his namesake was and resented that this did not entitle him to some advantage in life – specifically a share to the Bye peach orchard in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Allowing this resentment to fester into shiftlessness, Meriwether dropped out of medical school to go travel as a train porter. While Meriwether was away for work, Isaiah took ill and passed suddenly, leaving his son the school and the small accumulation of properties he had owned throughout Philadelphia. Meriwether blew through his inheritance, however, on gambling, medical bills, and general laziness, causing him to flee for New York City to find employment. During this time, Meriwether wrote to the white Meriwether Bye, himself a doctor at this point, seeking aid for his living arrangements to no avail. The bitterness and resentment built within him so that he would tell his son, Peter Bye, how effort and ambition counted for nothing and how whites are ungrateful for the labor African Americans had contributed to the building of America. Therefore, what Peter inherited from his forbearers was a disdain for white Americans and his father’s shiftlessness, though Peter’s aunt Alice tried her best to instill in her orphaned nephew the values of education, dignity in work, and the importance of religious observance.

Peter Bye and Joanna Marshall first meet at school when they are young children. Joanna already presenting a haughty attitude did not take a liking to Peter just yet, though, Fauset explains, “His practical experience and the memory of his father inclined him to dubiousness. But her [Joanna’s] superb assurance carried away all his doubts.”¹³⁷ Like Maggie, getting close with the Marshalls had the added benefit of allowing Peter to witness and experience African American accomplishment and ambition that very well may have saved him from the fate of his father.

Peter's Encounter, though, occurs in conversation with his love, Joanna Marshall, regarding her ambitions for show business. "You'll never get it [an opportunity to break into theater]," Peter tells a young Joanna, continuing in his pessimism by invoking his family's experience with the white Byes.¹³⁸ The discussion creates space for Peter's anger and resentment to resurface in an Acting Out against Joanna's ambitions. The phenomenon creeps back again later in the novel when Peter is considering leaving medical school to pursue music, having had enough of the profession's racism and the poverty he had had to endure all the while. Peter thus writes to Joanna with this idea, to which she responds with severe degradation:

'What I think about this...is that I don't want and won't have a husband who is just an ordinary strumming accompanist, playing one, two, three, one, two, three. Sometimes, Peter, I think you must be crazy.'¹³⁹

Joanna and Peter later break their engagement off after Peter's night out with a few friends at "a low cabaret." Joanna cites Peter's weakness in letting "the meanness of a few white men" get the best of him, in turning to alcohol and "dancing with cheap women" for solace.¹⁴⁰ From this point forward, Joanna's love for him had become conditional, which Peter refuses to accede, thus breaking off the engagement and proposing to Maggie Ellersley instead in order to feel "ordinary," which Joanna had never allowed him to feel.

Peter experiences another sea change with his third Encounter – a business-meeting with a Mrs. Lea. Mrs. Lea is familiar with the white side of Peter's family and hints at the irony of the family's former slaves coming to entertain them in the present.¹⁴¹ Peter quits immediately and decides to take up his studies once more, using the Encounter experienced at Mrs. Lea's as motivation for shifting perceptions towards him.

However, finding the months of work he would need to catch up on a bit more than he could handle, Peter decides to join the military and fight in France against the Central powers. It is during this time that Peter comes face-to-face with a direct descendant of the old white Byes upon a naval vessel heading to Europe – (another) Meriwether Bye. Through his relationship to the young white Bye, Peter comes to realize that this flesh and blood representation of his family's tragedy was in fact quite amicable and sympathetic, expressing interest in the lives of African Americans, and, excepting for their more gifted individual talents, each race "averaged about the same" in terms of work, creativity, and intelligence. His interactions with Meriwether Bye serve to dissolve Peter's previous assessments of white people, shirking his progenitors' defense mechanism against racial violence for the more inclusive attitude necessary for survival in the contemporary world. "He was a wonderful man, Joanna," Peter says of the younger Meriwether Bye, "a real, real man and he made me see life from an entirely different angle," that the war with racism is "spiritual and mental," and thus orders of magnitude more difficult to overcome than white Americans' "physical" freedom in the American Revolution.

Having forged a compact with the young Meriwether to deliver a message and a picture to his father in the case of his impending death, Peter encounters the old Meriwether Bye. After delivering the younger Meriwether's message, Meriwether the elder responds quite gravely, though offers to take on Peter's son (yet another Meriwether Bye!) to provide him an education and to afford him the ability to travel. Peter, incensed by the elder Bye's presumptuousness, prods the old man, questioning him for why he hadn't shown any interest in the black Byes before. Meriwether reveals that Peter's son

is, in fact, the last remaining heir to the Bye family estate, that Peter's grandfather, Isaiah, was actually the elder Meriwether's brother, and thus was the blood relative of Aaron Bye and his slave, Judy. This fourth and final of Peter Bye's Encounters brings him in as direct contact with his family legacy as he could feasibly manage. It allows him to make his final maneuver from the bitter, prejudiced, disjointed son of the black Meriwether Bye, to the dignified, self-respecting, motivated African American man he becomes in that moment. "See, dear," Peter says to Joanna, "there is the source of all I used to be. My ingratitude, my inability to adopt responsibility, my very irresoluteness come from that strain of white Bye blood. But I understand it now, I can fight against it. I'm free."¹⁴² Peter turns back toward the elder Meriwether, rejects the "gifts" offered his son, and (ostensibly) leaves the bitter pain and suffering he had endured throughout his life at the doorstep of old Meriwether Bye. He is finally able to repudiate his tortuous past connecting him to the pain and suffering of slavery, and live on his life as a self-respecting, self-defined, and successful African man.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GENDERED AND SEXED ENCOUNTER IN JAMES BALDWIN'S *ANOTHER COUNTRY* AND TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

Introduction

This chapter will explore the gendered and sexual orientation dimensions of the “Encounter” as expressed in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and *Another Country* by James Baldwin. I will begin with a discussion that situates the intersection of gender and race, followed by a discussion that situates the intersection of sexual orientation and race in the United States from a socio-historical perspective. My goal is to elaborate the theoretical lens through which my analyses of Baldwin and Morrison derive, focusing on the role that the intersection of race and gender, and race and sexual orientation, within Africana queer and women’s narratives play in identity formation for Africana subjects. By doing so, my work will provide a model for analyses of this sort for literary analysis and criticism, as well as Comparative Black Literature more broadly. Finally, it is my position that such analyses will allow for the conceptualization of more sophisticated literary pedagogies which account for the particular narrative developments and perspectives of Africana queer and female characters in literature, and thus situate the experiences of Africana queer and female students at the center of literary pedagogical frameworks.

The intersection of race and gender has only received serious, critical attention over the past few decades – the intersection of race and sexual orientation even more recently. Gendered appeals to Black liberation stretch as far back as the late-18th to early-19th centuries with the autobiographies and speeches of Africana women such as Maria

Stewart and Sojourner Truth in the US and Mary Prince in England. However, it wasn't until 1926 that Africana queer perspectives were explored artistically with Richard Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade." Combing through this literature, one finds several themes, when viewed through the lens of the Encounter, which confine and mold women's and queer individuals' identity formation and racial socialization.

The pairing of James Baldwin and Toni Morrison in a chapter on the gendered and sexually oriented dimensions of the "Encounter" is pertinent for two specific reasons: subject matter and literary philosophy. Both Baldwin and Morrison deal in matters of identity crises and discovery by situating characters within contexts of real-world struggle, expressed in deep, multi-layered human relationships that twist and turn throughout the development of dynamic narratives. Additionally, each writer produced fiction with the understanding that it is the artist's duty to reflect their reader's reality, whether actual, imagined, or potential. In fact, Baldwin's former assistant and biographer, David Leeming, has stated in regard to Baldwin that "[t]he artist choosing to deal in truth had better be concerned with articulating the manners, traditions, and rituals through which people have managed to survive in worlds dominated by the myths of others."¹ The logic being that the value of a writer – or artist – is measured in so far as their work can help its audience make sense of the circumstances that surround them, or may surround them, given the context.

One fundamental difference between Morrison and Baldwin, and it is not a trivial one, is the settings in which they tend to situate their characters – Baldwin being more attracted to urban environments while Morrison prefers rural or suburban ones. This could be due to each author's upbringing – Baldwin from Harlem, Morrison from Lorain,

OH. Whatever the case, they reflect discrete sets of circumstances with particular sets of values that bind their characters, environments, and situations together, providing rich contexts to mine meaning from.

Overview – Africana Women and Race

Sojourner Truth presented her famous “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech in 1851 at the Women’s Rights Convention held at the Old Stone Church in Akron, OH. In just a few short lines Truth exposed the classed, raced, and gendered position of African American people, particularly women, under, first, enslavement, then, Jim Crow segregation:

Nobody ever helps me into carriages, over mud-puddles, or give me any best place. And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman?²

On the one hand, she addressed the paradoxical, incoherent nature of patriarchy, which simultaneously reduces women to helpless damsels in distress, while historically and systematically denying and obstructing their ability to support and protect themselves and/or their families by their own merits in the labor market. Not to mention the absolute erasure of working-class women’s experiences and struggles to get by, living off meager incomes, working low wage service jobs, mainly – particularly among African American women – for wealthy white families, all while tolerating classist and racist condescension which essentialized the “nature” of their character as intellectual, moral, and sexual degenerates. Such presumptions asserted bourgeois white male and female normativity within a hierarchy of raced, classed, and gendered hegemonic social power. The staying power of Truth’s words must be attributed to her social place: rather than the analysis of a scholar, these were the words of a formerly enslaved Africana woman bearing witness as

an act of resistance against the treachery of enslavement and the racist-patriarchal superstructure of mid-19th century America.

Roughly 130 years later, bell hooks appropriated Truth's stinging declaration, "Ain't I a Woman?" for the title of her classic 1980 work of Black Feminism which explored similar themes but from a more academic, theoretical perspective. Hooks located her analysis within the history of Africana people in the United States to argue that, as a function of enslavement and the systematic destruction of traditional values and customs that this entailed, Africana men and women were removed from the superstructures that affirmed their gender identities and cultural place, and thus sought to ameliorate this confusion through the assimilation of white bourgeois values (i.e., patriarchy). Having no other outlet to positively express their gender identity, Africana men sought to "regain their manhood" through the subjugation of Africana women in ways that mirrored traditional white Euro-American value structures.³ It was the standard position at the time that Africana men were the "true victims" of enslavement because of the dissolution and disruption of their traditional family structures.⁴ As a result, argues hooks, Africana men came to resent and resist certain gendered roles, while Africana women sought assimilation and acceptance from their white female counterparts to no avail.⁵

Additionally, Africana women were forced to endure pervasive sexual violence and exploitation, which hooks claimed served to "obtain absolute allegiance and obedience to the white imperialist order."⁶ These women lived in constant fear of sexual assault due to the nature of their sexual vulnerability as property to white slave masters. Rape and other acts of sexual violence not only reinforced their place as exploitable sex

and labor objects but ensured the ability of white capitalist patriarchy to sustain itself and its power structures in the most concrete, immediate sense imaginable. Angela Davis, in her “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” persuasively argued that rape and the threat of rape constituted an institutionalized form of terrorism meant to demoralize and dehumanize African American women. “Given the already terroristic texture of plantation life,” Davis contends,

it would be as potential victim of rape that the slave woman would be most unguarded. Further, she might be most conveniently manipulated if the master contrived a random system of sorts, forcing her to pay with her body for foods, diminished severity of treatment, the safety of her children, etc.⁷

Africana women in the New World became the vessel through which white slaveowners would exercise their anti-woman religious anxieties relative to sexuality. While they mythologized the white woman as pure and virtuous (i.e., without any sexual impulse), they simultaneously transformed Africana women (and men) into sexually permissive brutes. They became “jezebels” and “temptresses” (and “Mandingoes”) threatening white men’s sexual and spiritual purity, rather than agents of their own sexual norms and proclivities.

Those Africana women fortunate enough to have escaped enslavement, or were otherwise free, were therefore faced with what hooks called a “double bind”: (1) ally with patriarchal Africana men, who sought to reestablish the manhood that they perceived to have lost through enslavement; or (2) ally with racist white suffragettes who romanticized the experiences of Africana women, rather than accede to the political legitimacy of their issues.⁸ Africana women, ultimately, chose Africana men, subordinating their own fight for suffrage to a fight for their men’s suffrage. Despite this political maneuvering,

African men curtailed African women's formal participation in civil rights organizations and other political entities and, according to hooks, used their focus on white male oppression as a scapegoat for their own patriarchal tendencies – which were upheld by both genders in one way or another.⁹ African men grew to resent African women who rejected their “place” as the “property” of African men, perceiving them as a threat to their masculinity.¹⁰

To be sure, as hooks and others have noted, racism had existed within the abolitionist movement from its very onset, which had been overshadowed by abolitionists' ardent, even radical at times, anti-slavery sentiments. Hooks has argued, persuasively, that, given white (bourgeois) women's immediate reaction to African American male enfranchisement, they perceived African American civil rights as a threat to their own social position. After all, as suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton made clear, “If Saxon men having legislated thus for their own mothers, wives and daughters, what can we hope for at the hands of Chinese, Indians, and Africans?”¹¹ For similar reasons, with the exception of such individuals as Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone, early white feminist and suffrage organizations, particularly those chapters in the south, instituted segregation within their own ranks – some even threatened secession when the General Federation of Women's Clubs signaled their support for admitting “colored clubs.” This exclusion was bolstered by late-19th century sociocultural assumptions that African American men and women were lascivious and immoral. Thus, to associate with them socially meant to risk white women's political interests.

These sociocultural assumptions had been scaffolded by the system of enslaved labor for generations, gaining renewed currency in the mid- to late-19th century when,

first, the specter of abolitionism began garnering popular support, then as a response to Reconstruction-era rights and proposals that benefitted African American men. While enslaved African American men had their dignity assaulted by their inability to perform their traditional role as protector of their families, African American women were simultaneously denied their traditional roles as nurturers and caregivers. Like enslaved African American men, many enslaved African American women were sent to harvest the plantation fields. As hooks astutely observed, fieldwork was perceived by the planter class as debasing and degrading to women, thus it was uncommon to find a middle- to upper-class white woman tilling a field but was common for those same women to castigate others who had no other choice but to harvest crops. In fact, fieldwork was considered so lowly for women that those who were indentured servants were sometimes put to the fields as punishment for some transgression they may have committed.

While African women, as part of their own sets of traditional African gender norms, had always worked in the fields, in the American context, they came to understand, over time, that this same practice “masculinized” them in the minds of the slave-owning class. As a result, these women interpreted their position within the social structure of the slave economy, relative, of course, primarily to the wives and daughters of slave masters, as having removed their femininity from them, thus manifesting a novel gender category between the traditional European man and woman. Enslaved African men also had a hard time adapting to plantation gender roles. Accustomed to fishing and hunting rather than planting and picking, these men grew resentful of having to perform “women’s work” on the plantation, which meant occasional physical or sexual violence for enslaved women as a result. Of course, enslaved African men were not the only

group which Africana women feared as a threat to their physical safety, nor were they predominantly the assailants of enslaved Africana women. With this socio-political analysis in mind, physical and sexual violence may be seen as a political tool for the master class to engender submission among the enslaved class vis-a-vis the objectification of the enslaved Africana female body – it detached a sense of selfhood, to a certain extent, among enslaved Africana women, and defanged any potential for paternal masculinity among enslaved Africana men.

What hooks failed to account for in her analysis, however, was (1) Africana men's agency; (2) a full-bodied analysis of traditional West African gender norms and family structures; (3) the integral, though informal, role Africana women have played in racial politics; and (4) white supremacist aesthetics.

It is an analytical miscalculation to assume, as hooks did, that Africana men and women simply appropriated Euro-American cultural proclivities for survival, rather than draw from their own traditional customs and traditions from Western Africa. Robert F. Thompson, Jason R. Young, and Sylviane Diouf have demonstrated, through meticulous cultural and historical analyses, that West African aesthetic sensibilities, religious customs, and philosophical principles all survived the devastating trauma that was the European trade in enslaved Africans. To be sure, hooks mentions toward the middle of her book that “Black male sexism existed long before American slavery.”¹² However, the only evidence she provides for this claim is the ruminations of formerly enslaved civil rights advocate, Martin Delaney, and a supposed “slave sub-culture” that “[t]he sexist politics of white-ruled and colonized America merely reinforced in the minds of enslaved black people existing beliefs that men were the superiors of women.”¹³ While this is

certainly true of the historically Muslim regions of West Africa – for example, parts of Mali, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger – this is not the case for regions of West Africa that retained their traditional religious and cultural customs. Clenora Hudson-Weems in her work, *Africana Womanism*, which is not without its own significant flaws, has posited that what has characterized traditional West African gender dynamics is the concept of complementarity, not a struggle for dominance which has characterized gender dynamics in the West.

Our analysis, however, must necessarily be complicated by some of the work in Ira Berlin's *Many Thousands Gone*. In this text, Berlin observed a distinction between the social structures that defined what he called "societies with slaves" and "slave societies." Societies with slaves, social systems where slavery does not constitute the dominant form of labor, are characterized, primarily, by a series of aspects that are embedded within them. Slavery, as a form of labor, competes with wage, family, and indentured labor as part of a robust and multifaceted economy, predominantly in the northern US prior to the American Civil War. These societies were majority white, with relatively small free and enslaved African American populations who lived in close proximity to the white majority, with greater degrees of cultural syncretism as a byproduct of their embeddedness. Alternatively, slave societies were reliant upon the economic and social structures of slavery, where slavery, in other words, formed the basis for every other social relationship within that society. Being kept in the so-called "slave quarters" relatively far and secluded from the main house allowed these men and women a certain degree of cultural autonomy to develop ways of knowing, being, and behaving that were

less influenced by the dominant culture who kept them segregated from much of the life of the plantation South.

From this perspective we may treat these African American men and women as agents, albeit limited and circumscribed ones, of their own experiences and developments. Even with emancipation the social structures of plantation slavery remained relatively intact. While many freed men and women made their way north to the quickly urbanizing industrial centers, the vast majority stayed on their plantations to negotiate the new social, political, and economic order. It is within these discourses that we may discern the evolving terms of how these men and women perceived freedom and what life after slavery would look like.

Furthermore, Niara Sudarkasa, in her robust 1986 study of gender relations in West Africa, "The 'Status of Women' in Indigenous African Societies," found that the Igbo, Yoruba, Tallensi, Asante, and Nupe all practiced gender norms which socially separated men and women but did not order them hierarchically.¹⁴ Men were relegated to the public sphere and women to the domestic sphere, to be sure, but overlap between the two domains was considerable. Accounts from enslaved Africans themselves, in some cases, seem to substantiate these findings as well. Olaudah Equiano's account, for example, provides insights into 18th century Igbo life. According to the author, men of the village would go out hunting while the women harvested the fields. We even discover that it was Equiano's mother that taught him the arts of war and agriculture, rather than his father. We also know that in the southern United States, during the era of enslavement, African women were far more likely than African men (80% vs. 66%) to

run away from their plantations to maintain contact with their families and relatives, which plausibly indicates the retention of West African matriarchal family structures.¹⁵

Additionally, in hooks we miss the informal roles Africana women played in racial politics during the era of Reconstruction, under Jim Crow segregation, and in the Civil Rights movement. Hooks claimed that during the struggle for universal suffrage that marked the late-19th century, Africana people, mainly men, began demonstrating Euro-American patriarchal values in their orientation toward Africana womanhood and liberation. While the extent to which Africana men sought to subordinate Africana women in this time may be debated, it cannot be said that Africana women sat by idly during the struggle for suffrage, or after Africana men got the vote, while their men led the fight for racial justice into the 20th century.

It is certainly true that many Africana women largely accepted their supporting role in the fight against Jim Crow segregation, with the hope and expectation of Africana male support when it came time to fight for their own suffrage and political interests, this was certainly not so for a great number of Africana women nationwide. Elsa Barkley Brown, for example, informs us that newly free Africana men and women took the principles of freedom, democracy, and representation quite seriously in the wake of the American Civil War and began to advocate on their own behalf either directly through the ballot or, in the case of Africana women, by proxy.¹⁶ Africana women were particularly influential in the organization of interest groups, their participation in political meetings, public displays of political advocacy, armed defense, social ostracism, and even politically motivated threats of abstinence and divorce.¹⁷ Women such as Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary Church Terrell, pioneers of a new class of college-

educated Africana women at the end of the 19th century, took to the podium and the page to argue for their rights as American citizens. Others, such as the Atlanta washerwomen, who staged a months-long labor strike in the summer of 1881, engaged in working-class collective action for higher wages and autonomy over their trades.¹⁸

This is not to say, though, that the organizational structure of civil rights organizations in the 20th century did not uphold patriarchal values. By all accounts, men within the Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and later, though less so, the Black Panther Party actively relegated female members to subordinate roles within their respective organizations.¹⁹ In other words, the organizational structure of these entities mirrored the patriarchal value structures of the dominant culture. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was a singular exception to this practice, largely due, as Belinda Robnett has argued, to the organization's decentralized, "radically democratic" organizational structure, which allowed Africana women the ability, to a certain degree, to influence the direction and decision-making processes of the organization. However, SNCC's leadership was exceedingly male-centered, particularly after its co-founder, Ella Baker, left and the organization gradually adopted a more centralized, nationalistic orientation.²⁰ Despite this, women in SNCC reportedly felt empowered and liberated by their participation in the movement as they leveraged their positions as organizers and mobilizers to mediate the rank-and-file membership's relationship with the male-dominated leadership.²¹

Furthermore, it was not only Euro-American gender norms which marked both race relations and Africana women's perception of self, but white supremacist aesthetics as well. Not only had Africana gender norms become a mark of "degeneracy" and/or

“primitivity” for Euro-Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries, but their physiognomic features had too.²² While the German philosopher and historian, Christoph Meiners, tied race to aesthetic sensibilities in his late-18th century book, *The Outline of History of Mankind*, it was Carl Linnaeus, in his *Systema Naturae*, published in 1735, that provided the first taxonomy of human “species” to account for cultural, *as well as* physical traits supposed to characterize different peoples from across the globe.²³ According to Linnaeus, the *Europeanus* were notable for their fair skin; long, blonde hair; and blue eyes, as well as their gentle character, laws, and creativity. Whereas the *Africanus* were notable for their dark skin, frizzy hair, and thick lips, as well as laziness, fertility, and lasciviousness. Scientist and former President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, proffered a similar distinction in 1785, where he commented on gender relations among Africana peoples:

Were we in equal barbarism, our females would be equal drudges. The man with them is less strong than with us, but their women stronger than ours; and both for the same obvious reason; because our man and their woman is habituated to labour, and formed by it... They are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation.²⁴

These and other scientific racist thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries developed the concept of race and cloaked it in the veneer of scientific legitimacy that Enlightenment ideation demanded.

These ideas were later reified as tropes during the Jim Crow era of the late-19th to early-20th century, vis-à-vis the rising popularity of minstrel shows, ad campaigns that featured caricatured representations of African Americans as heathen brutes, and even children’s cartoons that used African Americans’ supposed dimwittedness, gullibility, and primitivity as punchlines. As the 20th century trudged on, and these forms of

representation fell out of fashion – largely due to the efforts of Civil Rights and Black Power activists of the 1960s – racist representation became implicit – suggested in TV shows, movies, and ads through the projection of ideal beauty as a woman slim-waisted, large-breasted, blonde, blue-eyed, and submissive.

This ideological lens created space for the institutionalization of rigid social structures in the early- to mid-20th century among Black Nationalists and separatists, as well as among nominally left and liberal organizations like SNCC, NAACP, and the Congress of Racial Equality. While many of these organizations were established to challenge and provide an ostensible alternative to Euro-American value systems and social structures, they ended up reproducing the same gendered hierarchies as the sociocultural hegemon under the auspices of a supposed “authentic blackness,” “African cultural center,” or “politics of respectability.”

Advocates of Black Power and Black Nationalism in the late-1960s and 1970s began appealing to a notion of manhood and a “lost masculinity” in their rhetoric, pointing to a mythic, supposedly African patriarchal past as a way toward combating white racism, which effectively subordinated African American women and ostracized homosexual men. These political actors, in rhetoric as well as aesthetics through their artistic-cultural appendage in the Black Arts Movement, set out to create a distinct Black aesthetic which, in theory, rejected western cultural and aesthetic conventions in pursuit of an “authentic” Africana voice. These Black Power advocates and nationalists certainly succeeded in instilling the Civil Rights Movement with certain African aesthetic and cultural sensibilities, such as the donning of dashikis and head-wraps, eschewing expensive and often painful hair dyes and straightening products for fully grown

“naturals” or “afros,” sometimes changing their names to kiSwahili-influenced ones, and infusing jazz with African drums and polyrhythms. However, as Anthony Dawahare, Barbara Foley, George Hutchinson, and James Smethurst have pointed out, much of the ideological and political character of the Black Arts and Black Power movements, as well as the ethnic and cultural nationalists at the time, like the New Negro movement had in the 1920s and 1930s, retained deep ties to the political Left and Communist Left of the 1920s through 1950s.

It will be clear in our analysis of Morrison’s *Bluest Eye* how these dynamics play out in the context of Africana women’s literature and character development as the racial elements of Africana women’s character development interact with the gendered ones.

Overview – Africana Sexual Orientation and Race

Examining Africana queer identity in Africana literature is a sensitive subject – probably even more so than discussing Africana womanhood – for some very specific reasons. First, to discuss Africana queerness necessarily means to call into question Africana men’s perception of their manhood, which has been deliberately constructed in the wake of enslavement and Jim Crow, both syncretizing Euro-American conceptions of manhood with their own autochthonous conceptions, with conscious references to a traditional “African” sensibility supposed to have been lost in the Middle Passage. Second, the phenomenon of homosexuality, among men and women, is held by some to be a foreign concept to traditional African philosophies and ideologies, despite evidence to the contrary, therefore negating it as an acceptable quality of Africana masculinity. Third, at various points in time, including contemporaneously, homosexuality has been perceived as a morally deviant behavioral tendency, or “lifestyle,” which involves a

choice between communal responsibility and individual pleasure. And fourth, homosexuality is perceived as a threat to the genetic persistence of Africana people. I will address each of these perceptions and beliefs in the order that they have been delineated. The purpose in treating these beliefs in such a manner is to systematically controvert them and to demonstrate the harm they cause Africana queer men through James Baldwin's African American queer character, Rufus Scott, to provide a model for the analysis of queer character development within Africana literature.

Construction of African American Masculinity Post-Emancipation, the Genetic “Threat” of Homosexuality, and Racial “Preservation”

Just as Reconstruction provided a context for African American men and women to re-imagine the meaning of freedom and selfhood, Liberal Republicans, led by Missouri Senator, Carl Schurz, in opposition to the re-election of President Ulysses S. Grant, signaled the end of Reconstruction and the inauguration of a new era of segregation in the United States. There are differing accounts as to how these newly free African American men and women made sense of themselves and the world around them. As noted above, hooks thought that enslavement had disrupted Africana family and gender dynamics significantly enough for African American men and women to necessitate novel constructions of man- and womanhood based on what were thought to be traditional folk understandings among the enslaved, mixed with the understandings established by Euro-American institutions as culturally hegemonic. Others, like Tommy Curry in his *The Man-Not*, argue that enslavement degendered African American men and women, reducing them simply to beasts of burden. While there are certainly merits and issues with either interpretation, two things are abundantly clear: (1) traditional familial customs

and gender constructs were indeed ruptured by enslavement; and (2) the freedom of emancipation also signaled ontological confusion for free African American men and women.

In the wake of Emancipation, African American men had five interwoven institutions before them to reconstitute their identity as free men and to build communal networks from: politics, labor, family, tradition, and religion.

“Negro Election Days” in North America started in the New England colonies in 1741, but reports of similar events spread across the Caribbean, and Central and South America as well. These days of recreation and celebration provided a framework for enslaved African men and women to retain and institute certain West African cultural elements, such as feasting, dancing, and parading in the New World, as well as allowing enslaved African men and women to vote for a representative (“governor” or “king”) of their community to liaise between themselves and white New Englanders and other plantation owners. Besides offering at least the veneer of agency and self-determination, these elections were an opportunity for African men to express certain values in either their competition over or vote for leadership. Elections often entailed demonstrations of the candidate’s character, intelligence, and wisdom. In some cases, the governor was chosen as a function of their claim to royal African lineage.

²⁵ Despite all the theatrics, Negro Election Day was largely a symbolic gesture and did not entail any functional legal rights or powers in the colonial society, leaving African American men and women, ultimately, without any tangible sources to express their social or cultural identities.

Between their emancipation in 1865 and the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution in 1870, an arduous battle over African Americans' right to participate in the US's political life was fought, both in public and in private. In Congress, political conflicts rose to violence on several occasions over the matter of abolition. Once settled, African American males received the vote, enraging white suffragettes, causing them to turn on their one-time allies, even prompting high profile figures like Elizabeth Cady Stanton to appropriate and hurl emergent scientific racist stereotypes at African American men in speeches and articles across the nation. In private, though, African American women leveraged their domestic powers to influence how African American men would vote, even participating in assembly meetings and rallies to these ends. For this, it became a sort of convention, or rhetorical strategy, for white patriarchal men to target African American men's masculinity and belittle them for "allowing their women" to play such an outsized role in their decision making and private lives. By the early-20th century, the advent of the African American middle class and their assimilation of white bourgeois attitudes, as noted above, expressed itself in the patriarchal organizational structure of prominent entities like the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Masculinity, within bourgeois African American circles, became a value in and of itself in their struggle for collective agency in the face of a socio-political order (i.e., Jim Crow) which sought to render them politically dependent, economically useful, socially "dysfunctional," and culturally "backward."

But African American men's identification with their masculinity would not become as explicit as it would become by mid-century, with the rise of Black Power and Black Nationalism – Marlon B. Ross refers to this phase of African American history as

“staging the race.” Sexual identification and gender performativity became both explicit and implicit signifiers, according to Ross, of African Americans’ modernity heading into the new century, led by Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Charles Chesnutt, and William Pickens.²⁶ This was particularly so during the Great Migration which took place between 1910 and 1970. Existing narratives of African American male and female sexual promiscuity mixed with social Darwinian notions of biological determinism and social competition, produced a sort of moral panic, particularly among bourgeois whites and African Americans, that saw poor and working class African Americans as uniquely vulnerable to vice and sexual “degeneracy” as they moved from the South to the North, the East to the West, and from the country to the city.²⁷ Others perceived this newly accessible mobility as an opportunity to expand notions of African American manhood through sexual license.

Charles Chesnutt, in his second collection of short stories, *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color-Line*, published in 1899, explored these new possibilities for constructing a modern African American manhood which could compete biologically with the manhood of other races in the coming century. Chesnutt’s protagonist, Uncle Wellington Braboy, perceives migration as an opportunity for African American male sexual liberation in the interest of social mobility. Wellington’s marriage to Milly, established during enslavement, takes on a new meaning for Wellington in the context of, first, emancipation, and then, migration north. He begins to perceive his marriage to Milly as an encumbrance to his newfound freedom, and so becomes an allusion for his unfreedom during enslavement. The question for Wellington – and the moral of the story as a whole – becomes whether social bonds under enslavement continue to be useful and

emancipatory in the context of freedom. His marriage's fate is sealed during the lodge meeting where, under the influence of lodge member Professor Patterson, it is determined that true freedom, and thus the remaking of African American manhood, must come as a result of their ability to seize all educational, business, and sexual/matrimonial opportunities available to them as middle and upper class African American men – including those they may forge with white men and women. African American manhood and social advancement, then, becomes contingent upon, first, (northward) mobility, and second, one's ability to secure a wife (particularly a white wife, for their wealth and social symbolic significance).

This narrative of African American manhood was then reproduced in various forms in the works of African American novelists, like William Pickens, for the next few decades. That is until the Harlem Renaissance (or “New Negro Movement”) when openly homosexual or bisexual writers like Countee Cullen, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Claude McKay would challenge the rigid uniformity of this construct in their own lives and works. Much to the chagrin of intellectual gatekeepers of the day, like Locke and Du Bois, McKay ventured beyond the upstanding, chaste, and temperate middle-class aesthetic promoted by the Harlem intelligentsia in favor of down-on-their-luck, sensual, and morally deviant characters and themes. Even more provocative than the role of heterosexual sexuality in his novels and short stories, McKay portrayed, most famously in his novel, *Home to Harlem*, homosexual, and bisexual sexuality as well.²⁸ Not only did this challenge the classed narrative being projected by the NAACP and Urban League, as discussed in chapter two, but it challenged emergent gender norms meant to garner “respectability” for African American men in the minds of middle-class white people. It

is also notable that a degree of tolerance for homosexuality in these and other novels, like *The Walls of Jericho* by Rudolph Fisher, are found throughout the Harlem Renaissance. Ross posits that Fisher's depiction of homosexuality in Harlem represents a tolerance of hidden homosexual behavior within interpersonal relationships – as long as the individual demonstrated heterosexual behavior in public, of course. Ross's thesis seems borne out by the number of homosexual activists within the Civil Rights movement later on. While Bayard Rustin's, James Baldwin's, and Lorraine Hansberry's sexualities were certainly known within civil rights circles, it never impeded their inclusion within the movement – beyond, of course, the occasional disparaging remarks leveled at them in the press or in person.²⁹

By the mid- to late-1950s, a new narrative of gender emerged in racial discourse, which would be drawn upon and extended by the Black Power Movement in the mid- to late-1960s. Black Nationalists began utilizing a rhetoric of gender that merged the putatively traditional “responsibility” of biological reproduction with the preservation and social advancement of the African American race which had first been articulated by early Black Nationalist figures like Marcus Garvey. While the preoccupation with “racial purity” had since fallen away – at least to a certain extent – the role of the African American man, and the African American woman by association, as protector and reproducer of the race had been retained. What this meant for homosexual and bisexual African American men and women, however, was, in the best case, erasure, and in the worst case, ostracization. For example, Eldridge Cleaver, in his prison memoir, *Soul on Ice*, equated “blackness” with heterosexual virility and aggression, and African American homosexuality with a pathology of self-hatred, a desire for whiteness, and an

abandonment of blackness: “Many negro homosexuals, acquiescing in this racial death-wish, are outraged and frustrated because in their sickness they are unable to have a baby by a white man.”³⁰ Poet, playwright, and chief architect of the Black Arts Movement, Amiri Baraka (then known as LeRoi Jones), echoed Cleaver’s sentiments in his collection of essays titled *Home*, published in 1966, equating homosexuality with whiteness and weakness while ruminating on the meaning of African American masculinity, stating,

Most American white men are trained to be fags. For this reason it is no wonder their faces are weak and blank, left without the hurt that reality makes – anytime. That red flush, those silk blue faggot eyes... But for a man to be living in a certain social order, in fact, to have benefitted by that order (and the filth of its image) and yet claim to have no connection with it, is unrealistic in the extreme... And the most extreme form of alienation acknowledged within white society is homosexuality.³¹

In their attempts to forefront masculinity as a defining characteristic of their idea of “blackness,” these Black Nationalists and Black Liberation Movement writers and artists distanced themselves from homosexual men, perceiving them, to borrow a term from Angelique C. Harris, as having “voluntarily given up” their male privilege which is understood to have been earned as an asset through racial struggle, or were otherwise interpreted as “race traitors.”³² Stephen E. Kilianski, and Dominic J. Parrott, Henry E. Adams, and Amos Zeichner agree that there is a connection between what they call “exaggerated masculinity” and misogyny and homophobia, with Parrott, Adams, and Zeichner adding that this aversion may be oriented more towards the exhibition of feminine qualities, rather than the homosexual individuals themselves.³³ There is also evidence to suggest that homophobia is rooted in disgust sensitivity, then established deductively through personal beliefs and/or ideologies, rather than the other way round.³⁴ This typically occurs either within nationalistic or religious terms (e.g., male-female

relationships reproduce and advance the “nation;” homosexual behavior is an “abomination” or sin; etc.)

Homosexuality as “Un-African”

Since at least the early 1980s in the United States, homophobia among Black Nationalists has been justified by citing African history as precedent for discrimination and prejudice. In fact, this is true on the continent as well as the diaspora. They range from simple, matter of fact denunciations³⁵ to bizarre conspiracy theory,³⁶ but are grounded in putatively “cultural” arguments. For example, Deevia Bhana, Robert Morrell, Jeff Hearn, and Relebohile Moletsane found that when “culture” is invoked to establish sexual or gender norms, it is usually done so from a position of rigidity and permanence. In other words, culture takes on an almost metaphysical character, one that presumes that human behavior, cultural norms, and culture itself are transmitted as doctrine across time and space (i.e., “tradition”). From this understanding of culture, two anti-homosexual arguments emerge: (1) that homosexuality, as a value and behavior, is alien to the continent of Africa, and thus its “appearance” in the modern era can only be explained through foreign interests (which are typically framed in a nefarious light); or (2) that African civilizations have not traditionally accepted homosexuality as a sexual norm, and thus it is ethically incorrect for it to be accepted or tolerated in the present.

The first claim can be dismissed almost immediately. According to a recent Ipsos global survey, roughly 3% of the human population identifies as gay, lesbian, or homosexual; 4% identify as bisexual; and 1% identify as pansexual – which works out to about 233 million gay, lesbian, or homosexual people globally.³⁷ Homosexuality is also observable throughout African history, all over the continent. King Mwangi II of the

Buganda Kingdom was openly homosexual and was accepted completely by his people. The Yoruba term, *adofuro*, refers to one who enjoys anal sex – it is typically used, colloquially, to describe homosexual men. The Hausa also have a term for homosexuality which denotes identity rather than behavior as the Yoruba term does – *yan dauda*, which describes an effeminate man considered to be the wife of another man. Rock paintings, drawn over the course of thousands of years by the San people of southern Africa depict men engaging in sexual activities with each other. These, along with a bevy of other cases recorded in Murray and Roscoe’s edited volume, *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*, demonstrate the historic and ethnic ubiquity of African homosexuality and the various degrees of acceptance/rejection homosexuality has received across the continent.

Challenging the second claim requires a bit more breadth and depth of both historical and sociological analysis. Recent research on the understandings of homosexuality in Africa have indicated that what is considered to be “traditional,” in terms of gender and sexual norms, is in fact quite “new” and “inter-cultural.”³⁸

In terms of what Patrick Ireland calls “State Homophobia” – laws and codes which explicitly or implicitly outlaw homosexual behavior – thirty-six nations across Africa have rendered male homosexuality illegal, with penalties ranging from fines to life imprisonment (in Sudan, Somalia, Mauritania, and parts of Nigeria, the penalty is death).³⁹ These laws and the seemingly ubiquitous denunciation of homosexuality across the continent have led some scholars, activists, and politicians to bolster the claim that (acceptance of) homosexuality is either “un-African” or is otherwise “bad” for the development of Africa.⁴⁰ However, as recent scholarship on the subject has found, these laws are largely colonial holdovers, rather than autochthonous traditional, customary, or

legal strictures. Paul Semugoma, Steave Nemande, and Stefan Baral, for example, have found that, while the parliaments of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Burundi have introduced novel anti-homosexual prohibitions, others, like Cameroon, Uganda, Malawi, and Nigeria have all moved to strengthen existing prohibitions that were instituted by their respective colonial powers.⁴¹ Others, like Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Gabon, and Mozambique have all moved to expand legal rights for homosexuals, while South Africa, famously, wrote the explicit prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation into their Constitution in 1996 – the first nation in the world to do so.⁴² Furthermore, in June 2020, Botswana overturned its anti-sodomy laws, with Judge Michael Leburu declaring them “British import[s]” of the colonial era.⁴³

There is also evidence to suggest that state and interpersonal homophobia across Africa is linked to an aversion to globalization and westernization. (The acceptance of) homosexuality, in these contexts, is interpreted as a sort of technology of westernization, used by Western elites to undermine African labor and morality from the inside in order to weaken the social fabric of African communities as a function of Western imperialism.⁴⁴ This has been exacerbated further by Africa’s HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the appearance of LGBT+ organizations in Eastern and Southern Africa seeking to mitigate the spread of the virus throughout these regions’ LGBT+ populations. These organizations have been met with much skepticism from political officials who have mobilized to thwart their efforts – despite their success at galvanizing LGBT+ mobility against the spread of the virus. As Ireland reports, there are even some officials who have

claimed that “only whites and those under their influence could possibly be gay,” dismissing these efforts as simply an “assimilationist project.”⁴⁵

It is certainly true that Western organizations, such as the Arcus Foundation and OutRight Action International, have provided monetary and legal support to persecuted LGBT+ populations in Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, and Uganda, and in Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, respectively. The US and UK governments, too, have threatened to withdraw aid from Uganda in 2010 over the country’s proposed law that would punish homosexual acts with the death penalty, and their breach of human rights.⁴⁶ But, it is also true that anti-homosexual forces in Africa have received abundant resources from Western governments and organizations as well. The George W. Bush administration in 2004, for example, as part of their US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), promoted abstinence-until-marriage programs in Uganda in their efforts to quell the spread of HIV/AIDS, a nation where marriage between consenting homosexuals is illegal. Human Rights Watch, at the time, found that “these messages imply a lifetime of enforced celibacy” for LGBT+ youth in Uganda, denied them “information about safer sex which could save their lives,” and conveyed “a message about the intrinsic wrongfulness of homosexual conduct which reinforces existing social stigma and prejudice to potentially devastating effect.”⁴⁷

Furthermore, Kapyia Kaoma has found that American right-wing religious extremists have been working in tandem with African state leaders to propagate the narrative that homosexuality and tolerance of homosexuality have been imposed upon African nations by Western progressives, functionally exploiting anti-colonial sentiments among African populations in pursuit of homophobic ends.⁴⁸ Nathalie Baptiste has found

that, as homophobia and anti-homosexual activism in the US has become increasingly marginalized, these forces have gained ground in the global South as part of what she refers to as the globalization of America's "culture wars."⁴⁹ US evangelical pastor, Scott Lively, for example, worked closely with Ugandan Minister of Parliament (MP), David Bahati, in drafting and proselytizing Uganda's so-called "Kill the Gays" Bill, as well as utilizing the postcolonial, culturally-tinged rhetoric of preserving "African culture" and resisting "neocolonial" influence of feminists and homosexuals who have supposedly corroded the traditional American family and fractured the church.⁵⁰

Therefore, while not necessarily conclusive, the evidence does render the argument for homosexual ostracism from African culture and history dubious, at best – at worst, it is an intellectually dishonest claim with no serious, conclusive evidence to uphold it. But even if these claims were incontrovertible – that it was true that traditional African ethnic groups did, in fact, ubiquitously denounce homosexuality as morally wrong throughout history and across the continent – the deleterious implications for such claims in the present, if operationalized through policy and/or socio-cultural mores, endanger the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of African LGBT+ individuals across the African world.

Implications of Intra-Racial Homophobia Relative to the Encounter

Frantz Fanon observed seventy years ago, as part of his work for *Black Skin, White Masks*, that discrimination tends to be psychologically internalized by the victim, then "perpetuated socially between subordinated groups, classes, and races," with the origins of discrimination lying within the externalization of the culture-borne anxieties of the dominant group.⁵¹ From this perspective, we see how internalized trauma, produced

by racial discrimination, is then externalized toward evermore marginalized groups such as African women and homosexuals. These narratives coalesce with racial stereotypes and serve to alienate queer African men and women from themselves, their racial identities, and their communities more broadly.⁵²

Audre Lorde once said, “I simply do not believe that one aspect of myself can possibly profit from the oppression of any other part of my identity.”⁵³ What she was addressing was the socio-historical phenomenon of African women and African queer individuals feeling pressured to subordinate their gender and sexual identities to their racial identity. Most African American LGBT+ individuals report feeling more troubled by homophobia experienced within African American heterosexist spaces than by racism within white LGBT+ ones, with heterosexual African American men exhibiting stronger anti-homosexual attitudes than heterosexual African American women.⁵⁴ Angelique Harris has posited that what might explain these attitudes toward LGBT+ men and women is that heterosexual African American men are socially motivated to distance themselves from homosexual men, perceiving them as having “voluntarily given up” male privilege, which is viewed as an asset of heterosexual African American men earned over the course of decades of struggle.⁵⁵ Others, more recently, have found a link between homophobia and disgust sensitivity, though causation is still unclear. For example, Mark Kiss, Melanie Morrison, and Todd Morrison found that disgust sensitivity tends to exacerbate negative feelings, of varying degrees, towards homosexual men among heterosexual individuals.⁵⁶ Molly Tapias, Jack Glaser, Dacher Keltner, Kristen Vasquez, and Thomas Wickens corroborate this evidence by finding that disgust sensitivity is a strong predictor of negative attitudes towards foreigners, immigrants, and

other marginalized groups perceived to be “morally deviant” in general.⁵⁷ More specifically, Yoel Inbar, David Pizarro, Joshua Knobe, and Paul Bloom, and John Terrizzi, Natalie Shook, and W. Larry Ventis have found, separately, that disgust sensitivity is positively correlated with “implicit moral attitudes towards homosexuals.”⁵⁸

Homosexual African American men are particularly susceptible to social discrimination and anti-homosexual violence. Studies since the early 1990s have found links between illicit drug use among homosexual African American men and fears of rejection, stigmatization, and social isolation.⁵⁹ Many of these men avoid disclosing their sexual identity to peers or family members, further increasing the chances of illicit drug use, while psychological studies dating back to the 1970s have found that members of multiple minority groups tend to experience particular forms of oppression, with particular outcomes which effect their identities and culminate, cumulatively, to negative psychological health impacts.⁶⁰ This coincides with the work of Margaret Rosario, Eric Schrimshaw, and Joyce Hunter, who discovered that African American youths hold a higher degree of internalized homophobia than any other racial group.⁶¹ According to Doug Meyer and his *Violence Against Queer People*, some homosexual African American individuals internalize homophobic harassment as having “failed” or “betrayed” their racial group, further alienating and isolating them from potential social groups.⁶² Meyer has also found that homosexual men were, in fact, targeted not for their homosexuality, but their femininity. This bolsters his earlier claim that, not only do homosexual African American males perceive themselves as having “betrayed” their race for being homosexual, but it may be the case that intra-racial, anti-homosexual

harassment, violence, and ostracization are rooted in rigid understandings of culture common within right-wing African American politics.⁶³

In the following sections, this historical and theoretical framework will be utilized in the analysis of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and James Baldwin's *Another Country* in order to demonstrate how racial socialization, vis-à-vis the Encounter, intersects with gender and sexual identity in the developmental process of identity formation within Africana literature.

Analysis – *The Bluest Eye*

As is the case with most of her novels, Morrison's preoccupation in *The Bluest Eye* is with the process of coming to terms with one's place in a racist, patriarchal society as an African American girl or woman, and the choices available to these women and young girls along this journey which serve to mold their character as either a broken victim of circumstance, or an agent capable of overcoming circumstance. In the case of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison created the outline of Pecola Lovejoy, an African American girl living in poverty in Morrison's hometown of Lorain, OH, based on her experiences with African American childhood poverty in Washington, D.C. as a student at Howard University from 1949-1953. According to Morrison's biographer, Linda Wagner-Martin, Morrison wrote Pecola with the conscious intention of challenging conventional portrayals of African American female sexuality prevalent in the late-1960s.⁶⁴ This is not to say, however, that Morrison adopted a feminist lens. In the late-1960s and early-1970s, she rejected feminism as a white bourgeois project which promoted a fallacious "sisterhood" and liberation. She found feminists to be pre-occupied with corporate boardrooms and stay-at-home wives, neither of which spoke to the historical, lived

experiences of African American women.⁶⁵ Instead, as represented in the characters of Pecola Breedlove and Claudia MacTeer, Morrison focused on how poor homelife and sociocultural context can upend the life chances of African American children, leaving them with little opportunity for positive social, cultural, or emotional growth.

While Pecola Breedlove represents the danger of dissociation and self-hatred at stake with experiences of institutional bigotry, family dysfunction, and poverty for young African American girls, Claudia represents an alternative path toward a racialized self with self-respect and socio-cultural rootedness. She serves, simultaneously, as a totem to the importance of challenging hegemonic narratives and creating one's own narrative as acts of discursive and ontological resistance – in this case, to white supremacist negations of African American selfhood. Gema Ortega explained in her own analysis of *The Bluest Eye*, “The First of Many Heroines,” that the act of narration allows the subject to create and define its own subjectivity in concert and dialogue with the subject's circumstances.⁶⁶ In fact, Morrison, herself, detailed in her Nobel Laureate speech how language, vis-à-vis narration, allows the writer or speaker to create and communicate their “actual, imagined, and possible.”⁶⁷ From a structuralist or materialist perspective, the possibilities of narration available to a subject are delimited by the hegemonic discursive frame within which the subject is situated.

For example, early in *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia rejects the imposing white aesthetic that her family has come to cherish represented by the Raggedy Ann doll and reinforced in advertising and popular media. For the MacTeer women, receiving a Raggedy Ann doll is a sort of *rite de passage* – a confirmation of their young American womanhood. The doll functions as a totem of whiteness they would otherwise lack in their own

African American bodies. Additionally, the family's ability to afford the doll for their daughter signifies their class privilege, if only to themselves. By rejecting and destroying the doll, Claudia not only rejects the place of whiteness as a thing of value in and of itself but exposes its absence of ideological or symbolic substance – its lack of any essential meaning. The power of the doll, and, therefore, whiteness, is shown to be baseless and predicated upon the family's social investment in it as a symbol of white aesthetic superiority. Like Frantz Fanon's existentialist understanding of violence as a means for the colonized to achieve personhood, Claudia's tearing apart of the Raggedy Ann doll substitutes the violence she might otherwise direct at living white girls (as exhibited in her interactions with various white people throughout the novel) in order to destroy the imposed image of putative perfection symbolized in the doll's blonde hair and blue eyes. Ortega explains this event as the moment Claudia "becomes an active and conscious participant in the game of making meaning."⁶⁸ As a result, Claudia successfully navigates her circumstances from a position of agency and self-respect. She acclimates herself to the sociocultural matrix into which she is born and creates space for herself as a counternarrative to exclusionary hegemonic narrative.

Of course, Claudia's ability to navigate her circumstances is scaffolded by the home life afforded her by her family's class position – circumstances which are unapplicable to Pecola. As Ding Yang and Kong Xiangguo have pointed out in "Tragedy of Self-Splitting," Pecola Breedlove, like her parents, have no "other" from which to derive self-building – no capacity for establishing an "Ideal-I" or "Ideal Ego" in contradistinction to less ideal "others."⁶⁹ In other words, being a poor African American girl born and raised in the industrial Midwestern United States, Pecola occupies the

lowest rung of human existence and has no lower “other” from which to derive a positive sense of selfhood as a young African American girl. Utilizing the Laconian psychoanalytic concept of the “Mirror Stage” – the point of mental development at which an infant develops the capacity to recognize itself as an object in the world that may be viewed from outside its own perception, thus manifesting identity, *per se* – Yang and Xiangguo argue persuasively that Pecola remains trapped in self-alienation, unable to achieve a positive or “ideal” self-image which she has constructed from the centrality of the white aesthetic value structure.⁷⁰ Since the “Mirror Stage” requires interaction with “others” who function as “mirrors” for the individual subject to build their identity in dialectic opposition or concert (i.e., that which one desires to or not to be), occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder disallows the subject from establishing positive self-image, forcing them into a position of ambiguity and precarity.

For Pecola, the road to self-abnegation is set from the moment of birth, followed by a series of “Encounters” which systematically deteriorate her sense of selfhood and self-worth. Her mother, Pauline Breedlove, projects her own feelings of racial and sexual inferiority and exclusion – women of Lorain reject her for being “too country” and “unsophisticated,” at which point she turns to material possessions to boost her self-esteem, not unlike her daughter would later do with the “Dick and Jane” primers and Mary Jane candies – onto her daughter, referring to her as ugly on several occasions.⁷¹ Instead of resisting these acts of exclusion, Pecola, instead, retreats into her “ugliness,” embracing it as a shield against calls for higher ambitions and expectations for herself as she falls deeper and deeper into a dissociative state. Though verbal debasement, sadly, is not the only source of belittlement Pecola receives from her mother.

Furthermore, there is the incident during “Winter” where the upper-middle class, light-skinned, green-eyed girl, Maureen Peal, moves to Lorain from Toledo, OH, and is treated with far greater reverence by the community than Pecola or her family had ever experienced, causing her to wonder what the source of this disparity could be. Later in “Winter,” Pecola is attacked by a middle-class African American boy named Junior who, being troubled by his own disconnected, unacknowledged existence, bullies and assaults Pecola at his home after school. Junior throws his mother’s treasured cat at Pecola to get her scratched (as well as to assail the object which his mother values more than himself) when Geraldine, Junior’s mother, walks in as Junior flings the cat against a window, killing it in the process. Rather than accepting blame for his actions, Junior blames the incident on Pecola, which Geraldine acquiesces to as she “[s]aw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had come undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum peeping out from between the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel of the shoe.”⁷² As Morrison describes, this “nasty little black bitch,” Geraldine had seen “all of her life... Hanging out of windows over saloons in Mobile, crawling over the porches of shotgun houses on the edge of town... Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. And this one had settled in her house”⁷³ Like her mother and classmates, this “pretty milk-brown lady in the pretty gold-and-green house” reinforced Pecola’s sense of inferiority and supposed “ugliness,” her spirit “falling and dying on the pavement,” just as the snowflakes she tried to avoid on her way home.⁷⁴ Like Helene Sabat Wright from Morrison’s sophomore novel, *Sula*, “fears of being somehow flawed” and “[a]n eagerness to please and an apology for living met in her voice” come to characterize Pecola’s disposition towards life.⁷⁵

Pecola's final "Encounter" that causes her ultimate slip into dissociative psychosis is her rape and impregnation by her father, Cholly Breedlove. The event functions principally as the antithesis to Pecola's ideal homelife represented by the "Dick and Jane" primer. Rather than the suburban white family, with a father who works in the day, a mother who tends the home, and a dinner table the family settles down to every night with their blue eyes and light hair, Pecola's home is matriarchal, with a mother who neglects her and a father who (ultimately) abuses her, a shabby home in an old storefront situated below an apartment occupied by prostitutes, and, of course, "ugly" black skin. As a result (in part) Pecola becomes transfixed on the ideal of having blue eyes while being physiologically unable to reject her own dark-skinned, dark-eyed form. If Pauline serves to reinforce Pecola's negative attachment to and value of whiteness, then her father, Cholly, is the catalyst embedding Pecola's worthlessness as a subject deeper within her psyche. Already struggling to make sense of love, feelings of inadequacy, belittlement by her peers and neighbors, "All of our waste," as Claudia says, "which we dumped on her and which she absorbed," Pecola's rape irrevocably deconstructs her perceptions of love, beauty, and belonging within the act's inherent depravity and malevolence.⁷⁶ Within the racist superstructure, Pecola is unable to fall back on traditional institutions of identity formation, such as her family, due to their corruption by the very same devices.

Like the colonizer-colonized dialectic of Fanon and the master-slave dialectic of Hegel, where in order for the subject to become self-conscious, she requires the recognition of an equal other, Pecola exists in a space of absolute negation. Her selfhood is invalidated by the ads she sees in magazines and newspapers that proselytize the white

aesthetic ideal; is reinforced at school where the other children call her ugly for her dark skin and shabby dress; and calcified at home as her mother, Pauline, explicitly rejects her in favor of a little white girl.⁷⁷ Pecola's fate as an unacknowledged "other" – psychological dissociation – is sealed with her rape and impregnation by her father, Cholly Breedlove, at the novel's climax. Pecola becomes, at this moment, a prisoner of white negation, bringing renewed currency to Fanon's words in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

For the Black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago the Black man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence.⁷⁸

That is to say that, within the white supremacist superstructure, the "way out," so to speak, is defined within white/colonial terms, rather than within autochthonous ones. The result, represented by Pecola Breedlove, is a self-perpetuating cycle wherein the African American man, woman, or child (in this case, Pecola) cannot experience selfhood independent of racial discourse, which inherently holds whiteness (or the white aesthetic) as the ideal referent of self-worth and self-actualization, "For not only must the Black man be Black," says Fanon, "he must be Black in relation to the white man."⁷⁹

It is important for our analysis to also uncover Cholly Breedlove's own past to comprehend his actions towards his daughter at the novel's climax. We learn that Cholly, himself, became sexually active at the age of thirteen during a traumatic experience with his childhood love interest, Darlene, which left Cholly feeling emasculated and powerless. While playing games and goofing off with some friends at a cookout, Cholly and Darlene break away from the group and find themselves alone near the pine woods. While they begin making love, two white men – "[t]here was no mistake about their being white; he could smell them" – approach with lantern and flashlight and begin to

harass the couple.⁸⁰ The man with the flashlight proceeds to demand that Cholly and Darlene continue their sexual relations near the woods for the onlookers' pleasure. The pair of lovers eventually depart the situation confused and disconnected – Darlene unable to reconcile the objectification she has received from Cholly, at the behest of the two assailants; Cholly now unable to accept Darlene as an equal, as she has now become the object of his hate rather than the two white men who are protected from scrutiny by the racist social order.

In the eyes of these men, Cholly plays the Mandingo and Darlene the Jezebel, whereas in the children's minds, they are the hapless victims of deranged white lunatics – the “whiteness as terror” trope bell hooks identified in “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination.”⁸¹ In the wake of Cholly's and Darlene's “Encounter,” the former “cultivates” a hatred for the latter as he goes about his daily business. “Cholly wanted to strangle her,” Morrison tells us,

He could think only of the flashlight, the muscadines, and Darlene's hands. And when he was not thinking of them, the vacancy in his head was like the space left by a newly pulled tooth still conscious of the rottenness that had once filled it. Afraid of running into Darlene, he would not go far from the house. . . . Sullen, irritable, he cultivated his hatred of Darlene. Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess – that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke.⁸²

Cholly's trauma, constrained by a racist superstructure, is unable to find expression, to be Worked Through, in any positive or constructive manner. Instead, he Acts Out by externalizing his trauma (emotionally, if not yet physically) against a scapegoat – Darlene. Later, like Bigger Thomas of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Cholly victimizes

his own daughter, Pecola, as a consequence of his inability to channel his powerlessness and emasculation – vis-à-vis poverty, racism, and sexual exploitation – into a more constructive spirit of pride and ambition – two key values of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements of the 1960s that Morrison had appropriated during her time as a student at Howard University.

What we witness in the character of Pecola Breedlove, throughout the pages of *The Bluest Eye*, is an extreme example of the effects of white racism, the culmination of a series of “Encounters,” upon the psyche of young black girls, vis-à-vis as internalized white aesthetic.⁸³ Judith Butler refers to these conditions in *Bodies that Matter* as “abjection” – those “unlivable” or “uninhabitable” spaces “which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject.”⁸⁴ The young black girl, believing herself ugly and unworthy of love, chases after these symbols of beauty and affection in what Michael Tillotson, in *Invisible Jim Crow*, refers to as “beggar mentality.”⁸⁵ Morrison invokes this condition as a means to construct and enforce an “aesthetic of blackness,” using “the most dreadful and repellent” story of dislocation imagineable to redeem and restore in the young black girl feelings of self-worth, self-love, and liberation.⁸⁶ Morrison utilizes “blackness” as a signifier of the “good,” the “beautiful,” and the “righteous” – a symbol of “victory” – to contradict, through narrative, hegemonic notions within racial discourse.⁸⁷

Alternatively, through the figure of Claudia MacTeer, Morrison explores how “Encounters” may be navigated from the position of agency and victorious consciousness. While Claudia’s moments are by no means of the same extreme as those Pecola endures, how Claudia chooses to Work Through them provides valuable insights

into how “Encounters” may be worked through in reality. We must also consider that Claudia and Pecola do not come from the same social positioning. Unlike Pecola Breedlove, Claudia MacTeer comes from a middle-class African American family who are protective of their children (though Mrs. MacTeer appears as an authoritarian in the eyes of her daughters) and acculturate them into African American communal and cultural life.⁸⁸ For example, Claudia regularly receives affirmations of her reality as a young African American girl through her grandfather’s violin playing, her mother’s singing, her grandmother’s stories, and gossip from the women of the neighborhood. Mrs. MacTeer brings Claudia along to gatherings with her friends from the community where Claudia learns about people’s business – how they are spoken about, what they are lauded for, what they are criticized for, etc.⁸⁹ At Christmas time, Claudia longs for the presence of her elders, Big Mama and Big Papa, and the sensual experiences she has at their home (the sound of music, the taste of southern fruit [peaches], the scent of flowers).⁹⁰ Like Morrison, herself, remembered her mother’s singing, Claudia learned and came to long for the hardships of life as she interprets adulthood (womanhood?) as a period in one’s life where they face the challenges presented them with calm confidence and perseverance.⁹¹

Constructed by Morrison with the inspiration of 1960s Black Power ideology, Claudia rejects the aesthetics of whiteness imposed upon her by both popular media and her own family.⁹² For example, in our introduction to the Breedloves, through the eyes of Claudia, the reader learns that the family “wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them... had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement.”⁹³ In words which recall James Baldwin’s eulogy to his father in

the first chapter of *The Fire Next Time*, Morrison reveals how, unlike the Breedloves who have nothing else to fall back upon but the hegemonic narrative of white supremacy, Claudia successfully navigates her circumstances from a position of agency bolstered by her strong familial and communal bonds, and the sociocultural context necessary to affirm her position as a young African American girl. She is able, to borrow a phrase from Ortega, to “relativize dominant discourses” to save herself from being trapped in the matrix of experience outlined by white supremacist society.⁹⁴ Rather than embracing dislocation represented by the Raggedy Ann doll, she seeks self-affirmation based in African American culture, community, and family. Whereas Pecola, whose life is categorically shut off from every piece of self-affirmative device available to Claudia, retreats into Eurocentric negation and becomes fixated on the acquisition of blue eyes – her symbol of aesthetic whiteness.

Analysis – *Another Country*

Another Country, for which Baldwin received \$12,000 from the Ford Foundation to complete, took the renowned author fourteen years to complete; nearly a decade-and-a-half spread across two residences in New York City, a stay in Paris in between, before finishing the novel in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1962. According to Baldwin, the reason *Another Country* took so long to complete was that his own sexuality had been left unresolved. For a time, he perceived his homosexuality as a “violation,” his “shame,” owing, arguably, to a series of experiences, or “Encounters,” which taught him to reject part of himself to protect another – his racial identity. In his own words, he had to accept the “paradox of his existence” before he could be “free.”⁹⁵

In 1957, Baldwin was tasked by *Harper's Magazine* to cover the Civil Rights Movement in the American South, where he first met and profiled Martin Luther King, Jr. for the magazine. The trip took Baldwin across the South, starting in Charlotte, North Carolina, moving on to Atlanta, Georgia, and finishing in Little Rock, Arkansas. The trip, particularly Baldwin's meeting with King, was enlightening for a variety of reasons which found their way into both his fiction and non-fiction from the era.

Baldwin met with the Board of Trustees of Charlotte's own HBCU, Johnson C. Smith University, where he learned of the members' resentment towards desegregation and integration in their city's school system. Not only did they feel that integration would jeopardize the safety of Charlotte's African American population, most especially the children, but felt it was a concession forced upon them in the face of their accomplishments at establishing and sustaining their university.⁹⁶ From this experience, Baldwin determined to commit himself more fully to uncovering the "private lives" of the individuals involved on either side of the segregation-integration debate – white or African American. Yet this would not be the most lasting lesson Baldwin would learn on his journey through the South.

While chatting before an address he was to perform outside of the Charlotte public library, Baldwin met with several pro-desegregation advocates who expressed anxiety towards shaking his hand. The message for Baldwin was clear: I am a sex object subject to white people's "paradoxical hatred and fascination with the black man's sex."⁹⁷ The event presented Baldwin yet another firsthand encounter with race-sex intersectionality, of which he was made object. By the end of the trip, according to Baldwin's former-assistant and biographer, David Leeming, he detected a deep sense of

anxiety among segregationists in Charlotte, Atlanta, and Little Rock concerning the potential violation of their children by African American men and women if segregation were lifted.⁹⁸

The text brings to mind an earlier essay by Baldwin concerning race relations in Downtown Manhattan: “And yet it was clear that none of this effort would release one from the stigma and danger of being a Negro; this effort merely increased the shame and rage.”⁹⁹ In other words, for Baldwin, regardless of the efforts made by African Americans to advance themselves and achieve political victories, regardless of the purported support white Liberals may provide African Americans in their struggles, the barrier of race – the “people who believe they are white” – will persist as an obstacle to true racial solidarity. And in the wake of his visit to Charlotte, the relationship between race and white peoples’ sexual anxieties had become reified for Baldwin.

Additionally, upon meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., in September 1957, at his hotel room in Atlanta, Baldwin could sense an underlying tension or distrust between himself and King that Leeming speculates may have been consequent of King’s alleged discomfort with Baldwin’s homosexuality. Baldwin was not unfamiliar with such sentiments – he had dealt with others’ perceptions of his size and supposed effeminacy from an early age. By age 11 Baldwin had reported feeling alienated from his peers, which he suspected had something to do with his mannerisms and romantic disinterest in girls.¹⁰⁰ Around the same time, in 1935, Baldwin had come under the tutelage of Harlem Renaissance poet, Countee Cullen, and another teacher at Frederick Douglass Junior High School, Herman Porter, each of whom encouraged the young Baldwin to express himself through the written word. Porter, in fact, took particular interest in Baldwin’s

education and development as a writer, a position previously held by Baldwin's grade school teacher and mentor, Orilla "Bill" Miller, who, like Porter, took Baldwin on trips to the New York Public Library, 130udacit tensions between Porter and Baldwin's stepfather, David Baldwin, Sr. Feeling alienated from his peers for his effeminate disposition and from his father for his interest in books by "white devils," the young Baldwin retreated as much as he could into volumes held at the New York Public Library.

By Summer 1938, Baldwin was molested, his first sexual experience, by a man from his neighborhood shortly after the writer's sixteenth birthday. Baldwin expressed mixed feelings of fear and arousal from the experience in later writings, an attitude which Leeming called "sexual alienation."¹⁰¹ Compounded by his father's castigations against his "unholy" behavior and putative ugliness, as well as encounters with racist police officers (like the one recorded in the pages of *The Fire Next Time*), by age fourteen Baldwin believed himself to be "one of the most depraved people on earth," motivating his turn toward religion for solace.¹⁰² That is, of course, until he began experiencing "religious fits" at the pulpit which Baldwin believed were associated with his repressed sexuality. According to Leeming, "Baldwin always said sixteen was the age at which the child in Harlem can suddenly see the past and the future – his future – in his father's or mother's eyes, in the drunks and pimps of the street."¹⁰³ The possibility was enough for Baldwin to throw himself more completely into his preaching and biblical readings so as to escape his inner "demons," the "evil within me" and the "evil without."¹⁰⁴

By age nineteen Baldwin finally ran away to Greenwich Village where he emersed himself in the burgeoning Bohemian atmosphere emerging from the post-WWII

artistic and literary milieu that was leaving Harlem behind. In Greenwich Baldwin was exposed for the first time to a bustling interracial, sexually liberated, politically left-wing community of artists, novelists, and intellectuals like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, C.L.R. James, and Claude McKay. It was during this time that Baldwin engaged more openly in sexual relationships with members of both sexes, forming the early outlines of the character that would become Rufus Scott in *Another Country*. Before long he would confess to friends Emile Capouya and Stan Weir that he was indeed homosexual, being aided by several white female partners he felt were trying either to “save him” from his homosexuality or were otherwise using him as a fetish experiment.¹⁰⁵ Each case communicating to Baldwin that he was not, in fact, a full human being in the eyes of his acquaintances.

It was enough that by the late-1940s Baldwin began perceiving the contours of prejudice in the overwhelmingly Liberal Greenwich Village, noticing the relatively small population of African Americans in the neighborhood and the strength of sexual repression present within even those men Baldwin chose to share a bed with.¹⁰⁶ On his path toward learning and accepting his true self, however, Baldwin took several steps which he later identified as stepping stones toward self-realization. One such decision, according to Leeming, was to confess his love to photographer, Theodore Pelatowski, who he would use as inspiration for David’s first homosexual relationship in *Giovanni’s Room*.¹⁰⁷ Though Baldwin had fallen in love with a man before, most notably the young actor and fellow denizen of Greenwich Village, Marlon Brando, this had been the first time he had expressed the sentiment verbally.¹⁰⁸ And though Pelatowski, himself, was heterosexual, the admission allowed Baldwin to confront and overcome the fear of his

“violation” in a manner unavailable to his semi-biographical character, Rufus Scott, with predictable results.

Like Baldwin’s friend and love interest, Eugene Worth, the fictional Rufus Scott throws himself off the George Washington Bridge as the result of his inability to Work Through compounding instantiations of sexed “Encounters.” He is the representation of Baldwin’s theme of love and what one risks in failing to love (or to be loved). American society projects its myths onto Rufus, functionally denying his identity and individuality, leaving him too broken to give or accept love, thus his aversion to (white) friends Vivaldo’s and Cass’ concerns, and his abuse of (white) girlfriend Leona and (white) ex-lover Eric. However, unlike Pecola Breedlove, Rufus does not become a placeholder, an object of whiteness, but struggles against it as an agent – insofar as he is able. Therefore, *Another Country* – at least the first third of it – is a story of a queer African American man struggling to find the means to identify and express an authentic selfhood in the face of white and homophobic negations. We witness throughout Rufus’ narrative the various ways in which American society attempts to impose its myths onto Rufus through the interactions he has within mid-century New York City.

One of the earliest interactions Rufus has with white, homophobic America takes place in conversation with his best friend, Vivaldo, who Rufus refers to as a “liberal white bastard.”¹⁰⁹ Rufus has just spent the night with love interest, Leona, an encounter resembling more of a crime scene than an evening tryst. Attending a party at a Manhattan flat, Rufus finds himself in a situation which provides him with an opportunity to assert his dominance, if only ostensibly, over the meek, Liberal white woman, Leona, on the veranda of an acquaintance’s apartment.¹¹⁰ He handles Leona roughly, grabbing her

towards him as she resists and fights to get away. He is conscious of his actions as he tries to “make amends for what he was doing – for what he was doing to her.”¹¹¹ Baldwin punctuates Rufus’ intentions by writing that his protagonist had begun to “feel a tenderness for Leona which he had not expected to feel,” emphasizing the dominative character of his lust for this white woman.¹¹² In Leona’s vagina Rufus seeks “home,” representing the turbulent sexual nature of race relations as they appear to Baldwin. His description of Rufus and Leona’s intercourse is decidedly violent with references to the history of enslavement and Jim Crow segregation played out throughout the encounter. For example, the sex, on the surface, is described as slow and even-tempered, “barely suggestive of the violence of the deep” taking place within.¹¹³ The couple “murmured and sobbed,” while Leona’s face is “transfigured with agony and gleamed in the darkness like alabaster.”¹¹⁴ Rufus “wanted her to remember him the longest day she lived” (perhaps foreshadowing his impending death) “And, shortly, nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings.”¹¹⁵ Before climax, Rufus “cursed the milk-white bitch” under his breath as he “rode his weapon between her thighs” and “felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies.”¹¹⁶ The imagery conveys not only Rufus’ putative success in conquering this white woman’s body, but his despoiling of her entire bloodline with the “venom” of African American progeny.

The futility in this fantasy is expressed by Baldwin elsewhere in a meditation on the connection between race, Americanness, and sexuality: “Yes, it does indeed mean something – something unspeakable – to be born, in a white country, an Anglo-Teutonic, antisexual country, black.”¹¹⁷ For Baldwin, the history of race in America is irrevocably

intertwined with its sexual anxieties. The African American man and woman have been socially constructed as indelible sexual deviants posing a constant threat to the purity and innocence of white Americans – particularly white women. This is compounded by Rufus' bisexuality (and Baldwin's homosexuality) which has also been traditionally ostracized in the US as sexual deviation, making Rufus a threat to both white male and white female sexuality. Those white men or women who do express sympathies for African American struggle, at least in Baldwin's mind, tend to express their concern and solidarity through paternalism, as exemplified in the white Liberal figure of Vivaldo Moore, one of Rufus' closest companions.

After spending the night with Leona, Rufus receives a visit from Vivaldo at his apartment the morning after. The trio exchanges pleasantries and refreshments before Leona recedes to the apartment bathroom to get dressed. In her absence, Rufus and Vivaldo discuss Rufus' intentions for his new relationship with Leona. Vivaldo asks straightforwardly whether Leona will be staying with Rufus, while Rufus refuses to confirm or deny this. Vivaldo then proceeds to warn Rufus, implicitly, of the social consequences of him dating a white woman, to which Rufus responds, "I've thought of that."¹¹⁸ Vivaldo then explicitly reveals his feelings towards Rufus, proclaiming "Trouble is, I feel too paternal towards you, you son of a bitch," to which Rufus responds poignantly, "That's the trouble with all you white bastards."¹¹⁹

It turns out that this interaction presages Rufus' first sexed "Encounter," which occurs on the streets of Manhattan as the three stroll through the Village. It occurs to Rufus in the faces of passersby that "he had not thought at all about this world and its power to hate and destroy."¹²⁰ His mind quickly ventures to the risk his relationship with

Leona may pose to his housing, relationships with neighbors, and interactions with the robust weekenders who'd venture in and out of the Village – “the place of liberation” – with their prying eyes and judgmental looks.¹²¹ Rufus then considers how the relationship may affect his family – particularly his younger sister, Ida, whom Baldwin describes as “very race conscious.”¹²² Rufus envisions what Ida might say to him if she found out, questioning his commitment to being African American and his affection for African American women.

We may readily assume that Rufus himself is not as “race conscious” as his younger sister, otherwise it would have been moot for Baldwin to have introduced her in this way. Therefore, the racial implications of Rufus' behavior, relationships, friendships, etc. do not occur to him implicitly, that is, without provocation.¹²³ While he makes certain to assure interlocutors who warn him of the racial undertones and implications of particular activities or spaces Rufus engages and occupies throughout the city, it is a significant detail regarding Rufus' character that those around him feel he needs periodic reminding of his social position. This is not to say that Rufus is completely oblivious to his place. He does resist, for example, bringing Vivaldo to the hospital after a bar brawl for fear of how a beaten African American man and a nearly unconscious white man might be interpreted by the hospital staff. Baldwin also mentions that, “He was not really afraid for himself, but for Vivaldo, who knew so little about his countrymen,” meaning that, rather than attempting to save himself from potential arrest, Rufus intended to protect Vivaldo from the perception of his fellows, particularly a class as prestigious as healthcare professionals, as evil – what Baldwin would call “the people who think that they are white” in *The Fire Next Time*.¹²⁴

Rufus' position is further complicated by the dynamics of his nuclear family. He is acutely aware that his family will not accept his relationship with a white woman, just as he is aware that they will not accept his bisexuality. Baldwin emphasizes this point in his introduction of Rufus as a queer African American character. In the earliest pages of *Another Country*, we come to know Rufus Scott as a popular performing jazz drummer living in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. By page forty-one he is down on his luck, wandering the cold streets of the city in winter, (hesitantly) "peddling his ass" for a sandwich and a beer when an older white man approaches him for his "company." Rufus struggles internally over the situation, wrestling with paranoia, anxiety, and moral ambiguity until he feels dizzy and nauseous from it all. While we are informed that this is not the first time he has "consented to the bleakly physical exchange," something about the context and this particular man makes it unbearable for him.¹²⁵ Rufus prays into a shot glass of whiskey, paid for by his would-be "John," pleading with God, "Lord, don't let it happen. Don't let me go home with this man. I've got so little left, Lord, don't let me lose it all."¹²⁶ The stakes of the moment are expressed in his adoption of the diminutive, "boy," that he had earlier insisted Leona avoid.¹²⁷ This signals a diminution of self in Rufus' own mind constituting the result of having to bear the pain of having or feeling as though he must bottle his true self away from others for self-preservation. Paradoxically, it is this circumstance which ultimately leads to his end.

We do not, however, find out Rufus' family's true feelings about his queerness until much later in the novel. Rather than reveal the Scotts' attitudes from the perspective of Rufus, Baldwin instead uses Ida as the family's mouthpiece. There doesn't seem to be

any purpose in this choice except that Ida appears to be far more explicit in her thoughts and feelings than her late brother had been.

Toward the end of the novel, when Vivaldo and Ida are at the climax of their relationship, the couple engage in a heated discussion regarding Cass and Eric's love affair. The exchange doubles as a meditation on infidelity and homosexuality. Baldwin provides a hint of how Ida feels about her brother's queerness through contemptuous remarks she makes regarding Eric's sexuality. "*She* [Cass] can't realize what she's doing," says Ida, "She's got a good man and he's really starting to get someplace, and she can't find anything *better* to do than start screwing some poor-white faggot from Alabama. I swear I don't understand white folks worth a damn."¹²⁸ While we are never told whether Ida had or would have used this homophobic slur against her brother, we are made aware of her general attitude towards homosexuality through her orientation towards Eric as proxy.

Despite Vivaldo's persistent rebuke of Ida's homophobia, declaring "I just don't see why it should matter to you, that's all. So he likes a roll in the hay with a man. So what?" Ida turns her homophobic venom toward her brother, making him a putative victim to Eric's "sickness" in a familiar manner discussed above: "He wanted a roll in the hay with my brother, too... He wanted to make him as *sick* as he is."¹²⁹ Ida is unable to accept that her brother could be queer, and thus concocts a conspiracy which situates Rufus as hapless victim of queer white malevolence and moral degeneracy. She denies Rufus his own agency as an African American man due to her inability to perceive queerness as a legitimate sexual identity, let alone a legitimate sexual identity for African American men. The association of "queer" with "white" allows her to reconcile Rufus'

sexuality to a sort of brainwashing imposed upon him from the white supremacist superstructure, as a control mechanism to temper the ostensibly brutish nature African American men. In this way, Ida reflects a political theoretic disposition which gained currency by the late-1960s and early 1970s.

A new breed of Black Nationalist, exemplified by vocal theorists such as Frances Cress Welsing and others, began expressing vicious condemnations of homosexuality among African Americans, particularly African American males. These actors levied accusations that homosexuality had been forced upon African American men to “effeminize” and submit them to white dominance, thus hamstringing what they perceive(-ed) as the masculine vanguard of racial liberation.

In tandem with abortion, mass incarceration, and interracial relationships (which also feature prominently in *Another Country*), the argument holds that homosexuality has been imposed upon African American males to undermine African Americans’ ability to forge sustainable family units, thus constraining their ability to reproduce themselves as agents of a self-determining race. This pseudo-theory has been reiterated by clergymen,¹³⁰ supposed scholars,¹³¹ and state councilmembers.¹³² It is one part of a larger campaign to marginalize LGBTQ+ individuals and their putatively “degenerate” behavior in order to “save” African America (and the Africana world more broadly) from moral collapse. Fundamental to this ideology is the belief that queer identities may be “encouraged” or that otherwise heterosexual (heteronormative) individuals may be manipulated or “groomed” into being queer, thus threatening the persistence of, in this case, African American cultural/ethnic solvency. Even the mere existence of queer individuals is seen as an attempt to encourage heterosexual individuals (mainly children)

to be queer, which in turn motivates this anti-LGBT+, homophobic behavior to be externalized onto the broader society through policy and personal interactions. The consequences of such actions and beliefs, as explored earlier in this chapter, are political suppression and ultimate erosion of hard-fought LGBT+ rights, an increase in anti-LGBT+ hate crimes, and an increase in self-harm, substance abuse, domestic abuse, and suicide among LGBT+ individuals and in households where LGBT+ individuals are forced to hide their identities; and this is no less true of African American LGBT+ individuals than it is of those in any other racial group.

As though to underscore this point further, later in *Another Country*, Eric proclaims to Vivaldo his own thoughts regarding sexuality: “the sense that one is never what one seems – never – and yet, what one seems to be is probably, in some sense, almost exactly what one *is*.”¹³³ There is a certain social constructivist feel to Eric’s words as he argues that one is simultaneously in control of how one is perceived, while at the same time unable to control one’s own sense of one’s self. Eric later elaborates, implicitly, by explaining that he had once envied Vivaldo for being “normal,” that is, heterosexual (heteronormative), though he clarifies that he no longer envies him, at least not for this reason. Once again, Baldwin utilizes Eric as his mouthpiece for his understanding of identity: “I mean, I think you’ve got to be truthful about the life you *have*. Otherwise, there’s no possibility of achieving the life you *want*... Or *think* you want.”¹³⁴ Which is to say, unless one is honest with themselves, if not to anyone else, about whom one is, one will never have a clear picture of where one is going, and that can be devastating.

Through this exchange we experience a dichotomization between the fates of Eric and Rufus: Eric has been able to reconcile his inner turmoil concerning his sexual identity by, like Baldwin, fleeing to “another country,” while Rufus resorts to taking his own life in resignation to his confusion and dislocation. Put another way, Eric is now able to live his life true to himself, for himself, and – to a certain degree – in control of himself, while Rufus had never had this opportunity, nor could he see it in his future, thus he ultimately kills himself as a consequence of never really having control of his sense of self, despite his public performance to the contrary.

However, Rufus does assert his racial agency through brief, almost self-conscious acts among friends and acquaintances throughout most of his presence in the novel, rather than address them forthright in conversation. For example, early on in their relationship, Rufus corrects Leona’s behavior on several occasions – once while walking round the Village, another sitting in conversation with Vivaldo and Cass Silenski (an old friend of Vivaldo’s) in a park. In the first instance, Leona blithely refers to Rufus as “boy” in jest while discussing the attitude of a young child who’d stared the couple down as they strode – “Well, that’s what’s the matter with most people,” says Leona, “ain’t got nobody to be with. That’s what makes them so evil. I’m telling you, boy, I know,” to which Rufus responds, “Don’t call me *boy*.”¹³⁵ In the second, Leona strokes Rufus’ head in an act she intends as consolation, while Rufus quickly removes her hand from his scalp out of discomfort.¹³⁶ Each instance represents a disconnect between Leona’s liberal white naivete and Rufus’ struggle with his own racial and sexual identity. His reaction to being called “boy,” even by a lover, is loaded with generations of African American infantilization and discrimination, while his aversion to having his hair stroked – again,

even by a lover – is burdened by generations of African American hyper-sexualization, exoticism, and fetishization in the Euro-American mind. Rufus’ relatively even-tempered response represents both his desire to take control of his agency as an African American queer man, while at the same time attempting to retain his proximity to whiteness. In other words, each example represents the negotiation between agency, identity, and recognition which characterize integration as well as Baldwin’s perception of the nature of race relations, particularly those that are sexual and/or romantic.

Prior to these experiences, as discussed above, we are to understand that Rufus had not been “race conscious,” therefore explaining the importance of his paranoia as he walked through the park with Vivaldo and Leona. It isn’t until he has experienced a series of “Encounters,” each more traumatic than the next, that he becomes perfectly aware (nigrescence) of his place within his little world, as well as the society broadly, that he begins really to come to terms with his race and sexuality.

From a racial perspective, Rufus becomes increasingly cynical and distrustful of the white men and women around him, as demonstrated by his physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of Leona and verbal abuse of Vivaldo – he even begins picking fights with random white men in bars. By page forty-six, Rufus, after roughly a month of absence from friends and family, confides in Vivaldo regarding the turmoil that ended his relationship with Leona. “Did you ever have the feeling,” says Rufus, “that a woman was eating you up? I mean – no matter what she was like or what else she was doing – that that’s what she was *really* doing?”¹³⁷ Which he follows up by declaring that neither Leona nor Vivaldo can “help it,” which we are to understand from the perspective of standpoint epistemology – i.e., they are white and could never understand what Rufus had

been going through on a daily basis; no matter how hard they'd tried, they could never fully comprehend Rufus' life, and this reality "ate up" Rufus from the inside. In fact, it seems to have contributed to his own sense of alienation and dislocation within himself, for he recalls a time when Leona once told him, presuming, of course, his own unspoken sentiments about himself, that "ain't nothing wrong in being colored."¹³⁸ Rufus, at first puzzled by Leona's intentions, begins to internalize the statement's premises – that there *could* be something wrong with being colored at all – and projects his insecurities onto her. On occasion he'd respond to the declaration, "Not if you a hard-up white lady," insinuating, of course, that she'd have nothing to do with him if she weren't wanting for money or sex. Leona confirms Rufus' self-hatred clearly in a flashback that recalls a night when Vivaldo had come to the couple's apartment to find Leona beaten and sobbing on the bathroom floor and Rufus sitting motionless, snarling on the bed. After denigrating Leona for her past relationships, accusing her of using African American men sexually to escape her abusive husband, as he believed in that moment she was doing with him, Vivaldo moves to take Leona back to his apartment to let the situation cool down. He accuses Rufus of believing that Leona was not good enough for him, thus his treatment of the lady. But Leona butts in to declare that it is, in fact, Rufus who does not believe *he* is good enough for *her*. Rufus' response serves to confirm Leona's accusations: "You see? *You* bring it up all the time. *You* the one who brings it up. Now, how you expect me to make it with a bitch like you?"¹³⁹

Eschewing a racial connection with his white liberal friends and lovers, Rufus instead tries to connect with Vivaldo in another way, by inquiring him on his sexuality. "Have you ever wished you were queer," he asks Vivaldo, beseechingly, almost

desperate for a response.¹⁴⁰ To which Vivaldo responds with a smile, “I used to think maybe I was. Hell, I think I even wished I was...But I’m not, so I’m stuck.”¹⁴¹ Pensive and unamused, Rufus expresses a hint of relief that his best friend had considered his sexuality as he had considered his own. However, Vivaldo’s follow up is poignant, and seems only to demoralize Rufus once more: “We’ve all been up the same streets. There aren’t a hell of a lot of streets. Only, we’ve been taught to lie so much about so many things, that we hardly ever know *where* we are.”¹⁴² Rufus stands speechless by the apartment window, feeling as though he is “smothering.” Rather than find solace in the fact that others may be experiencing the same internal strife as he has, Rufus instead becomes hopeless, even disconnected. In his mind there is no out, no escape that he can look forward to arriving at, only more doom.

Still in Vivaldo’s apartment, Rufus begins to sob with the realization that this is him, and no force on earth could change himself from himself. Reticent to see his parents or sister, the thought which “checked and chilled him,” Rufus’ opportunities for confiding in a sympathetic friend seem to him less and less probable. It begins to seem as though Leona’s warnings are true: that “Rufus ain’t going to kill nobody but himself...if he don’t find a friend to help him.”¹⁴³

On the night of Rufus’ death, he shares an intimate interaction with friend, Cass Silenski. It is the first time since Rufus’ separation from Leona that he has accepted the warm sympathy of a friend.¹⁴⁴ Cass’ presence at this time signals hope and safety for Rufus – neither emotion had he felt with Leona. He feels enough comfort with Cass to confide an experience he had had while meeting Leona’s brother while she was away at Manhattan’s Bellevue Hospital following a psychological break she had suffered after a

fight with Rufus. He recalls Leona's brother spitting on him and threatening Rufus with death. In this "Encounter" Rufus learns to associate whiteness with terror –

He remembered the walls of the hospital: white, and the uniforms and faces of the doctors and nurses, white on white. And the face of Leona's brother, white, with the blood beneath it rushing thickly, bitterly, to the skin's surface, summoned by his mortal enemy.¹⁴⁵

The language of Baldwin's description conveys a carnal, age-long battle between the races, squelched temporarily by the union of members of each race in romantic partnership, staving off the inevitable violent hatred fomenting under the surface.

Cass pleads for Rufus to forgive himself for what he had done to Leona so that he may prevent projecting his insecurities and traumas upon some other hapless victim. Cass consoles Rufus with her words, reassuring him that his appearance is no matter for his presence to her, insisting that things would be the same with his family uptown as well. Suddenly, Richard, Cass' husband, announces their departure, and Rufus begins to fear her absence. "He longed to do something to prolong that smile, that moment," Baldwin informs us, emphasizing his protagonist's desperation. But Cass' absence signals a further widening of the "chasm" between Rufus and his (white) friends.

Rufus uses the bathroom as an excuse to separate himself from Vivaldo and Vivaldo's old lover, Jane, who had intruded on their table at Benno's, a local bar Rufus and his friend circle attend infrequently. Rufus takes to the streets and heads for the subway to catch a train uptown. On the train car we witness the last light of Rufus' hope for racial and sexual reconciliation get swept away as he observes the passengers on their way to disparate destinations:

At Fifty-ninth Street many came on board and many rushed across the platform to the waiting local. Many white people and many black people, chained together in time and in space, and by history, and all of them in a

hurry. In a hurry to get away from each other, he thought, but we ain't never going to make it. We been fucked for fair.¹⁴⁶

The separation of the passengers, for Rufus, represents the separation of the city, which he perceives, as Baldwin, too, would later perceive, as “on fire.” Our last glimpse of Rufus, this desperate, young, African American, queer man, overcome by what racism and homophobia had made of him, is the simile of his black skin and the black water below, running under the George Washington Bridge. He leaps from the railing as the likeness and reality become one, and Rufus Scott dies, physically and spiritually, a tragic victim of homophobic “Encounters.”

CHAPTER FOUR

MIGRATION AND THE “ENCOUNTER” IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE’S *AMERICANAH* AND EDWIDGE DANTICAT’S *BREATH, EYES, MEMORY*

Introduction

This final chapter of analysis, before turning to a discussion regarding the pedagogical benefits these sorts of analyses provide to Comparative Black Literature, focuses on the role of racial “encounters” in the racialization and racial socialization processes of Africana migrant narratives and identity formation, using Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*. The chapter introduces Anna-Leena Toivanen concept of “Mobility” outlined in her *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms in African and Afrodiasporic Literatures* published in 2021. Mobility necessarily involves the displacement of individual or groups of subjects and its meanings are relational, socially constructed, and impact the subject(s) and the people and groups encountered through the subject’s movements between locations.¹ From a literary perspective, the application of Mobility offers two important functions: (1) to make sense of mobilities experienced in the real world amongst individual and groups of subjectivities; and (2) to situate oneself, as reader and/or analyst, in the mobile world of constructed mobile identities.

Mobility

In performing such an analysis, we must assume that the choice to move and the means of movement are structurally influenced by existing or coextensive power dynamics within and between the country of origin and the receiving country.² We must also understand that, while Mobility may not necessarily lead the subject to cosmopolitanism, but to mutual antagonisms, isolation, and resentment instead – for

cosmopolitanism requires interaction (between individuals and other individuals, individuals and new spaces, etc.) on the grounds of mutual willingness to engage - this it does irrevocably put the subject in direct contact with unfamiliar subjectivities and locations which alter the subject in significant ways.³ If the subject fails to become cosmopolitan through their mobility, Toivanen and Hiroki Igarashi and Hiro Saito argue that it is a consequence of either the subject's "lack of 'cosmopolitan competencies' and cosmopolitan cultural capital" or various forms of social marginalization enacted upon and experienced by the mobile subject.⁴ Toivanen explains that "cosmopolitan competency" requires "ethical engagement with the world, with the Other, and an understanding of one's own positionality."⁵ In other words, the mobile subject must participate in active engagement with the beyond which they are already familiar and/or knowledgeable, and have the ability to comprehend others' perspectives relative to themselves. Toivanen also points out that diversity within spaces held to be cosmopolitan may be overextended. She and Pnina Werbner have both argued that ethnic concentration and ghettoization may impose insurmountable borders between spaces *within* places thought to be diverse.⁶

A final note on Digital Mobility is necessary to properly situate *Americanah*, specifically, in our theoretical lens. Email in the 1990s and the popularity of blogging in the early-2000s extended the average person's ability to come into contact, even daily contact, with a cosmopolitan community of information and communication technologies (ICT) users. Through the virtual and imaginative mobility which the internet and ICT allow, migrant and potential migrant expectations may be set directly by members of the receiving country's population. It also allows subjects to penetrate local and national

borders by establishing personal relationships with other subjectivities not within their immediate vicinity.⁷ Toivanen points out, though, that this connectivity should not be considered to produce genuine dialogue inherently, but is “always necessarily an imperfect, partial process.”⁸ This is due to several factors, including epistemic, cultural, emotional, and physical distance between the connected subjects; the time, space, and money needed to connect using ICT (in the case of *Americanah*, willingness to engage or respond); and the alterability of the medium – in other words, the “gaps” innate to the means of communication.⁹

Migration, Racialization, and Racial Socialization

Racialization and racial socialization, as contributive social structures of identity formation within the Africana migrant novel, are undertheorized phenomena of Africana literature, particularly within an Africana Studies framework, and offer unique insights into the racialization and racial socialization processes of Africana people in general. Africana migrants bring with them notions of race and identity – if such notions exist in the country-of-origin at all – that are often quite different from those held by residents of the receiving country. While elements of these conceptions may overlap in significant ways, perceptual particularity exists as a byproduct of personal and collective experiences, divergent cultural and social norms, and historical developments that allow race and identity – as abstract concepts – to evolve and transform, as sociocultural phenomena are wont to do. This generally occurs according to the ideological peculiarities of the given society or ethnic group over time and in accordance with evolving social and cultural mores. To put it simply: while race, as a concept, is shared between American and Haitian society, and American and Nigerian society, its meaning

and use has varied substantially over time relative to the discrete social, historical, and cultural particularities of each region and its various people(s).

These particularities gain renewed significance as they converge within migrant-host relationships that produce novel social relations and emergent identities as individuals and groups of migrants navigate the sociocultural conceptual terrain of the host country and develop new identities according to their interactions and relationships with the host country's existing population. These interactions and relationships are inevitably marked by novel and/or divergent sociocultural concepts such as race that the migrant(s) is forced to integrate into their own conceptual understandings or otherwise grapple with in their new life in the host country. This may happen through channels – or “Encounters” – familiar to the average (African) American, or by the very (benign) act of first being called Black by an interlocutor, either directly or indirectly.

Scholar Christopher Foster, drawing upon the work of anthropologist David Scott, has argued that to understand the Africana migrant condition one must appreciate how the “conditions of possible action” and the “cognitive and institutional conditions in which the New World slave” and colonial subject was able to act in.¹⁰ Enslavement, then colonialism thus effectively destroyed – or at the very least substantially weakened – subjugated societies who were then forced to acculturate to the sociocultural hegemon as a consequence. Ultimately, Foster concludes, that refugees and migrants from subjugated societies are effectively conscripted to these statuses even before their decision to move – that is, they move not as agents, but as conscripted, attenuated individuals under circumstances which have been imposed, rather than risen autochthonously. In the dominant society, movement to and from its national boundaries is monitored and

managed through migration regulatory apparatuses and social life for those migrants fortunate enough to breach those structures are conscripted through social pressures and conventions, like pejoratives and stereotypes. Consequently, the migrant/refugee occupies a sort of intermediary position – not quite a member of their society of origin, not quite a member of their country of destination.

This is hardly surprising. Human beings, after all, are not automatons and they are not living in the Matrix where information may be uploaded into their cerebral mainframes. Instead, the process of acculturation takes place over a period of years, wherein the migrant learns to adapt to, navigate, and survive the host context. Often, as Shelly Habecker refers to as “hybrid assimilation,” this process may produce identity confusion and “dynamic identities” that are able to adapt to new environments and new information.¹¹ The migrant’s identity is thrown into flux when presented with the new context of the host society and they are forced to develop new methods of being and behaving in the world that may not have been present/available in the society of origin. Therefore, in this sense, migration, *per se*, is a traumatic experience causing individual or groups of migrants to reinterpret themselves and their place in the world, ultimately formulating “hybrid” identities which integrate features from both the home and host cultures. In other words, the very act of leaving one’s country of origin signals an ontological shift for the individual migrant.¹²

One of the fundamental features that Africana migrants, in particular, must contend with when they arrive in the US is the country’s particular concept of race and racial identity. While in the two examples presented in this chapter, one from Haiti and the other from Nigeria, race exists as an abstract social structure which plays a role in

Haitian and Nigerian life, the degree to which this is so and the conceptualization of race in the country of origin varies extensively from its degree of relevance and conceptualization in the US. There are specific social, cultural, and historical reasons for this, of course, just as it was so in our discussion of the variations in the understandings of race between the US and Jamaica engaged with in chapter 1. In order to Work Through these complexities, Haitian and Nigerian migrants employ several acculturation strategies intended to navigate the racial attitudes of the majority host population.

One such strategy, typically utilized among first-generation Africana migrants, is to reject identification with African Americans, though racial self-identification, as Kevin J.A. Thomas has observed, is largely predicated upon the migrant's socioeconomic position within the host society, especially for migrants from the Caribbean.¹³ There are three primary reasons Africana migrants cite to rationalize this strategy: (1) they argue that African Americans are "overly preoccupied with racial issues," (2) they determine that it is within their material and social best interests to either assimilate to the white middle-class or to retain their ethnic identity, and (3) they accede to familial demands – primarily from parents – to retain their cultural heritage and reject association with negative African American stereotypes.¹⁴ These strategies tend to drift away by the 1.5 and second generation migrants reach adolescence or early-adulthood. They tend to receive a greater degree of pressure to socially identify with African Americans than did their parents and who segment themselves up into their own social categories.¹⁵ However, ethnic communities are built and are typically thought to be spaces where ethnic identity may be reproduced and "protected" from "rapid Americanization," despite

heavy immersion and interaction with the mainstream American culture.¹⁶ In fact, sociological evidence since the 1990s has shown the creation of ethnic communities or enclaves within host countries, mainly in or near major metropolitan centers, is positively associated with upward socioeconomic mobility.¹⁷

As Africana migrants acculturate to the host society, they, perhaps inevitably, grapple with what Saskia Furst calls “Palimpsests of Ancestral Memories,” which holds that, while “[t]he re-negotiating of identities is fundamental to migration,” the “ghostly ancestral memories in the form of dreams in the bodies of the protagonist” necessarily emerges to complicate the emergent image of the migrant’s self in the context of their new environment.¹⁸ These “ghostly ancestral memories” serve as a form of Working Through (or “giving testimony” in Furst’s terminology) the trauma of migration.¹⁹ In many cases, as is true in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Americanah*, this means providing voice to a voiceless ancestor whose memory intertwines with the psyche of a living descendant.²⁰ In less spiritual terms, the migrant latches onto the memory, usually a very specific experience with or of either a living or dead ancestor, in order to make sense of their journey and new life in the host context. Much like religion, it provides the migrant a concrete tool for making sense of themselves and their surroundings in the making of their new Identity.

Of course, there are countervailing social pressures which infringe upon individual migrants’ and migrant communities’ ability to determine their own identity rooted within their own heritage. Tanya Golash-Boza, Maria D. Duenas, and Chia Xiong have argued that American racism devalues and disincentivizes migrants’ self-identification with their culture, ethnicity, and nationality of origin.²¹ As a consequence

of being socialized and acculturated out of these cultural, ethnic, and linguistic patterns, migrants are cut off from vital socio-cultural skills, networks, and knowledge bases from which to draw upon to establish healthy, positive senses of self and belonging within the host context.²² This also holds generational implications as well. Unless second generation migrants are actively encouraged to preserve these sociocultural tools, they may succumb altogether to the social pressures from both the mainstream American society *and* minority African American society as well, as discussed above.²³ That is, of course, if the particular African American community is amenable to forging social relations with the given Haitian migrant community or if the first generation fails to apply sufficient social pressure to inoculate the 1.5 or second generations from desiring contact with African Americans.²⁴ Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the loss of this social and cultural capital may infringe on second generation migrants' self-esteem, association with one's country/ethnicity of origin, and educational outcomes.²⁵

Not enough work has been done to uncover the peculiarities of migrant racialization or racial socialization. What is known is that Africana migrant self-identification with African Americans is predicated upon the migrant's socioeconomic status, country of origin, migrants' pre-existing notions of race carried over from their homeland, the historical experience Africana migrants have with colonialism and the trade in enslaved Africans, and as discussed above, the pre-existing attitudes Africana migrants have toward African Americans. In the inters of the present dissertation, we must discuss the particularities of this condition in the context of Haitian and Nigerian migrants.

Haitian Migrants, Racialization, and Racial Socialization

In the first place, Haitian migrants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – the majority of Haitian migrants to the US – who overwhelmingly settle in either the Northeast or in Florida, tend to have less of a problem identifying with African Americans.²⁶ Mary Waters speculates that this may be due to the fairly homogenous context poor Haitian migrant children are exposed to in school as well as the social pressures to not “act white” present in many of these contexts.²⁷ Another explanation, which Violet Johnson posits, is that to identify as “Black” or “African American” as a poor Haitian immigrant would not pose the same (perceived) amount of risk as it would for a middle or upper class Haitian migrant.²⁸ This is substantiated by Steve Song’s findings that Haitian immigrants’ self-association with “Black” or “African American” labels are tied to the individual’s experience with discrimination: incidence of discrimination perceived to be due to the individual’s “blackness” resulted in a lesser likelihood of self-identifying as “Black” or “African American.”²⁹ However, among the three migrant groups studied by Song, the Haitians were actually the least likely to report experiencing discrimination, with about 35% responding in the affirmative, as opposed to roughly 37% of Chinese migrants and 43% of Mexican migrants.³⁰ But even in the minority of cases where Haitian migrants identified their “blackness” as the catalyst for their discrimination, the migrant was more likely to identify with a hyphenated (i.e., Haitian-American) label than with “Black” or “African American.”³¹ If nothing else, this data signals the obstacles to racial solidarity, or even general social cohesion, rooted in both the racial attitudes that Haitian immigrants bring with them to the US, and the

structure of American racism which projects and reinforces these attitudes through popular media and other sociocultural forces.

Appendix A provides an extended history of race in Haiti. For our immediate purposes it is important to note that, despite Haiti's complicated history of race – mainly as political mechanism – Haitians today are more or less divided on their racial self-identification. While they are less likely than African Americans to demonstrate preferences for racial identities based on US racial norms, at least half choose to use “Black” rather than “non-Black” as their racial identity.³² Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that race is received as a foreign concept through experience with American society.³³ This is further complicated by the highly stratified environments that many, if not most, Haitian migrants settle into in America. They must contend with the prejudices of whites, of course, but also of those from other islands around the Caribbean, African migrants, and, as noted above, African Americans.³⁴

Nigerian Migrants, Racialization, and Racial Socialization

On the other hand, Nigerian migrants to the US are generally middle class, are either well-educated or are immigrating to become better educated, and are more thoroughly identified according to ethnicity than by race, gender, class, etc. Emeka Onwubu, for example, has observed that Nigerian “nationality” is more a byproduct of British colonialism than of autonomous, organic manifestation, is plagued by “internal ethnic coherence” based in “deep-rooted ethnic identities.”³⁵ As a consequence, a solvent, concrete nationalism has not been able to develop as it has in Haiti (or America or England). The situation in Nigeria is further complicated by 250 distinct ethnic groups and over 500 distinct languages that span the country's borders, with Hausa-Fulani,

Yoruba, and Igbo making up the largest share of the population. For our purposes, we will focus on the Igbo due to the fact that this is Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's and her character, Ifemelu's ethnic background.

Onwubu states that the Igbo "invariably always maintained and preserved their distinct Igbo cultural life in their own physically separate Igbo mini-communities" across Nigeria, with their traditional homeland lying near the southern Biafran coast.³⁶ They typically self-segregate when living outside of this region, which tends to be perceived with hostility by the host population(s), particularly if Igbo are perceived to be prospering more than the native ethnic group.³⁷ For several political, economic, and geographic reasons, regional development is quite unbalanced, leading to ethnic antagonisms and chauvinistic attitudes between ethnic groups to manifest as a result. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) made these antagonisms worse. As a result of the war, Nigeria was segmented into 36 states which breached Igbo territory and seeded lands to their neighbors. The situation was particularly acute for the Igbo due to their land's abnormal population density and uniquely infertile soil – both key reasons for their propensity to migrate for sustenance, both across Nigeria and to the US and UK.

Various explanations have been offered for the tens of thousands of Nigerians who choose to abscond to the US rather than migrate to a different part of Nigeria. While it is not the purpose of the present chapter to offer an evaluation of these explanations or to offer an alternative explanation, it is constructive for our purposes to engage with this material for building an understanding of the unique push and pull factors that lead Nigerians to leave their homeland behind seeking greater opportunities elsewhere.

Douglas S. Massey introduced Cumulative Causation theory in 1990, which has since been refined by Annett Fleischer, Derik Gelderblom, and Marie Wentzel, Johan Viljoen, and Pieter Kok through Network Theory. While the latter emphasize the role of friends and family living abroad as motivation for subsequent migrants to take the risk, Massey argues that each successful migration from a given community motivates subsequent migrations from the community as a byproduct of interconnected “individual behavior, household strategies, community structures, and national political economies.”³⁸ These factors feed into the growth of networks, individual migration choices, migrant remittances, and local income distributions.³⁹ The migrant’s network (e.g., kin, friend, or ethnic group) serve to link the migrant to a socially beneficial base back in his or her homeland that is built of “reciprocal obligations and mutual expectations” of one another.⁴⁰ The migration process necessarily involves the creation of network connections in this view because each person from the given kin, friend, or ethnic group establishes social ties to the host country vis-à-vis the migrant. This increases the likelihood that more members of the given kin, friend, or ethnic group may migrate because the obstacles to effective settlement and integration into the host country are mitigated through the experience of the preceding migrant(s), especially in cases of labor migration.⁴¹ Massey calls this “risk diversification.”⁴² Additionally, remittances provide the necessary incentive and investment that makes migration possible for subsequent kin, friend, or ethnic group members to follow.

Alternatively, Gordon De Jong, Kerry Richter, and Pimonpan Isarabhakdi, and De Jong, Andrea Johnson, and Richter offer Value Expectancy theory, which holds that the decision to migrate is made when an individual realizes that the values the values which

undergird their goals and expectations would be better served someplace else. They pinpoint income, affiliation, stimulation, and comfort as the four core “value-expectancy dimensions” which determine an individual’s decision to emigrate. Of course, the vast majority of individuals in a given locale will decide to stay put, regardless of whether or not they have determined that their goals and expectations would be elevated elsewhere, or if they are dissatisfied with their current living situation. Rather than acceding to Icek Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Action thesis which holds that an individual’s decision to emigrate is primarily driven by subjective evaluation, De Jong, Richter, and Isarabhakdi’s, and De Jong, Johnson, and Richter’s data suggests that migration is determined both by subjective evaluation and objective material circumstances (e.g., labor contract practices, gender role differences, etc.)⁴³

Lastly, ‘Dimeji Togunde, Ayobami Ojebode, and Amanda Vocke, and Charles Ambler have determined representations of the US in American media to be an outsized influence in migrants’ decision to move. They highlight America’s role as global superpower in most non-US media as a significant factor in this process.⁴⁴ To quote Togunde, Ojebode, and Vocke directly: “To most Africans in urban areas, American living conditions is (sic) portrayed as a paradise on earth where there is no poverty.”⁴⁵ This is primarily driven by Nigerian popular media, like music and movies, where the US is primarily referred to as a place where Nigerians can succeed and receive a warm welcome.⁴⁶ In many cases the artist will compare/contrast their homeland to America in deprecating terms.⁴⁷ In rarer cases, artists will focus on the hardships of living in the US, especially those experienced by fellow Nigerian immigrants (e.g., marital instability, children’s entitlement, precarious employment, high cost of living).⁴⁸

Conversely, US attention in Nigerian print media is much more negative.

Togunde, Ojebode, and Vocke found that more than ¼ (26.7%) of all foreign stories focused on the US, with 30.2% of those stories portraying the country in a negative light (primarily US foreign policy failures).⁴⁹ Despite this negative attention, though, 7 in 10 Nigerians perceive the US as a “land of opportunity” and 87.6% of those surveyed said they planned to visit within the next 5 years.⁵⁰ Even 4 in 5 of those who did express a negative attitude toward American society and culture declared their intention on moving there for its purported economic prosperity and opportunity.⁵¹ This was particularly the case in the 1980s and 1990s when political upheavals and instability led to depressed wages and an elevated cost of living, fewer pathways for professional advancement, and inadequate higher education facilities.⁵² Since the overthrow of General Sani Abacha in 1998, though, the US has seen an uptick in the number of skilled and unskilled laborers seeking better economic opportunities and in students taking advantage of Nigeria’s government sponsored education abroad program.⁵³

Nigerian immigrants do, however, seem to prioritize preserving their heritage and culture more than Haitian immigrants.⁵⁴ For example, Bridget Teboh has observed that Nigerian migrants not only tend to group together in the host country along national and even ethnic grounds, they also have established networks of aid organizations which help bolster their African culture and identity.⁵⁵ They do this by fostering a sense of community and belonging reinforced by the preparation of traditional foods, speaking native languages, and holding annual or monthly meetings.⁵⁶

However, Toyin Falola and Bukola Oyeniyi have observed that ethnicity continues to supersede national identity, which has mitigated the effectiveness of these

organizations as community building institutions for Nigerian migrants in the US.⁵⁷ This is because, as Maximilian Feldner argues, Nigeria itself has not yet established a coherent national identity since independence. In fact, independence has instead meant political, economic, and social instability for Nigeria and its hundreds of distinct ethnic groups who have since had to determine how best to deal with this diversity under a single national umbrella. The single most confounding factor complicating this project is the borders established under colonialism that have disrupted (and continue to disrupt) traditional ethnic territorial boundaries.⁵⁸ Additionally, tensions and resentments have risen due to Nigeria's regionally uneven economic development. The nation's wealth, mainly predicated upon its oil reserves, is concentrated in the coastal urban centers to the country's south among the large Igbo and Yoruba populations (though other ethnic groups in the south benefit as well). Consequently, the nation's educated population is also concentrated in the urban centers to the south – roughly half of the nation's population of over 218 million people. Conversely, in the rural agrarian north, chronic poverty has led to the rise of such violent religious extremist groups as Boko Haram, and violent territorial disputes between the majority Fulani herdsman population and other ethnic groups throughout the region.

Ultimately, such political, social, cultural, and economic factors serve to reinforce and reproduce ethnic divisions in the country, with race playing little or no role whatsoever in the identity formation of the vast majority of Nigerians. Therefore, racial socialization upon arriving in the US is of the utmost importance for Nigerian migrants. One strategy they utilize, to borrow a phrase from Chinwe Ezinna Oriji, is the “ethnic shield,” which is used against the “realities of Black racialization” in America.⁵⁹ In other

words, while in America, to avoid negative associations with African Americans, Nigerians fall back on their ethnic or, more rarely, their national identity as protection against discrimination by instilling a separation between “Nigerian-ness” and Blackness,” which effectively “localizes Blackness” to just the African American (or even other non-Nigerian, Black migrants).⁶⁰ Another strategy, typically utilized by 1.5 or second generation Nigerian migrants, is to insist on their Americanness through the adherence to what are perceived as American values or behaviors. The objective being to shirk marginality altogether. Emmanuel Ngwira argues that the development of this process starts in Nigeria with the fetishization of American culture in Nigerian popular culture – mainly film and music.⁶¹ Once such a Nigerian migrant moves to the US, they commence what Ngwira calls “participating in their own othering” through the “imitation” of American culture, even participating in their exoticization.⁶²

According to Ezekiel Umo Ette, how the immigrant adjusts to their new surroundings depends upon the meaning and interpretation they ascribe to their resettlement.⁶³ The meaning and interpretation that they ascribe is predicated upon the sociocultural environments of both the country (or region) of origin and of the host country. Demographics, time of arrival, reason(s) for leaving, and religiosity all affect how the individual acculturates and adapts to their new environment.⁶⁴ Ette finds that, though the majority of Nigerian migrants are between 18 and 30 years of age, the older migrants who do make the journey generally have a harder time adjusting than do younger migrants.⁶⁵ The migration experience, however, according to Ette, is inevitably traumatic for the migrant at any age. The reason being that the quality which most

typifies the Nigerian migrant is hope, which is built and reinforced through several interlocking social and cultural mechanisms in Nigeria.⁶⁶

Flight from Nigeria to the US in the 1970s, for example, was driven by a combination of factors. First, several West African political leaders, artists, authors, and intellectuals had left their home countries in years past to take advantage of the American higher education system – Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Hastings Banda (Malawi), and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria) all attended American universities between the late-1920s and early-1940s before acquiring political leadership in their respective countries later in the century. Furthermore, after the passing of the Immigration Act in 1965, the proportion of immigrants arriving in the US from Africa, Asia, and South America rose to 80% of all migrants by 1980, compared to just 42% of the total immigrant population in 1960.⁶⁷ Fundamentally though, political turmoil following the 1966 Aguyi Ironsi-led coup against Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa and Parliament compounded with Ironsi’s assassination and the Civil War fought between the Igbo and Hausa from 1967 to 1970, as well as the 1970s recession incentivized many Nigerians – at least those privileged enough to relocate – to seek opportunities elsewhere, most settling in American and British urban centers like London, New York City, Houston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta where they took up low-wage, unskilled labor – including many doctors and other professionals. By the 1990s, tens of thousands of Nigerians had been granted permanent residency in the US.⁶⁸

The host country’s failure to meet migrant expectations, though, threw these migrant’s internal interpretive mechanisms into chaos, requiring a new narrativization of existing circumstances in the host country.⁶⁹ This “failure” can take on various examples:

educated professionals having to settle for low-wage labor, preoccupation with the wellbeing of friends and family back home, stress endured through the process of transition, diminished traditional social and familial networks, etc.⁷⁰ Furthermore, traditional sources of identity formation may no longer be available to the migrant in the host country. Ethnic categorizations and histories no longer provide any useful purpose, thus new forms of identification are required to sustain the migrant's mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing.⁷¹ In these cases, the migrant may seek out fellow Nigerians (or fellow members of their specific ethnic group) to lean on and establish familiarity and companionship.⁷² Others who may be more isolated can fall back on familiar customs for identification or turn to the past or future – finding comfort in memories or in setting goals for the future..⁷³ Most find their work or education sufficient distractions or adjustment mechanisms for coping with their new realities.⁷⁴ In any event, the migrant must contend with the circumstances of their new home as well as the expectation of those in their country of origin to retain their ethnic identity while taking advantage of every opportunity that may come their way.⁷⁵ In the end, Nigerian migrants' new/transformed identity is typically predicated upon the sociocultural context of the host country where the migrant subject is immersed and interacts with daily, as well as the country of origin whose influence is reinforced through regular contact between the migrant subject and his or her friends and family, and/or ethnic or national networks operating in the host country.⁷⁶

Migration patterns from Nigeria to the US and UK have more or less held steady since the International Monetary Fund imposed its Structural Adjustment Program in 1986. The SAP aimed to cut welfare spending, crack down on corruption, and devalue

the Naira in order for Nigeria to qualify for IMF-issued loans. Instead, what resulted was unprecedented poverty – which reached about 70% - unemployment, corruption, and austerity. The price of oil increased, and the Nigerian transportation system was overloaded. Economic strife and America’s liberalization of their immigration policy with the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 – which ended the forty-seven year race and nationality quota system established by the National Origin Act of 1924 – increased immigration from Nigeria to the US exponentially. The global economic recession in the 1970s created conditions for immigration to reemerge as a “hot-button” issue in American politics, which was reinforced by the so-called “boat people” fleeing Haiti after the death of Francois Duvalier and the takeover by his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier. In 1986, the Reagan administration signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act into law which imposed sanctions on employers of undocumented immigrants, required at least 2 years of marriage to a migrant before the migrant could receive permanent citizenship, called for tighter enforcement of the southern border with Mexico, among other restrictive measures.

Nigerian “re-Democratization” in 1999, following the death of General Abacha and interim President Abdulsalami Abubakar’s resignation and handing over of power to the democratically elected civilian President Olusegun Obasanjo, led to another emigration swell in Nigeria, due to the economic plight which followed the political instability. The previous generation of migrants who fled Nigeria for the US and UK during and after the Civil War years, coupled with the aforementioned education funding programs of the 1980s and 1990s allowed these new migrants to lean on and reinforce kinship networks to help them relocate more easily.

Uniquely, US immigration policy toward Nigeria has always emphasized education. American foundations began offering scholarships to Nigerian students to study in the US as early as the 1920s. Though migration got off to a slow start, by the end of World War II the African Scholarship Program of American Universities provoked many Nigerians to seek permission to live in the US. The 1967 Nigerian Civil War between the Hausa and Igbo further incentivized migration that by 1996 tens of thousands of Nigerians had been granted permanent residency. The Nigerian government has since begun financing the migration, settlement, and education – mostly in the much-needed medical sector – of its citizens in the US in an attempt to train the next generation of professionals and public leadership.⁷⁷ By 2010, the World Bank ranked Nigeria in the top ten emigration countries in all of Africa and was the largest recipient of remittances on the continent as well.⁷⁸

The Authors: Danticat and Adichie

Many of these patterns and proclivities are present in the fiction and lives of Edwidge Danticat and Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, particularly in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Americanah*, respectively.

Like the majority of Haitian migrants in the 1970s and early-1980s, Edwidge and the Danticat family fled Haiti for America during the transition from Francois to Jean-Claude Duvalier through chain migration. Her father migrated first in 1971 after Papa Doc' death, her mother followed in 1975, and Edwidge finally followed thereafter in 1981 at the age of 12. Haiti's urban centers, particularly the Danticat's home town, Port-au-Prince, were being overrun by a mass mobilization of rural paupers fleeing the country's barren, diseased farmlands for work in the cities. The cities' inability to handle

such a demographic shift eventually gave way to the spread of organized crime, due in large part to the lack of good jobs available. Additionally, Danticat remembers this time as a period in which Haitian folk culture was being denigrated or ignored in media and in the education system and French culture and society was highlighted “[S]o often,” Danticat claims, “what a student experienced at home was not echoed in the classroom.”⁷⁹ But for Danticat, like for many of her compatriots at this time, this learning had been ruptured not only by political dissolve, but also the absence of her parents and then again by her move from Haiti to America. The separation of families looms large in her narratives for this reason.

This time taught Danticat how trauma may function as an agent of change – a mechanism for connecting people through common experience.⁸⁰ Community, then, serves as the central binding force through which human beings may Work Through this trauma collectively. Port-au-Prince had a vibrant visual arts community which sought to communicate the shared experiences of Haitians, across class and gender lines, who were experiencing this turmoil. On the literary front, many Haitian writers and poets gained national and international recognition for their interpretations of the moment, as well as Haiti’s past. Danticat’s own stated objective for her fiction is the building of international community between Haiti and the US through an understanding of how the two countries have intersected in the past, present, and future. “I hope to inspire the readers,” she says,

to learn more about their connection to the material they’re reading. I hope to spark their interest and send them on that quest for more information. The best way to deal with stereotypes is to introduce folks to other folks from a group they know little about and perhaps misunderstand. A book is able to do that in a way that only a personal encounter can do, that even a personal encounter might not be able to do.⁸¹

She does this through her novels by foregrounding the peculiarities of Haitians and Americans and the ways in which people navigate these interstices to find understanding and a binding identity. Danticat writes her characters in such a way that as they develop and evolve they seek always to retain a connection to their past selves in their country of origin while constantly searching for their place in the receiving country. This is even reflected in Danticat's choice to write her novels and stories in English rather than French or Haitian Creole – the decision reflects the Haitian-American's dilemma of navigating their place in America while holding onto the stories (identity) of their homeland. To use Danticat's own words, “[m]aybe there's a place on the hyphen.”⁸² This “place” is found in commune with the Haitian-American's family and community, where even from one's home, wherever in America that may be, one may “learn by walking out of the house what it's like to be Haitian.”⁸³

The Adichie family had a similar experience to the Danticat's in regard to political turmoil in their homeland. Adichie refers to the Nigerian Civil War between her own ethnic group, the Igbo, and the Hausa as a moment which “changed the arc” of her family and her own childhood as having “grew up in the shadow of the Nigerian-Biafran War.”⁸⁴ In other words, though Adichie was born seven years after the war ended, it held a presence in the lives of her family and community. In her own words,

I knew that this thing [the war] had deeply divided my family...But I didn't understand it fully. My mother would often say things like, ‘Before the war, I had so, so, and so...’ And so, I wanted to understand this period of our history for myself.⁸⁵

Writing became the primary medium through which Adichie could Work Through and make sense of this period in her country's and family's history – for herself as well as for her generation of Nigerians (particularly the Igbo).⁸⁶ In fact, history plays a large role in

both Adichie's fiction and life. For her, the past is to be studied and understood in its relationship to the present so that one may move forward into the future. The same is true for her *Americanah* protagonist, Ifemelu.

Like many of her generation that contributed to the literary outpouring of Nigerian expatriates in the 2000s and 2010s, such as Sefi Atta, Helon Habila, and Chris Abani, Adichie meditated upon the theme of the persistent pull to return to Nigeria and the difficulties which offset this dream both in Nigeria and in the US. In this way, Ifemelu is not only a reflection of her author's personal experiences with migration, but an entire diaspora as well, which will be elaborated in the succeeding section of this chapter. Through Ifemelu, Adichie invokes the political, social, historical, and economic push and pull factors which affect all Nigerian migrants of a certain age. This is why Feldner writes that migrant literature demonstrates the fluidity and dynamism of identity formation – it represents the complexities and subtleties of the migratory process which set the migrant's expectations, establish contact with the host country, and determine the means and ends by which the migrant will understand themselves in their new environment.⁸⁷ This process necessarily involves, like Haitian-American migrant literature, the struggle to construct an identity within the host country which retains connection to the migrant's country of birth, yet allows them the elasticity necessary for adapting to and navigating their new environment.

Breath, Eyes, Memory: Racialization and Racial Socialization in the Haitian Migrant Novel

Though Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* focuses primarily on gender dynamics and the intergenerational trauma of sexual violence, it offers a snapshot into the intersections of African immigration (or at least Haitian immigration), racialization, and

racial socialization. Interestingly, like many Haitian immigrants of her and her character Sophie's generation, race and racism *per se* seem to matter very little relative to colorism and the struggle to retain one's ethnic/national identity. These phenomena are vital intermediaries shaping the formations of selfhood, self-relations, and relations to others. Given these circumstances, it is imperative to the study of Haitian migrant narratives to pay attention to the place of racialization and racial socialization has in character and narrative development.

Through the character of Sophie Caco,⁸⁸ a young Haitian girl living in a rural Haitian village near Port-au-Prince called Croix-des-Rosets with her aunt, Atie, Danticat explores the semi-autobiographical process of immigration and assimilation to America. Like Danticat's parents, Sophie's mother, Martine, leaves her daughter with her sister, Atie, to seek asylum and settle in New York City, because "[i]n this country, there are many good reasons for mothers to abandon their children."⁸⁹ In both Danticat's and Martine's cases, they end up in a Haitian-concentrated neighborhood in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Once Martine is able to secure permanent residency, a job, and housing, she mails a plane ticket and a message to Sophie for her to come join her in New York. Up to this point, Sophie and Martine have communicated periodically through voice recorded cassette tapes and handwritten letters sent through the mail with remittances. Sophie perceives her Aunt Atie as more of a mother figure to her than Martine, though Atie resists this notion by emphasizing her sister's rightful place as the young girl's true mother, as need be. The devastated Aunt Atie reveals the news to her niece at a village potluck – *konbit* – and proceeds subsequently to make arrangements through Haiti's illicit migration networks for Sophie's journey. They first need to seek permission from the

family elder, Granme Ife, which is granted. A week or so later, Sophie and Atie take a taxi cab to the Francois Duvalier Airport in Port-au-Prince which was attracting controversy over a recent name change of the building back to the previous Mais Gate – a reflection of the period in which Danticat absconded Haiti herself. Sophie is then passed off to an unnamed female flight attendant who sits Sophie next to a young crying boy named Jean-Claude who had just lost his father in a fire outside the chaotic airport.⁹⁰

Prior to Sophie's journey, Danticat informs the reader of Haitian life in the rural small villages of the period. The townsfolk are forced to communicate through letters and cassettes because “[a]t that time in Haiti very few people even had landlines. Most people had to go to call centers to talk to people in other countries.”⁹¹ These call centers were typically in or around city centers and cost money to operate and get to. Postage, however, also cost money, so many Haitians with relatives or friends abroad would solicit strangers at the Port-au-Prince airport to take their letters and cassettes with them to their destination.

Though education is held to be a luxury of the young, as reflected in Atie's refusal to have “a pack of children teaching me how to read,” a byproduct of the community's heavy emphasis on elder veneration, education is stressed as a means of acquiring cultural and social capital and elevating one's family honor.⁹² Martine, in fact, explicates these values as one of her first lessons for Sophie soon after her arrival in New York:

Your schooling is the only thing that will make people respect you.... You are going to work hard here...and no one is going to break your heart because you cannot read or write. You have a chance to become the kind of woman Atie and I have always wanted to be. If you make something of yourself in life, we will all succeed. You can *raise our heads*.⁹³

This reflects both the Haitian migrant's motivations for leaving their home country as well as the nature of class in Haitian society and exposes the reader to several interesting dilemmas and themes the Haitian immigrant is forced to face as a function of their migration.

One of the primary factors which shapes the experience of the migrant is community. Community is a vital lifeline for the Haitian migrant both at home in and the host country. It serves as the foundation of the migrant's identity formation at home by reinforcing cultural and social norms, building networks between fellow members of the community, and provides a structure through which an individual may model their lives. The community of Croix-des-Rosets is no different. Due to the austere, concentrated housing of the village, where each neighbor shares a yard with the others, townsfolk interact with each other on a quotidian basis and celebrate festivals and holidays together. Children huddle together in open social circles where passersby may engage and disengage with invitation. At night the boys break off in groups to play games or discuss various topics and the girls sit at the feet of their elders learning to sew. For potlucks, the men bring their offerings of various foods to the host's yard where they are cooked on an open fire before they stroll away to smoke and converse. The women mind the children and the teenagers explore their burgeoning sexuality. While the potluck tradition was formed generations ago as a means for poor farmers to help each other in clearing and planting each other's fields, after Haiti industrialized "the workers used their friendships in the factories of their grouping in the shared houses as a reason to get together, eat, and celebrate life."⁹⁴

These occasions are also times, as discussed above, when aspiring migrants may have their expectations set for their new homes in the US. The townswomen interrogate Atie on the large package containing the plane ticket for Sophie. Madame Augustine, the wife of one of the more wealthy men of Croix-des-Rosets, questions whether the ticket was for Atie and whether or not she'd tell anyone when the time came for her to leave. The Madame's questioning attracts the attention of other interlocutors to which Atie assures that it is not she whom the ticket is for. Upon learning that it is Sophie who is to be moving, conversation begins to center around her, concluding with the reassuring voice of an unnamed acquaintance telling her that "[t]his is very good news" and "is the best thing that is ever going to happen to you."⁹⁵

The breakdown in expectations set by the anonymous interlocutor that night occurs rather early on in Sophie's settling down in New York. Though the neighborhood in Flatbush is rather homogenous, Sophie learns that there are sharp divides in the community predicated on both familiar and novel notions of character that fall along class lines. Without a car of their own, Martine and Sophie are forced to utilize public transportation, which, besides her trip to the airport aboard a taxi cab, Sophie appears unfamiliar with. This is evinced by her description of the bus she and her mother ride on their way back to Martine's home where the pair "were crowded and pressed against complete strangers," a description which conveys Sophie's discomfort with the endeavor.⁹⁶ Additionally, Martine emphasizes the importance of maintaining respectable appearances and assimilation to Sophie. On the way home from the airport, Martine stops at a Haitian beauty salon to buy relaxer for her hair and skin-lightening cream for what we are to assume is her dark complexion. While at the salon, Martine urges her daughter

to take learning English quite seriously and warns her of the bullying she might receive from Americans at school for HBO (“Haitian Body Odor”) and her accent – whereas, in Sophie’s small Haitian village, migrants are expected to retain Creole in spite of their acculturation.⁹⁷ Martine imposes these standards directly upon Sophie shortly after: “When we got home, we went through my suitcase and picked out a loose-fitting, high-collared dree Tante Atie had bought me for Sunday Masses. She held it out for me to wear to dinner. ‘This is what a proper young lady should wear,’ she said.”⁹⁸

Further bolstering the connection between appearance and class is Sophie’s description of Martine’s lover, Marc – he is “a deep bronze color and very well dressed” man who lives in “a more peaceful neighborhood” than her mother’s, where “the houses had large yards and little children danced around sprinklers on the grass.”⁹⁹ The line of demarcation between the ostensibly noisy, lower class neighborhood that the salon is situated in and this new idyllic neighborhood is the elevated train which drops pebbles on Martine and Sophie as they pass underneath. But we come to realize that keeping up appearances is not the only disciplining mechanism for Haitians in America. In a conversation with Marc, Sophie is asked what she would like to do as a profession when she is older, to which she replies, “I want to do *173udaci*...be a secretary,” to which Marc responds, “There are a lot of opportunities in this country... You should reconsider, unless of course this is the passion of your life.”¹⁰⁰ While not communicated explicitly, the suggestion connotes a common expectation of migrants for their children to earn a degree, perhaps pursue a postgraduate education, but certainly to enter the professions – particularly medicine or business. Martine later echoes Marc’s sentiments more explicitly to her daughter, ““You are going to be a doctor,”” she says, and more later on, ““I wish I

could help you do one of your jobs,' I [Sophie] said. 'But I[Martine] want you to go to school. I want you to get a doctorate, or even higher than that.'"¹⁰¹

Colorism plays a minor role in Sophie's consciousness before her move to the US, though color seems to mirror the connotations of race in interesting ways. For example, she knows the town "lottery agent" (*bolet*), Chabin, by his "yellow like an amber roach" skin tone and good fortune. His albinism is interpreted to be a symbol of his closeness with the spirits and magic shapeshifting powers.¹⁰² According to Tante Atie's suspicions, albinism also connotes the ability to divine the future.

To this point in the novel, Sophie has only been indirectly exposed to racial prejudice, as it occurs among Haitians and fellow Haitian migrants when referencing African Americans, particularly women, to distance Black identity from Haitian identity. She witnesses, for example, her mother's purchase of skin-lightening cream at the Haitian salon and is later sexualized by her as chaste, "She is not going to be running around wild like those American girls,' my mother said. 'She will have a boyfriend when she is eighteen.'"¹⁰³ The two then have a discussion regarding Sophie's virginity where she is "tested" for the first time and her schooling is again emphasized. Ultimately, Martine throws Sophie out of the house because of Sophie's "failure" with the test" – the result of taking her own virginity with a pestle out of resentment for her mother's weekly "tests." Martine here and elsewhere draws upon familiar tropes regarding African American female sexuality, framing them as lascivious and indecent. It is a trope traceable to the Age of Discovery wherein European travelers misinterpreted African polygamy and women's dress for lewdness and promiscuity.¹⁰⁴ The portrait of purported African female lasciviousness gained scientific currency during the Age of

Enlightenment with the Swiss physician, botanist, and zoologist Carl Linne's racial taxonomy, published in his opus *Systema Naturae* in 1735, which classified African women as being "without shame" (*Feminis sinus pudoris*). Charles Montesquieu, the French historian and political philosopher, followed suit arguing in his 1748 *Spirit of Law* that the variation in climes across the globe led human beings to develop distinct temperaments and attitudes suitable to their environs. During the Jim Crow era this archetype lived on in the image of Jezebel, the mischievous seductress of biblical lore meant to defame free and enslaved women (typically mulattoes) who traded sexual favors for monetary compensation with their masters as part of the placage system.¹⁰⁵ The image lives on and is exported today in American popular culture through blaxploitation films and popular music.¹⁰⁶

In fact, Sophie invokes the Jezebel symbol of promiscuity explicitly while picking out Martine's funerary clothes, demonstrating her consciousness of such stereotypical archetypes relative to her own experience:

I picked out the most crimson of all my mother's clothes, a bright red, two-piece suit that she was too afraid to wear to the Pentecostal services. It was too loud a color for a burial. I knew it. She would look like a Jezebel, hot-blooded Erzulie who feared no men, but rather made them her slaves, raped them, and killed them.¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, Sophie uses the archetype with a rather ambiguous tone which seems to complicate the historically pejorative image that it has held. This, of course, can be explained by Martine's rape which haunts both the mother and daughter – the product of this traumatic experience – throughout the novel and very much dictates the fates of both.

Clear lines are drawn for Sophie, particularly in the context of sexual and romantic relationships, between Haitian and African American men and women that

reinforce her Haitian heritage and teach her to keep them at a distance. News media refers to Haitians pejoratively as “boat people,” Sophie’s attendance at the Marana (Bilingual Institution) and her residence in a Haitian neighborhood of Brooklyn keep her physically separated from other (African) Americans, and bullying from her peers cause her to become self-conscious and anxious to hide her Haitian particularities. At home, these social forces are reinforced for Sophie by the traumatized Martine who, as discussed above, urges her to maintain her virginity so as not to become like the American girls Martine is so suspicious of. But Martine does not only dissuade her daughter from being like African American women. Just as she had done with African American women, Martine portrays African American men as sex-hungry brutes looking to take advantage of her daughter at any moment – this, despite, as Sophie reveals, their calling her “a nasty West Indian to [her] face.”¹⁰⁸ It is surprising, then, that at age 18 Sophie does fall in love with her older musician next door neighbor, Joseph.

Joseph, and Sophie’s relationship to him, play as a counterweight to Sophie’s anti-African American upbringing. While she had tried to hide her Haitian Creole accent since she arrived – she “wanted to sound completely American, especially for him” – Joseph begs her to let him hear it, demonstrating to Sophie that perhaps her Haitian identity is not something to hide after all.¹⁰⁹ It’s at this point, too, that the reader catches a glimpse of Sophie’s final resolution: falling back on ethno-national essentialism to bolster her identity. During a conversation over sandwiches at Sophie and Martine’s home, Joseph presses her on what she would like to study in college and do as a profession. Being dissatisfied with Sophie’s rehearsal of Martine’s wishes for her to be a doctor – because “it’s important for us to have a doctor in the family” – Joseph questions

what it is Sophie would really like to do, to which she is left speechless.¹¹⁰ Joseph then attempts to console Sophie's spirits by reassuring her that "[i]t is okay not to have your future on a map...That way you can flow wherever life takes you."¹¹¹ To this Sophie responds, "That is not Haitian...That's very American...Being a wanderer. The very idea."¹¹² Sophie's Haitian ethno-nationally essentialized identity disallows her from identifying with the suggestion offered by an African American male elder. Joseph attempts to reinforce their racial bond by referencing their connection through African heritage. He represents the Pan-African principle of global racial unity in his persistent probing of both African American and Afro-Latin heritage through music by playing "slave songs, Negro spirituals" and travelling across the Africana world – from "Jamaica, Cuba and Brazil several times, trying to find links between the Negro spirituals and Latin island music."¹¹³ He even plays Haitian record albums for Sophie, which seems to resonate with her by keeping her in touch with her Haitian roots.

Withheld from being American through prejudice and xenophobia, unable and unwilling to sever her hereditary connection to Haiti, Sophie becomes effectively an "in between person." Upon her return to Haiti Sophie has become both physically and spiritually unrecognizable as a Haitian, though she retains her ability to speak Haitian Creole, signaling her now subjunctive ethno-national Haitian identity, one that now only her grandmother can detect.¹¹⁴ "You look very meg, bony," says Atie's good friend Louise, noticing Sophie's departure from Haitian birthing customs,

Not like women here who eat to fill a hole after their babies come out. When you were pregnant, you didn't eat corn so the baby could be yellow...? You should have eaten honey so her hair would be soft.¹¹⁵

The same happens again upon meeting a group of sugarcane farmers while strolling with Granme Ife,

‘*Bonjou*, Granme Ife,’ they chanted.
 ‘*Bonjou*, good men,’ replied my grandmother.
 ‘This here is my granddaughter, Uncle Bazie,’ my grandmother said to an old man sitting on the side of the road.
 He was slashing a machete across a thin piece of sugar cane. He took off his hat and bowed in my direction.
 ‘Whereabouts she from?’ asked the old man. ‘Here,’ answered my grandmother. ‘She’s from right here.’¹¹⁶

Then again while jogging along a road through the cemetery after a tense discussion regarding the trauma Sophie experienced from “the test,”

The next morning, I went jogging, along the road, through the cemetery plot, and into the hills. The sun had already dried some of the puddles from the drizzle the night before. Along the way, people stared at me with puzzled expressions on their faces. *Is this what happens to our girls when they leave this place?* They become such frightened creatures that they run like the wind, from nothing at all.¹¹⁷

By answering her own imagined question, Sophie demonstrates her own consciousness of the weakening ties that she has to Haiti and her former compatriots. Her engagement with an American pastime in her home country and garnering the reaction she does from her former compatriots signals Sophie’s transition from Haitian to “in between person.”

However, like in most of Danticat’s fiction, the protagonist, Sophie, does not resign herself to being spiritually homeless or embrace the role of victim. Instead, unlike her mother’s tragic conclusion, she allows herself to be transformed by her experiences in a way that does not adhere to rigid, static ethno-national identities, but flourishes in fluidity. Marion C. Rohrleitner, in her 2021 essay “Black Butterflies” has effectively argued that, rather than allowing her migration or her mother’s “testing” and death to lead to her own tragic conclusion, “Sophie turns to Haitian folklore at the end of the novel and

reimagines her mother's tragic death as a spiritual and physical transformation that liberates her."¹¹⁸ Martine's soul does not go to heaven, but to Guinea – where many Africana people of the diaspora believe is their ancestral homeland – where she is finally able to be free of pain.

With the help of Sophie's therapist, the Santeria priestess Rena, she successfully merges her cultural and spiritual home in Haiti with her newly developed habits and thought patterns in the US. While she never quite becomes an American *per se*, she cannot remain statically Haitian. Rather than Acting Out her trauma by simply succumbing to what Carine Mardorossian misunderstands as the "179udacity179e[ation of] the Black experience as an inherent aspect of the authentic and productive kind of creolization that [Edouard] Glissant highlights," she eventually eschews such essentialized ethno-national categories and notions for a truly cosmopolitan Creole identity.¹¹⁹ While she comes to understand that "the mother-and-daughter motif ... was something that was essentially Haitian," she is referring to Haiti as a cultural and spiritual home that provides its people their roots as they grow and navigate through life, not an abstract, rigid notion of an unbroken "Hatian-ity" or "Blackness."¹²⁰ Burying Martine in Haiti reconciles the trauma Sophie associates with her homeland, but the chosen family that she has built remains in America, where she inevitably returns. Sophie learns to marry these pieces of herself into a harmonious whole, where she finally understands how to respond to Granme Ife's query,

Listen. Listen before it passes. *Pawol gen pye, pawol gen zel*. The words can give wings to your feet. There is so much to say, but time has failed you... There is a place where women are buried in clothes the color of flames, where we drop coffee on the ground for those who went ahead, where the daughter is never fully a woman until her mother has passed on before her. There is always a place where, if you listen closely in the

night, you will hear your mother telling a story and the end of the tale, she will ask you this question: ‘*Ou libere?*’ Are you free, my daughter?’¹²¹

***Americanah*: Racialization and Racial Socialization in the Nigerian Migrant Novel**

Unlike her collection of short stories published in 2009 titled *That Thing Around Your Neck*, where enculturation and eschewing marginality involves the migrant subject’s conscious effort to fit in or belong in the host society, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s protagonist in *Americanah*, Ifemelu, comes to America consciously seeking to preserve her cultural heritage, beliefs, and behavioral patterns, while simultaneously seeking to take advantage of the country’s educational and economic opportunities. In fact, the novel’s twin themes of cultural confusion and homesickness are introduced explicitly through racial Encounter in the early pages of the book. Ifem is standing at a New Jersey Transit rail platform observing others and their peculiarly American idiosyncrasies as she reflects on the lessons she has learned about herself during the several years she had spent living in America – how “she had ignored, too, the cement in her soul.”¹²² This “cement” is a signifier for

an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. It brought with it amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness... Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil.¹²³

These symbolic symptoms of Major Depression and alienation from her host country are immediately bolstered by the novel’s first, rather sudden, Encounter with a “haggard and thin-lipped” man at the supermarket whom had “prodded her awake,” as it were, from a daydream – a refuge from the real world where one may escape the tribulations of life in the comfort of one’s own mind, only to be interrupted with the reminder that dreams are

fantasies in a racist country. Even the election of the first African American President of the United States is not enough to move her to stay, she is so divorced from life in America and is being “propelled” back to her origins in Nigeria – both the physical and symbolic embodiment of “the return.”

As the novel carries on, the reader is privy to the inner world of Ifemelu as she traverses her journey to America and back to Nigeria again. Like many of her migrant compatriots (including her author), Ifem embarks on this saga as a young woman seeking an American university education as her high school lover Obinze does the same in England. Throughout their journey, Ifem and Obinze struggle to find a balance between their foundational Nigerian (Igbo) identity and the creation of new selves in their respective host countries. The reader detects early on in the novel the role that pre-migration expectations and assumptions play in this process for the migrant subject. For example, Ifem leaves her hair salon interlocutors in disbelief after intimating to them her intention to move back to Nigeria, and that she was braiding her hair for the trip. Aisha, a Senegalese woman, braids Ifem’s hair and engages her in conversation regarding her ethnic heritage and duration of habitation in the US. Interestingly, through this exchange the reader witnesses a sort of alteration of migrant attitudes predicated upon class. While Ifem, who at the time is living in the wealthy Princeton, NJ, area after just finishing a fellowship at the University, seems less in touch with her ethnic heritage than do her acquaintances, whom we surmise based on Adichie’s description of the salon and neighborhood, are lower class.¹²⁴ Yet, it is Ifem who has chosen to return to her home country out of a feeling of alienation from her host country, and it is her acquaintances who marvel at her decision.

The reader learns through subtle hints in the African women's behavior in the salon that they have retained a greater connectedness to their heritage and ethnic background than has Ifem. For example, both Halima and Mariama – each from Mali – flash smiles of greeting at Ifemelu that “in its warm knowingness, said welcome to a fellow African; she would not smile at an American in the same way.”¹²⁵ The thought reflects a social pattern among Africans, of any ethnicity, to more easily connect with fellow Africans when abroad, than they do with African people of the diaspora. The pattern is scaffolded by the tendency of West Africans, as discussed above, to identify with their ethnicity or nationality rather than with their race. Such dissociation is reflected elsewhere in the novel when “black Americans” enter the consciousnesses of other characters too. For example, Obinze makes the distinction between African and Black years later while meditating on Ifemelu and what her life must be like living in America. He recalls the pet name Ifem had for him back at university – “Ceiling” – and the confusion it caused for their friends, yet the elation it provoked in them for the sexually charged humor they would engage in with each other. However, an intrusive thought interrupts what otherwise is a fond memory of his former lover, and he asks himself, “Did she see the ceiling when the black American touched her?”¹²⁶ His use of “black” rather than “African” to preface Ifemelu's lover's ethnic identity serves to reinforce the distance which Obinze feels between his own identity and those of African diasporic people living in the US. He and they do not share an experience in common, they are functionally the Other to him.

These are by no means the most pernicious examples of the African to African American disconnect throughout the novel, nor is the relationship exclusive to Africans

and African Americans. For instance, Ifemelu meets a couple from Grenada, Jane and Marlon, through one of her cousin Dike's playdates. Ifem's Aunty Uju assures her niece that "[t]hey are like us; he has a good job and he has ambition and they spank their children."¹²⁷ The tenor of Uju's comment implies that "us" is a first-person plural for Africana people from outside the US whom, apparently, do things like childrearing and work the "proper" way, as opposed to the Black Other who putatively have degenerate priorities. Jane then endorses Aunty Uju's attitude with derogatory comments of her own:

'You know, this is my tenth year here and I feel as if I'm still settling in,' Jane said. 'The hardest thing is raising my kids. Look at Elizabeth, we have to be very careful with her. If you are not careful in this country, your children become what you don't know. It's different back home because you can control them. Here, no...Nine and already trying to be a drama queen. We pay good money for her to go to private school because the public schools here are useless. Marlon says we'll move to the suburbs soon so they can go to better schools. Otherwise she will start behaving like these black Americans.'¹²⁸

Jane reveals a dual worry shared by Ifem and her family – not only does being in America have a seemingly inherent propensity for "subduing" immigrants, that is, imposing assimilation regardless of the migrant subject's degree of resistance, but that some migrants will go through great lengths to ensure that "we" do not turn into "them," that is, African Americans.

Similarly, across the Atlantic in London, Obinze learns of his compatriots' reticent attitudes towards Jamaicans. While discussing life in London with fellow Nigerian expatriates the subject of love affairs and marriage comes up, at which point one interlocutor, Bose, intimates that "London is a leveler," and "[w]e are now all in London and we are now all the same, what nonsense."¹²⁹ By this he means that, regardless of one's true heritage, Londoners have a way of flattening Africana national and ethnic

identities to a single unitary monolith – Black. Both individuality and ethno-national particularity are absorbed, and the subject is transformed into a representative of an amorphous “Blackness” whether or not – usually not – they accept it. This phenomenon is coupled with a set of learned behaviors or codes which the now amorphous migrant subject must adopt in order to communicate with fellow “Blacks,” of their ethnicity or nationality or not, in order to get by. Ifemelu, for example, discusses the “black nod” in one of her blog excerpts. The “black nod” is a signal African Americans use, typically in “heavily white area[s],” to establish camaraderie within a potentially hostile space. In a sense, the “black nod” constitutes its own Encounter for Ifemelu in that by receiving the cue, she learns not only has white American society subsumed her ethnic identity and migrant status under the amorphous, thoroughly American concept of “Blackness” but so have African Americans. As Ifem writes, “Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care.”¹³⁰ “America,” here, of course, referring both to white *and* Black Americans. Ifem confirms this later in the novel during a tendentious discussion with dinner guests in Manhattan on the eve of President Barack Obama’s nomination as the Democratic Party’s presidential candidate. The unnamed woman posits that “Obama will end racism in this country,” with another, a Haitian immigrant, suggests that “race was never an issue” between her and a white lover in California. Ifem replies,

That’s a lie... The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it’s a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America.¹³¹

Another of Obinze's interlocutors named Amara chimes in on the conversation stating,

'Maybe he [unnamed lover of Chika, another acquaintance] should go find a Jamaican woman... These West Indian women are taking our men and our men are stupid enough to follow them. Next thing, they will have a baby and they don't want the men to marry them o, they just want child support. All they do is spend their money doing their hair and nails.'¹³²

Here we witness the application of the mythic Jezebel or "Black Bitch" archetype to "these West Indian women" by Nigerian immigrants rather than to African Americans by Euro-Americans. There are at least two possible interlocking explanations for this attitude: the persistent theme of modesty as a central moral value, and proximity to Americanness/Britishness as a social value.

Modesty is a central value for Nigerians throughout the novel. However, interestingly this is always in the American context, whether to denigrate African Americans or to describe other migrants who are perceived to have become "Americanah."¹³³ Back in the African salon, for example, after Halima finishes up a young customer's braids, Mariama comments on the girl's supposedly sexually permissive character. "Very small girl and already she has two children," to which Halima responds, "Oh oh oh, these people... When a girl is thirteen already she knows all the positions. Never in Afrique!" The exchange is shortly followed by an internal monologue where Ifem ruminates on Mariama and Halima's expectation that she should join in their derision of this young girl. She assumes, with reason, that the pair would speak on her silence after she had left the salon and conclude that "she was still their African sister, even if she had briefly lost her way." "Her way," here, obviously meant to suggest Ifem's Africanity and her "African values" being "lost" in her adaptation to

American culture.¹³⁴ The premise of the exchange being that it is an African migrant's duty to retain their traditional values despite living abroad at all costs. The theme reemerges later during Ifem's first meeting with Bartholomew, Aunty Uju's new boyfriend. She observes that Bartholomew seems to lean on performative American gestures and behaviors to compensate for his shortcomings. Yet, he seems also to attempt to demonstrate his Nigerian-ness¹³⁵ in what Ifem calls "his false, overheated moralities."¹³⁶ This is the type of man, she explains, that people from his rural community back in Nigeria would call "lost" – an "Americanah."¹³⁷ Ifem levies a similar critique toward another migrant who attempts to perform Nigerian-ness to affirm their Nigerian identity to other Nigerian migrants. Ginika, Ifem's old friend living in Philadelphia, slips into outdated "Nigerian English" after picking Ifem up from the bus station which Ifem interprets as having "lapsed into Nigerian English, a dated, overcooked version, eager to prove how unchangeable she was."¹³⁸

The other factor contributing to Nigerians' disconnect from other diasporic Africana peoples in the US is the social value placed on one's proximity to what can be called Americanness or Britishness – at least by the Nigerian middle-class and elite. The two clearest examples of this occur during a dinner party at the fabulously wealthy "Chief's" house and Ifem's first meeting with the African Student Association (ASA).

At the dinner party we learn that Obinze's wife Kosi revels in "the pleasure she took in being mistaken for mixed-race."¹³⁹ While this certainly signals Kosi's absorption of coloristic aesthetics, it also represents the social value placed on one's proximity to Americanness or Britishness in Nigerian high society. This becomes clear as the reader observes Kosi's demeanor at the dinner party and the attention she receives from the

other guests. The reader is told that Kosi proceeds to “hugging men and women she barely knew, basking in the attention her face drew but flattening her personality so that her beauty did not threaten,” as one female guest asks Kosi, rhetorically, “How can one person have this kind of perfect skin?”¹⁴⁰ The perfection-beauty association with Americanness and Britishness comes into stark relief as Kosi engages Mrs. Akin-Cole, a “famously old woman from a famously old family” who inquires as to whether Kosi and Obinze’s children have started school yet. Mrs. Akin-Cole insists that the children must be sent to the “French school,” where “it can only be good for the child to learn another civilized language, since she already learns English at home.”¹⁴¹ Another woman, who had become wealthy under the despotic Abacha regime, chimes in with her own recommendation of Sidcot Hall where “[t]hey teach the complete British curriculum.”¹⁴² When Obinze suggests that they had all gone “to primary schools that taught the Nigerian curriculum,” he receives “puzzled expressions” which “implied that he could not possibly be serious, and Mrs. Akin-Cole responds “[i]f you decide to disadvantage your child by sending her to one of these schools with half-baked Nigerian teachers, then you only have yourself to blame.”¹⁴³ Leaving the “Nigerian curriculum” and the “British curriculum” ambiguous emphasizes the degree to which the superiority of the latter to the former is taken simply as a matter of fact truism in need of no further elaboration.¹⁴⁴

The ASA’s role in Ifem’s development diverges slightly from this value structure. While the organization certainly emphasizes the retention of Nigerian values, behaviors, traditions, etc. it simultaneously urges its members to interact with and befriend African Americans. The organization itself is a hodgepodge of various African nationals, including Ugandans, Nigerians, Zimbabweans, a Congolese, and a Guinean. They sit in a

semi-circle in a small room eating pizza from paper plates as “[t]hey mimicked what Americans told them.”¹⁴⁵ That is, they commented on each other’s English prowess, questioned the degree to which AIDS had spread in each other’s respective countries, and shared “stories of absurdity, of stupidity, and they felt safe to mock, because it was mockery born of longing, and for the heartbroken desire to see a place made whole again.”¹⁴⁶ It is in this context that, yes, anti-African attitudes may be reinforced – or at the very least expressed among friends – but it is also a place where Ifem, for the first time since coming to America, “felt a gentle, swaying sense of renewal. Here, she did not have to explain herself.”¹⁴⁷ Each new member receives the “welcome talk,” where the member is given important information for how to conduct oneself in American society. Drops of knowledge like, “You are now in America: do not expect to have hot food for lunch. That African taste must be abolished,” and “do not be shocked by the indiscriminate touching of American couples...but please do not imitate this behavior.”¹⁴⁸ The lesson taught by the ASA seek to strike a balance between preparing the African migrant for life in America while remaining respectful to the cultural background of each member. But central to the organizations mission was the spirit of “pan-Africanism.” Members are encouraged to befriend African Americans and to maintain relationships with fellow Africans, “as this will help you keep your perspective.”¹⁴⁹ The mission to befriend African Americans is not romanticized though. The ASA warns that there are some whom will insult ASA members for being African – that their pan-African vision may not be shared by these individuals and to be weary of such interactions. The ASA also conceptualizes the migration experience as a traumatic one, through which ASA members may find it easier to connect with “other

internationals” and that this “is a good place to start a friendship,” therefore encouraging not only the adoption of a pan-African orientation but a broader, more cosmopolitan one connecting migrants from all over the world together through the shared experience of what it means to be an immigrant in America.¹⁵⁰

It is in large part thanks to the ASA that Ifem is able to finally realize the vacuity of mimicry and the tragedy of losing (rejecting) one’s roots in order to contort oneself into the manufactured image of what an American is supposed to be. She realizes this through an Encounter with “a telemarketer, a young, male American,” who commends her for sounding “totally American” on the phone.¹⁵¹ Her thanks triggers an internal conundrum “of a burgeoning shame spreading all over her...for crafting his words ‘You sound American’ into a garland that she hung around her own neck.”¹⁵² She realizes for the first time that her American performance has detached her from being her true self and “resolves to stop faking the American accent.”¹⁵³ Her determination to rid herself of her American proclivities is compounded by her balding from relaxer overuse. Wambui, a member of the ASA, suggests that she revert back to keeping her hair natural or in braids, calling hair relaxer “like being in prison,” that is, to keep her hair relaxed, Ifem must restrict her habits and activities and pay particular attention that she not mismanage the expensive product. In a sense, her hair becomes, in this moment, a substitute for her own battle with identity. Ifem is “always battling [her] hair to do what it wasn’t meant to do,” just as her behavior had been delicately managed and contorted to suit something that she never really was.¹⁵⁴

Wambui cutting Ifem’s hair functions as an act of Working Through – though her new short hairstyle triggers immediate feelings of regret, Wambui ensures her of her

beauty, that she is “just not used to seeing [herself] like this.”¹⁵⁵ While she feels “unfinished,” like “[s]he was all big eyes and big head,” she does not consider in that moment that this symbolic gesture of de-Americanization is another step in Ifem Working Through her trauma(s) and actualizing a more complete self in the process.

Obinze has his own reckoning with his identity in conversation with Phillip, an acquaintance of an old Nigerian friend named Emenike he meets at another dinner party. Obinze expresses his lifelong love of America, “from afar,” as he puts it. He explains how he’s observed that “English people are in awe of America but also deeply resent it.” Emenike’s response, “But the Americans love us Brits,” triggers Obinze’s critical gaze for the rest of the conversation, thinking all along of how what has happened to his friend may reflect on himself. It’s the first extended criticism that America and American culture receives in the whole novel. First, the ensemble discuss the rather churlish attitude they have found Americans to have “approaching foreignness” and “the garishness of the nationalism” there.¹⁵⁶ Another expresses fear at the prospect of having an opinion of America, in America, that is anything but an expression of love towards it.¹⁵⁷ A man named Mark offers his own take on the country, claiming that he “found America quite jingoistic.”¹⁵⁸ The conversation then abruptly centers on race relations, for which Emenike is turned to for his experience in Philadelphia – “It seemed to me that in America blacks and whites work together but don’t play together, and here blacks and whites play together but don’t work together.”¹⁵⁹ Emenike’s explanation receives a bit of prodding from Mark, at which point Obinze speaks up:

I think class in this country is in the air that people breathe. Everyone knows their place. Even the people who are angry about class have somehow accepted their place...A white boy and a black girl who grow up in the same working-class town in this country can get together and race

will be secondary, but in America, even if the white boy and black girl grow up in the same neighborhood, race would be primary.¹⁶⁰

Emenike is then urged by his wife, Georgina, to tell the group of an experience he had had with a cabbie in London, one that Obinze had heard before but “he was struck now by how differently Emenike told it.”¹⁶¹ Left out was Emenike’s trembling rage he had felt towards the cab driver, and in its place he was now “sipping the last of his red wine, flowers floating in front of him, he spoke in a tone cleansed of anger, thick only with a kind of superior amusement.”¹⁶²

The conversation then returns to immigration policy and refugees, at which point Obinze begins to feel “alienation run through him like a shiver.”¹⁶³ He realizes that while the other guests could understand fleeing debilitating poverty and war, what they could not comprehend was “the need to escape from the oppressive lethargy of choicelenssness.”¹⁶⁴ He had not grown up hungry. He had gone to school and grown up in one of Nigeria’s largest cities – Nsukka. Yet he had been brought up with the understanding that opportunity was elsewhere. That if he expected to make anything of himself it would have to be in that elsewhere. It’s an experience many Nigerian immigrants feel as they flee their home country for the US or England. As a result, Obinze is left as Ifem had been after her series of Encounters: between the homeland he had left and a host he now felt detached from.

As the years pass, Ifem continues to pursue methods of Working Through her experiences by starting a popular blog and speaking at corporations and universities on the importance of diversity. The latter comes to naught, though, after she realizes that her audiences are not interested in the content of what she has to say, “they merely wanted the gesture of her presence,” to feel good about themselves for having attended such an

event.¹⁶⁵ In the meantime, she becomes a homeowner now living in the Roland Park neighborhood of Baltimore. She reconnects with an old lover named Blaine in Washington, DC, and experiences what could have been yet another Encounter for her, if her orientation and perspective towards the world and herself had not so radically been transformed years earlier. Standing in line at the grocery store, an elderly white woman in line behind Ifem and Blaine commented on how beautiful Ifem's natural hair was and if she could touch it. To Blaine's chagrin, Ifem complies, at which point Blaine simmers in the audacity of what he had just witnessed. From Blaine's perspective, Ifem had just been this woman's "guinea pig" for learning what Black hair felt like. For Ifem, it was an opportunity to connect with another human being by teaching her something about herself. Emphasizing the division that now existed between Blaine, an African American male professor, and Ifem, an African migrant female blogger and public speaker, Adichie states, "He expected her to feel what she did not know to feel. There were things that existed for him that she could not penetrate."¹⁶⁶ Ifem has at this point reconciled that, while she may share certain experiences with her African American compatriots, her Africanity served as a persistent barrier between them, and it does not seem to be breakable.

Smaller occurrences happen throughout the final third of the novel that serve to emphasize Ifem's journey towards self-actualization – her recovery from a long period of Encounters that had once left her confused and vulnerable, but were now manageable from her centered position of emerging self-knowledge and confidence. Adichie reveals that Ifem no longer subjects herself to the discomfort of public performance she had tolerated, reluctantly, in the past. At a surprise birthday party for one of Blaine's friends,

Marcia, she does not pretend to enjoy the “soul food” being served at dinner, she preferred the boiled yams and rice jollof that reminded her of her childhood. This resilience is also demonstrated in her reticence in placating African American women when they assume that a belief or an experience is shared between them. For example, when Ifem meets Blaine’s sister Shan for the first time, she reluctantly disagrees with her in regard to interracial relationships. After ruminating on the difference between white men in Europe and in America, Shan assures her audience that “I don’t want to date them, hell no, I just want to know the possibility is there.”¹⁶⁷ She follows this by stating, “[o]f course, there’s the niche of white men in this country who will only date black women, but that’s a kind of fetish and it’s nasty.”¹⁶⁸ All the while, Ifem observes that Blaine’s demeanor towards his sister as she speaks is far more deferential than would otherwise be the case, which presumedly leads her to share that “[a]ctually my experience has been the opposite. I get a lot more interest from white men than from African-American men.”¹⁶⁹ Shan responds by positing that it must be Ifem’s “exotic credential, the whole Authentic African thing,” which leaves Ifem “stung” by her “dismissal,” especially since Blaine had failed to disagree with his sister, as she expected him to do.¹⁷⁰

Ifem’s growing disconnect from America is almost complete. She intimates briefly to Blaine that the two of them do not share a common experience. In fact, she suggests to him that he has more in common with Paula, Blaine’s white ex-girlfriend, than he does to her. “The fried chicken you eat is not the fried chicken I eat, but it’s the fried chicken that Paula eats,” says Ifem, “For you and Puala, fried chicken is battered. For me, fried chicken has no batter. I just thought about how you both have a lot in common.”¹⁷¹ Ifem suggests here what she has come to learn about Americans, white and

Black, as Obinze has begun to understand, is that they share in common a certain understanding, of themselves and each other, that is not reflected in how Ifem or Obinze, as Nigerian migrants, perceive themselves or the world around them. While they may experience similar experiences, their interpretations will inevitably be quite different due to their recent sojourn to the country that people like Blaine and Paula have been traversing for centuries. This revelation serves as the climax for Ifem in realizing herself as a sort of “in-between person,” much like how Sophie Caco and many other African migrants come to perceive themselves, a point which Shan explicates later to Blaine and Ifem while discussing Ifem’s blog:

You know why Ifemelu can write that blog, by the way...? Because she’s African. She’s writing from the outside. She doesn’t really feel all the stuff she’s writing about. It’s all quaint and curious to her... If she were African American, she’d just be labeled and shunned.¹⁷²

Ifem and Blaine end their relationship, more or less, over the issue raised in the exchange with Shan – the two simply could not connect with each other any longer, and in the end “he became a stranger to her.”¹⁷³ After another exchange of disconnect over a speech given by then Presidential candidate, Barack Obama, Blaine and Ifem are effectively split. Ifem’s cousin Dike attempts suicide due to a crisis of identity similar to the one she had been dealing with throughout her stay in America. Except, for Dike, he had nothing to fall back on. Earlier in the novel we are informed that Dike feels othered by other children at camp – he was refused sunscreen by a “group leader” because she believed that he did not need on account of his dark skin. He states, “I just want to be regular.” Ifem confronts Aunty Uju because she “told him what he wasn’t but [she] didn’t tell him what he was,” that is, Nigerian (Igbo).¹⁷⁴ The incident is a reflection of Ifem’s

own journey Working Through her identity crisis which she was able to navigate successfully by utilizing her Nigerian-ness.

Ifem returns to Nigeria for good and initially experiences a bit of culture shock: “At first, Lagos assaulted her; the sun-dazed haste, the yellow buses full of squashed limbs, the sweating hawkers racing after cars, the advertisements on hulking billboards...and the heaps of rubbish that rose on the roadsides like a taunt.”¹⁷⁵ Ifem experiences a renewed sense of confusion over the “strange familiar” of Lagos she had left years ago. She is picked up by her old friend, Ranyinudo, who refers to her as “Americanah,” though reassuring her that she is “not even a real Americanah,” for “[a]t least if you had an American accent we would tolerate your complaining.”¹⁷⁶ Ifem later feels discomfort with her new borne status derived from her time in America, though she does eventually find comfort in connecting with fellow “returnees.”¹⁷⁷ Though, despite this, Ifem falls deeper into this sense of unbelonging, now in her home country. “She was comfortable here,” explains Adichie, “and she wished she were not.”¹⁷⁸ She finds herself longing for the things she had become used to in America. Her feelings of disconnect are compounded by guilt, and these emotions cause her to Act Out by arguing needlessly with other “returnees” over trivial matters, like the place of Nollywood in Nigerian culture.¹⁷⁹

Ifem resolves to Work Through her alienation as she had back in the US: she is hired to write a column for a Nigerian tabloid called *Zoe*, which she later leverages to start a blog discussing various cultural and social issues around Lagos and Nigeria more broadly. This decision allows her to come into direct contact with many Nigerians as she interviews them for their perspectives on the direction of Nigeria, the experience of

emigres and “returnees,” and the current state of Lagos in the second decade of the 21st century.

Ifem reconnects with Obinze, now living in Lagos with his wife, Kosi, and children and is now quite wealthy. The two meet over coffee one afternoon (after much back and forth) and eventually rekindle their romance. They discuss various subjects, but Obinze points out the centerpiece of both his own and Ifem’s self-renewal:

When I started in real estate, I considered renovating old houses instead of tearing them down, but it didn’t make sense. Nigerians don’t buy houses because they’re old. A renovated two-hundred-year-old mill granary, you know, the kind of thing Europeans like. It doesn’t work here at all. But of course it makes sense because we are Third Worlders and Third Worlders are forward-looking, we like things to be new, because our best is still ahead, while in the West their best is already past and so they have to make a fetish of the past.¹⁸⁰

In the West, even they could only look backward. Ifem and Obinze had to return home discover the future.

CONCLUSION

NOTES FOR A COMPARATIVE BLACK LITERATURE PEDAGOGY

This final chapter will focus on the pedagogical utility of applying the racial Encounter to the instruction and study of Africana literature through a comparative lens (i.e., in the context of Comparative Black Literature). The objective here is not to elaborate a complete pedagogical theory – which would require far greater space than is available at this stage – but to explain how implementing such analyses in the teaching and studying of Africana literature can intellectually, socially, and emotionally benefit students in regard to racialization and racial socialization. In the interest of clarity and organization, several pedagogical proposals, followed by a series of premises upon which these proposals rest are enlisted below. A brief elaboration of each proposal, all of which center upon the importance and application of a Comparative Black Literature pedagogy that pays attention to racialization and racial socialization processes, vis-à-vis racial Encounters, will follow subsequently to conclude this dissertation.

- Identity, specifically racial identity, is not a forgone conclusion, but a dynamic, emergent process predicated upon the circumstances surrounding an individual subject or group of individual subjects, and the response(s) which the individual subject or group of individual subjects has toward and within those circumstances, in commune with other similarly situated individual subjects or groups of individual subjects.
- A positive, productive (racial) identity is one which emerges and develops through social interaction between individual subjects and groups of individual subjects, where participants engage as agents and equals in a dialogic pursuit of

knowledge – of self and the world – to generate future high quality experiences and social and intellectual development.

- Studying and teaching literature functions as a conduit for exploring the social, political, and cultural contexts from which identities emerge and actual or potential identity crises may be Worked Through to produce positive and productive (racial) identities in the interest of fostering cohesive social relations between similarly situated subjects or groups of subjects in the classroom and society at large.
- Studying and teaching Africana literature comparatively allows the student and teacher to engage with a plurality of global perspectives concerning similar circumstances and experiences to understand how other subjects or groups of subjects across the Africana world have addressed such problems and what the outcomes were through the approachable, creative medium of literary narrative.

In order for these proposals to be justified, certain premises must be accepted:

- If one accepts race as a social reality with political and economic implications, contingent upon and reflexive of the cultural, political, economic, and social contexts of a given space and time frame, and not as an objective biological reality, it stands to reason that an individual subject must “become” raced (racialization) and learn what being a raced subject means (racial socialization) in the context of the subject’s social space and what social skills and conventions he or she must adopt as a function of this reality.
- The manner in which the raced subject is conditioned to function within these contexts (racial socialization), wherein predictable or spontaneous occasions

occur that reinforce or alter the subject's understanding of himself or herself as "raced" (racial Encounters), will produce particular attitudes and behavior patterns (social and emotional skills; behavior patterns) which may be beneficial or detrimental to the subject's psychological development and life chances.

- Accepting the possibility that such racial Encounters may be, and often are traumatic experiences for the individual subject or group of individual subjects who experience them, a vital aspect of any pedagogical framework, specifically in regard to the development of certain social and emotional skills that may protect or even empower learning subjects at risk of traumatic Encounters, is the inclusion of these Encounters in school curricula so that they may be preemptively or actively Worked Through in the controlled environment of the classroom among peers.
- Being the principal apparatus for adapting a society's subjects to its beliefs, customs, traditions, attitudes, manners, expectations, aspirations – in a word, its social life – the school is tasked with preparing the young learning subject for participation in the society in a way which instills a positive self-image; fosters attitudes and manners which facilitate productive interaction between participating subjects; and adapts to meet the evolving social life of the society in the interest of reproducing those needs, ideals, and aspirations forward through successive generations of learning subjects.
- Understanding that literature, as an artform, reflects either actual, lived reality, or an otherwise imagined reality, it may then be utilized as a model or counter-model of social interactions, the consequences of such social interactions under a given

set of circumstances and situations for individual subjects or groups of individual subjects, and certain attitudes and/or behaviors which develop in the individual subject or group of individual subjects in response to these experiences for students so that they may preemptively or actively Work Through these experiences within the controlled environment of the classroom.

In 1904, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that the role of the school is “for transmitting the social heritage of men,” by which he meant the totality of human experience and development, combined with the reformation of the social conditions of the community to create optimal conditions for intellectual and social growth.¹ Several decades later, John Dewey, in the supplement to his seminal text *Democracy and Education*, echoed and expanded Du Bois’ sentiments by arguing in his theory of *Experience and Education*, that, in order for experience to be truly educative and conducive to intellectual and social growth, it must arouse curiosity, strengthen initiative, establish desires and purposes.² This, he argued, could only be done in a context which fosters the students’ capacity to associate with one another from a position of equality and freedom, in the creation of “wise citizens of a free community.”³ To this must be added that the student, or learning subject, must participate in the learning environment from a position of agency, centered in his or her own lived experience and perspective.⁴ Vital to such an enterprise is the educator’s appreciation for their students’ experiences, perspectives, and identities.

But one’s identity, like Dewey’s “experience,” does not develop in a vacuum. Like the literature under investigation, the learning subject must be properly situated in his or her cultural, historical, and social context in order for the educator to do their job effectively – Gloria Ladson-Billings referred to this process as “digging knowledge out”

of the student in her text, *The Dreamkeepers*.⁵ As part of this “excavation,” the educator realizes that his or her students come to class with pre-existing knowledge that they have received through past experience with peers, family members, and surroundings that the educator may utilize as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. As the students evolve as learning subjects, so too must the educator adapt his or her classroom to the evolving needs and experiences of his or her students (both existing and incoming).⁶

Taken further, bell hooks argued in *Teaching Critical Thinking*, as part of her theory of “Engaged Pedagogy,” that it is the educator’s job to take the experiences and circumstances that surround their students and are outside of their students’ control, and to demystify the choices that are available to them given these circumstances.⁷ By doing so, the educator acknowledges Dewey’s precept that, “[e]very genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had.”⁸ In other words, the role of the educator is to create an interactive space where learning subjects form “habits” which form their emotional and intellectual attitudes, and influence and create individual sensitivities and ways the learners respond to phenomena.⁹ To quote Dewey once more, the educator “should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them [learning subjects] all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worth while.”¹⁰

In this interest, literature serves as an indispensable tool for communicating abstract notions and concepts by presenting existing or potential circumstances which may be dealt with either from a distance or, if the learning subject is familiar with the narrative’s circumstances already, as a medium for Working Through the experience(s) in a

controlled environment in commune with peers. Additionally, literature provides a medium through which the educator and student may practice what Paulo Freire referred to as “Authentic Reflection” – historicizing individual subjects and considering them in relation to the world, which, Freire argued, would inevitably turn in on the learning subject himself or herself and their own place in the world in which they find themselves.¹¹ In so doing, the learning subject will cease to perceive their experiences as disconnected and their surroundings as static and realize, instead that they are “a reality in process.”¹² The narrative, then, to borrow another phrase from Dewey, falls “within the scope of ordinary life-experience.”¹³ The very existence of the narrative demonstrates to the learning subject that their experience does not exist in isolation, detached from the broader context of historical experience, but is a moment within the historical process of change.¹⁴

Dialog, as hooks and Freire remind us, is an essential component of this process, as it allows for active reflection and may lead to action in a partnership in creating and re-creating the world around them while simultaneously engaging in generative “rigorous self-critique.”¹⁵ In the learning subject’s process of Working Through their (potential) experiences, they are able not only to see themselves and the choices available to them in the narratives of the literature, but may have their dispositions, perspectives, and interpretations challenged or reinforced through egalitarian interactions with their peers and instructor. In this way we may recall Christel Temple’s call for utilizing Comparative Black Literature as a mechanism through which social, political, and cultural phenomena – such as the racial “Encounter” – may be explored “in order to draw conclusions and to

apply knowledge for social, political, psychological, and community-based problem solving.”¹⁶

The comparative study of Africana literature and its insights for the creation of identity in terms of racialization and racial socialization, vis-à-vis the experiences and narrative arcs of Africana characters, inherently centers the Africana student and his or her (potential) narrative within the intellectual enterprise. The literature itself functions as an Africana cultural reference point of departure for the learning subject to Work Through their own experiences – real or imagined – and expands the learning subject’s frame of reference for dealing with phenomena in the world in critical, egalitarian dialog with similarly situated peers.

The preceding chapters provided examples for how such analyses may be carried out in the examination of Africana texts from around the Atlantic world – three from the US, one from Haiti, one from Jamaica, and another from Nigeria. These examples further demonstrated the necessity of situating these narratives within cultural, historical, and social context for fully comprehending the consequences at stake, the conditions under which racial Encounters occur, the choices available for Working Through or Acting Out these experiences in one’s own life or the lives of others, the benefits and consequences of these choices, and, perhaps most importantly, showed how these traumatic experiences are central to the identity formation not only of African Americans, but to the identity formation of Africana people across the world and through time. The analyses discussed here, of course, are not exhaustive. But they provide a framework for how racialization and racial socialization, through the lenses of class, sexual orientation, gender, and migration status, facilitated through the concept of racial Encounter, may be carried out

in future projects. And this Conclusion makes the case for how such analyses provide value to the classroom in the study and teaching of Africana literature as well.

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APPENDIX A: A HISTORY OF RACE IN HAITI

The Racial Concept in Pre-Revolution Haiti

Like elsewhere in the Atlantic world (see, for example, the discussion of the concept of race in Jamaica in chapter 2), throughout the era of enslavement in Haiti, one's race directly influenced one's job prospects and opportunities for social mobility. While the small population of free Black people in pre-revolutionary St. Domingue controlled something like 1/3 of the island's wealth – the only “significant” population of free Black planters to have ever existed in the Caribbean, according to Herbert Klein – despite St. Domingue's notoriously cruel system of enslavement and “seasoning” at this time, the vast majority of enslaved and dark-skinned freemen stood firmly at the bottom of the racial hierarchy of St. Domingue society.¹ This is because, according to historian, John Garrigus, “St.-Domingue's colonists did not universally apply this ‘one-drop rule’ in St.-Domingue, especially before the 1760s,” nor did they hold a universally consistent concept of race throughout the colonial period, nor was the concept consistent among French colonists from colony to colony.²

While, prior to the 1760s, exceedingly prosperous planters of mixed-race ancestry could elevate their social standing in St. Domingue based on wealth accumulation, as was and remained the case in French colonial Guadeloupe and Martinique, mixed-race ancestry, regardless of personal wealth, became a more rigid barrier to social mobility by the second half of the 18th century. 1763, the end of the Seven Years' War among Europe's major powers that led to a French defeat and reorientation of global dominance toward Britain, marked a period of drastic imperial restructuring of the French, Spanish, and British empires. In tandem with significant economic predicaments from the war

effort, France lost all their colonial holdings in the western hemisphere, save for their sugar plantations on the small islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, and Goree, and fishing rights off the coast of Newfoundland. As a result, Garrigus argues, French colonists on St. Domingue sought to signal their allegiance and identification with the French motherland using race as a politically and culturally binding force in the service of arguing for a more “liberalized” relationship between the colony and its parent country.³ What resulted was a reformed social order which alienated wealthy mixed-race planters from St. Domingue social life – now considered moral and physical “degenerates.”⁴

St. Domingue’s growing sugar economy further motivated these racist attitudes to permeate the colonial elite, and the growing wealth of the small free mixed-race population of the island served to instigate resentments among the white colonial poor and working class.⁵ This did not, however, diminish the wealth controlled by these mixed-race freemen – wealth that allowed them, post-Haitian Revolution, to procure political and economic power over a rebuilding Haiti of the 19th century. These elites projected themselves as the leaders of the revolution in the histories they began to write in the 1840s.⁶ These same elites reneged on their promises to institute democracy on the island and were accused of promoting their own class interests. It would not be until the early-20th century that a new narrative of the Revolution would prevail, emphasizing the role of ex-slaves and the leadership of Toussaint l’Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines in Haiti’s triumph over the European powers. C.L.R. James, the famous anti-colonial activist and historian from Trinidad, added his own class analysis to the mix with the

publication of *Black Jacobins* in 1938 which thenceforth controlled the narrative surrounding the Revolution for decades.

The regional split between the darker, multi-ethnic northern regions and the elite, self-consciously “creole” southern regions connotes the historic class and racial distinctions present on the island since the early-18th century. On the latter frontier, race merged with social class to manifest discrete racial categories that drifted away from the ancestral basis of race that existed in the urban centers of the North. By 1785, according to Garrigus, race had supplanted class as the primary catalyst of the social hierarchy on St. Domingue. To quote Garrigus directly: “Even poor whites were now addressed as ‘Sieur,’ by virtue of their race.”⁷ Reference to Black men – with or without wealth – by the French augmentative “Sieur” in official documents and court records was either ceased or erased altogether. Non-whites were explicitly prohibited from employment in colonial courts and all free people of color were to be excluded from meeting places and other formal institutions of colonial, political, or commercial significance. In fact, by 1773, free black men and women were prohibited from even having “white names” and were given just a few months to go through the name change process and acquire a putatively “African” surname, a name related to their trade, or any other name not associated with the surname of any white colonial family – the purpose being, given the extensive disparity between male and female colonists on the island, to sever any family ties, of which there were plenty by the late-18th century, that may exist between Black and white folks on the island.

Additionally, French colonists adopted use of the term “Afranchis” for free people of color – the term itself literally meaning “ex-slave” or “emancipated person.”⁸

The pejorative use of the term was certainly meant to convey a sense of otherness against free people of color living in St. Domingue. By attaching individuals' ancestry – inherently and irrevocably – to enslavement, the aggressor performed a rhetorical trick in everyday experience which diminished the status and value of all free Black people, regardless of their individual or familial socioeconomic background, to that of a former slave. Furthermore, in an attempt to drive a fissure further between whites and free Blacks, colonial administrators began advocating for free people of color to wear pieces of red ribbon on their head, in addition to having to carry proof of manumission at all times, as a symbol of their freedom and subjected them to surveillance from clerks, scribes, and other administrative officials excluding them from public life on account of their putatively effeminate, physically weak, undisciplined nature perceived as a threat to French (white) virility and strength. To further bolster these ends, royal administrators claimed greater control of manumission by the mid-1770s, most pronouncedly by the increase in the manumission tax in 1775 which raised the tax from 800 to 1,000 livres for enslaved males and 2,000 for enslaved females under the age of 40. Additionally, free people of color were required to always carry proof of their freedom or else risk (re)enslavement.⁹ Ironically, enslaved people, masters, and families were able to find a loophole for tax-free manumission through the late-17th century Article 9 of the *Code Noir* which stipulated automatic and immediate manumission if a master married their slave. Of course, this policy increased the population of free people of color - to a minor extent - and grew the population of middle-class mixed-race people across the island.

All the while, St. Domingue was becoming more and more African - so to speak - as the years carried on. From 1763 (the signing of the Treaty of Paris that ended the

Seven Years' War) to the 1780s, the number of Africans imported to the French colony exploded from fewer than 2,000 to upwards of 30,000 enslaved people annually – a great deal ending up in the southern peninsula thanks to colonial government subsidies.¹⁰ The mixed-race (“creole”) planters in the South were experiencing a financial boom thanks to both legitimate and black-market trade in indigo and cotton with the French colonists and the burgeoning British textile industry offshore brought on by the end of the Seven Years' War. The new demand for cotton allowed established mixed-race cotton planters and land speculators to build a great deal of wealth throughout the 1770s and 1780s – mainly concentrating in the mountains to the South of the island as well as around the growing commercial hub of Les Cayes.

The main beneficiaries of this new wealth were the free people of color living near the southern coast who, as a result, became the majority buyers, sellers, and leasers of southern St. Dominguan lands, despite the growing number of European immigrants arriving to the island by the 1780s. This necessarily meant a growing demand for cheap, imported slave labor from Africa, too – between the 1760s and 1780s, the share of purchases of enslaved African imports that free people of color were involved in rose from 41% to 57% of all purchases.¹¹ Additionally, free people of color planter families began to consolidate their wealth through marriage. This involved careful consideration of each respective party's properties, including their supply of enslaved Africans.¹²

Despite these economic gains, however, free people of color could not escape their racial marginalization. St. Domingue colonial law, post-1773, required all peoples of African descent to identify with racial labels – “creoles,” for example, being referred to, according to their racial ancestry, as “*mulatre*” or “*quarteron*” - in official

documentation, and denied any person of color the privilege of being referred to by the superlative, “Sieur.”¹³ More perniciously, though, one’s non-white designation by the state subjected the (supposedly) mixed-race individual to disparate sentencing in the courts – *mulattoes* or *quarterones* typically served lengthier sentences than did whites for the same crime in 18th century St. Domingue – and disintitled mixed-race soldiers from the same provisions as white soldiers.

The French Revolution Influence

The outbreak of revolution in France set the upper and lower white colonist classes at odds with each other – perhaps most pronouncedly in Les Cayes due to its outsized commercial and political roles on the southern peninsula. In addition to its lucrative ports – the only significant ones on the southern peninsula – the region surrounding Les Cayes was home to a cadre of established creole sugarcane planters out in the plains. Members of the white working class of Les Cayes, in response to the purportedly repressive managerial character of the new Masonic Temple established in 1784, founded what was known as the “Patriot” club, organized around anti-authoritarianism. Though the split was minor, it did open space for creole and other free Black activities to take place between 1789 and 1790. For example, in early March 1790, parish representatives met at one of the Les Cayes Masonic lodges to organize a revolutionary government in the southern province. It was decided that, though free people of color would be barred from official parish meetings, a establish formal system for free people of color to submit written complaints and petitions, as well as to organize a militia of free people of color would be established there.

On March 10 a troop of free people of color, calling itself the *Grenadiers Nationaux*, appeared before the assembly, displaying to the white revolutionary administrators, as Garrigus argues, the first indication that such institutions would be used as political tools by free people of color.¹⁴ They determined that this new militia could still be controlled by requiring the appointment of white quartermasters and other official positions by the assembly itself and the *Grenadiers Nationaux* acceded to it. This, in fact, served as a watershed moment for militant organization among free people of color across the island, including as far north as the Grand Riviere parish. One of this northern militia's first moves was to contact the Provincial Assembly and ask that their pledged loyalty and service to the king and the French National Assembly would be passed along to administrators in France. As part of this plea, the free people of color militiamen asked that they cease being called *affranchis*, that the French National Assembly and Provincial Assembly acknowledge them as full and equal citizens of France, and to be commanded by men of their own class, as well as to be included in colonial assemblies.¹⁵

While this was happening in St. Domingue, the fabulously wealthy mixed-race merchants and landlords, Vincent Oge and Julien Raimond, were seeking out allies among the liberal white revolutionaries in France. Their primary objective was to secure allies to lobby the National Assembly to institute racial reforms back in St. Domingue. The pair argued for representation of free people of color in the National and Colonial Assemblies. They gained favor with the white Parisian barrister, Etienne-Louis Hector de Joly, in late-Summer 1789, which granted them access to his group of white Parisian artisans and domestics with commercial and financial interests in St. Domingue. The

troupe met at least twice throughout September 1789 where it was decided that de Joly's group would donate six million livres to the Revolution, while Raimond, Oge, and other free people of color with commercial and financial interests in the colony would donate an additional six million.

The men returned to Versailles in early-October where de Joly gave a speech before the National Assembly wherein he referred, 19 times, to free men of color as French citizens, drawing heavily upon the newly ratified Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.¹⁶ De Joly's group submitted their proposals to the Assembly's Credentials Committee thereafter which advocated for the elimination of racial distinctions in law, which would effectively compress the class structure of St. Domingue to just freemen and slaves. However, a racial redefinition of French identity which held that all slaves with white ancestry would be freed, was added to the reforms, effectively racializing enslavement in the law to be exclusive to dark-skinned Black people, and institutionalizing an update to the existing racial order that would more closely identify free people of color with their white compatriots as part of a renewed, ethnically-inclusive French identity. The political alignments, at least among white and free people of color colonials, leading into the outbreak of revolution on St. Domingue fell along the lines of white racial purity and what constituted as French citizenship.

Of course, these debates instigated serious consternation in the National and Colonial Assemblies. By July 1790, free people of color along the southern coast of St. Domingue began expressing their belief and dismay that the Assembly would not be including them in France's renewed concept of citizenship, and so began forming committees across the island to organize in the interest of challenging the Assemblies'

decisions. In Cavaillon parish, over 30 free men of color submitted a formal petition identifying Raimond as their representative in Paris and rejecting the colonial assemblies' authority, asserting their full citizenship as "good Frenchmen."¹⁷ Additionally, in response to this rejection, Oge travelled back to St. Domingue in October 1790 where white colonists were getting ready to elect a new Colonial Assembly. Oge demanded Governor Blanchelande to allow qualified free men of color to vote in the election while simultaneously lobbying fellow free men of color throughout St. Domingue to support him, gaining allies in only the southern parish of Port Salut. For his efforts, Oge and his colonial allies were rebuffed by embittered white colonists, driving the troupe to the mountain plantation led by the free man of color, Leon Proux. Oge's allies in Les Cayes joined his allies on the plantation where on November 13 the estate was attacked by hundreds of whites from Les Cayes. Governor Blancheland sent troops from Port-au-Prince on November 17 and after two weeks of tension between the parties, amnesty was offered to the freemen.

All the while, Oge was encamped in the north near Cap Francais. Oge's forces met colonial forces on several occasions before being driven across the eastern border to the Spanish-held Santo Domingo. Captured by Spanish forces, Oge and twenty-three of his associates were extradited back to St. Domingue where they were tried and broken on the rack in the main square of Le Cap for all to witness. Their body parts were distributed across the island as warnings to would-be revolutionaries and dissenters.

In response to Oge's revolt, Governor Blanchelande and various provincial officials feared retaliation against free people of color from the broader white colonial public. Therefore, it was decided that free men of color were to be disarmed and Oge's surviving

associates tried. While the latter remained at large, six weeks after the freemen's disarmament, Port Salut parish erupted in violence, marking the inaugural event which sparked the revolution. Shortly thereafter, in late-January 1791, the white planter, Joseph Alabre, learned from a creole slave named Antoine that, purportedly, King Louis had decreed a four-day work week which white colonists had blocked. News of the supposed decree spread among mulattoes and enslaved people throughout the region rather quickly. Mulattoes began recruiting enslaved people by April 25, garnering the support of roughly 200. The Black and mixed-race rebels then descended upon the plantation of white planter, Jacques Fabre, where they proceeded to kidnap the overseer and others managing the land. Several of the captives escaped, fleeing back to the Fabre plantation where they informed their master of the events, which then led Fabre to inform colonial authorities. With a subsequent riot in Port-au Prince, the revolution was underway.

Race and the Haitian Revolution

Some historians, such as David Nicholls, have understood the Haitian Revolution as a response to oppression and a will to national independence “that led blacks and mulattoes once more to see themselves as belonging to a single race and sharing a common destiny.”¹⁸ In other words, a rebellion organized around ethnic unity against a racially oppressive system. However, from others, perhaps most notably C.L.R. James in his *Black Jacobins*, have shown a putative “racial unity” between mulattoes and Blacks – or even between enslaved and free Blacks – to have been a far more complicated and, frankly, far more of a willed belief than a conclusion reached through evidence. The lines of racial division in St. Domingue at the outbreak of revolution are hardly surprising given the historical, economic, and political pretexts surrounding the island's

people. To begin with, by 1791, enslavement in St. Domingue had become thoroughly racial. The attitude of white planters and many poorer whites was simple enough: “The Negroes...are unjust, cruel, barbarous, half-human, treacherous, deceitful, thieves, drunkards, proud, lazy, unclean, shameless, jealous to fury, and cowards,” and great pains were taken to ensure “the Negroes” remained this way.¹⁹ Most slavers abstained from educating their enslaved laborers in religion or otherwise for fear of rousing rebellious sentiments or facilitating cross-plantation communication among the enslaved.²⁰

However, this was not the case for what James referred to as the “small privileged caste” of enslaved people who worked as coachmen, cooks, butlers, maids, nurses, consorts, and other domestic occupations – i.e., those jobs most intimately interwoven with the daily lives of the slave masters. These differences in labor not only separated enslaved Africans by work performed, but by social rank as well. James and Laurent Dubois in his *A Colony of Citizens* explain the social dynamics between field hands and the more domestic professions to be marked by resentment, jealousy, and chauvinism – though some did exploit their positions to educate themselves in the culture of their oppressors.²¹

And the fears were well-founded: two of the three principal leaders of the revolution – Henri Christophe and Toussaint L’Ouverture – were literate, bi-lingual, and enjoyed the privileges of one or more of these jobs throughout their enslavement (and freedom). Perhaps most significantly was L’Ouverture’s ability to acquire, read, and comprehend the ideas written in the Abbe Guillaume Thomas Francois Raynal’s infamous tome, *L’Histoire philosophique et politique des etablissements et du commerce des Europeens dans les deux Indes*. In it L’Ouverture found Raynal’s divinations of “a

courageous chief’ who will come to the fore to “raise the sacred standard of liberty” for the enslaved.²² Inspired by such messianic notions, L’Ouverture was moved to action, running his family off to Santo Domingo and joining the revolution in the North. Vodun, a religious phenomenon raised up from the folk culture of the enslaved, and primarily adhered to by the same, became a linchpin of organization and rally for the enslaved. Whether it be the ferocious maroon priest in the mountains, Francois Mackandal years before the revolution, or the towering Dutty Boukman and his accomplice Cecile Fatiman, Vodun *houngans* proved effective organizers of rebellion.

The religion, however, among many other factors, distinguished the enslaved from the free people of color and the mulattoes – both of which generally adhered to French Catholicism. In the eyes of the latter, Vodun signified the putatively savage heathenry of their ancestors, where as Catholicism represented the civility and progress of modernity. Some have argued that this orientation towards Vodun amongst the free people of color and the mixed-race signified their effort to appropriate and assimilate their oppressor’s culture to earn their favor and prove their value.²³ The fact of the matter, however, is that this religious distinction factored prominently in the minds of those who invoked it, and did so (generally) in a conscious effort to distance themselves from their less “civilized” compatriots in bondage, whom they perceived as a separate race from themselves entirely.²⁴

From the country’s founding in 1804 through the reign of President Fabre Geffrard that ended in 1867, Haitian leaders had attempted to suppress the practices and customs of Vodun on the island. In fact, this sort of politico-cultural strategy was maintained even into the early-20th century, as exemplified in President Stenio Vincent’s

1937 criminalization of Vodun sacred rituals and assemblies that was supported by the Catholic church. The move, as had been the case in the years leading to the Haitian Revolution, was a vindicationist project set on proving to the (European) world that Haitians were “civilized” and “modern” led by the island nation’s mulatto elites.²⁵ Such overtures, it was believed, would curry favor with the European business and political classes and attract foreign investment and new trade relationships across the Atlantic and in the US.

At the start of the revolution, mulattoes and free and enslaved Blacks joined forces against the white colonists, yet the parties quickly re-factionalized. Contrary to what might be assumed under a purely racial analysis, poorer and middle-class whites did not so readily join forces with the richer white landowners, administrators, and the like. They demanded a guarantee of large portions of booty collected as war spoils for their participation, signaling the classed character of alliances at the start of the revolution; demands which the colonial business and political classes were not so willing to agree to. Most mulattoes, for their part, fearing a loss of their property to the enslaved and a loss of their lives to the poorer whites, offered their wives and children as collateral for their service to the Colonial Assembly. This alliance, however, would not last long, being as it was that the whites in the colonial administrative apparatus oscillated their loyalty to the propertied mulattoes according to their own financial and political interests throughout the war. The mulattoes did not unilaterally rely upon the support of the Colonial Assembly, though. For example, a contingent of mulattoes from Port-au-Prince, under the leadership of mulatto Andre Rigaud, gathered a few miles east of the capital at La Croix-des-Bouquets to take a stand against a swarming mob of poorer whites. In response, the

Commandant of La Croix-de-Bouquets' district, Humus de Jumecourt, along with the rich whites of Port-au-Prince, offered an alliance to the Port-au-Prince mulattoes to help squash the poor white counter-revolution in the region, and the mulattoes agreed.²⁶ The orientation of the Colonial Assembly towards the enslaved, as can perhaps be expected, was far less peaceable and typically involved torture, terrorism, beheadings, and violent acts of symbolism to drive fear in the hearts of their foes – sticking heads on pikes and condemning dozens of enslaved people to the breaking wheel on a daily basis.

The aforementioned reveals important insights into the psyche of the colonial authority and how they viewed enslaved Blacks versus free Blacks versus the mulattoes. The former were killed on sight, whether or not they were found to be aiding the revolutionary effort; the latter were dealt with, first, diplomatically, then violently as was necessary. It could be that the colonial authorities viewed the enslaved population, who had a low life expectancy anyway and needed constant replenishment vis-à-vis imports from Africa, as expendable commodities that could be replaced easily in the interest of retaining order. It could also be that the colonial authorities viewed the enslaved, of whom the majority were born in Africa and shipped to St. Domingue as adolescents or young adults by the late-1780s, as further from themselves than were the mulattoes who, despite being viewed as a degenerate race/class as discussed above, did have a genetic connection to the colonists on account of their mixed ancestry. Another alternative is somewhere between the preceding possibilities. In any event, the historical record makes clear that distinctions were made and remade regarding the identification of shared or competing interests throughout the revolution that fell largely along the lines of a fluid, fungible racial concept.

Race Relations in Post-Revolution Haiti

By 1796 the white colonial population had been all but vanquished, leaving the question as to who would lead the island moving forward. The mulattoes, naturally, given their privileged positions in the previous society and their accumulated wealth, believed that leadership fell to them by historical right. In the south they began building a mulatto state and harassing the British. The latter had ambitions of conquering the island for themselves.

There was one last moment of racial solidarity between the mulattoes and Blacks against the European whites wherein each party saw it within its own best interest to protect its hold of the island against Napoleon's encroaching army. Dessalines, with the aid of his longtime ally and future king of Haiti, Henri Christophe, organized Haiti's mulattoes and Blacks in the interest of full, unmitigated independence from France. Under the first Constitution of Haiti, written and ratified in 1806, all residents on the island were declared "Black," regardless of skin tone (this included the small German and Polish populations that remained on the island and had aided in the fight for liberation). Additionally, the Constitution prohibited white men, regardless of nationality, from owning any Haitian property. The object, of course, being the prevention of a rising class of whites on the island which Haitian leadership deemed detrimental to the freshly independent nation's sovereignty and security.

Dessalines had also to deal with the matter of renewed contradictions between what were known as the *anciens libres* and the *nouveaux libres*. The former, who were largely Black property owners, retained their properties throughout the revolution and thereafter. Complicating the issue further, as David Nicholls explains in *From Dessalines*

to *Duvalier*, was the matter of inherited and illicitly procured properties by the *anciens libres*. The more fortunate of this class had received property from their white fathers who had fled the island during wartime; others simply seized vacant properties illegally as their own. Dessalines, for his efforts, tried to eliminate color prejudice in Haiti through the draft of the aforementioned Constitution which legally labeled all residents of Haiti “Black.” But what remained, as is arguably the case with all disputes based in ideology, were matters of material interests and wellbeing. Put another way, there still needed to be addressed the matter of wealth inequalities between Blacks and mulattoes. Dessalines himself broke from his own racial orthodoxy to address the predicament – using the racial backgrounds of “those whose fathers are in Africa” and “the sons of the white colonists,” he warned these “negroes and mulattoes” to “be on your guard” in regard to the properties which they had retained from the colonial period prior to the revolution.²⁷

There were also signs of the old methods of racial distinction fading away in the new republic. Early propagandists and other writers, like Noel Colombel and F.D. Chanlatte, tied the Haitian victory over the European powers as a crack in the edifice of colonialism and everything it represented across the world. This included the Europeans’ racial theories of inherent physical and mental inferiority/superiority between peoples of different racial backgrounds. Juste Chanlatte, for example, presciently tied physical difference between human beings to the varying climates in which they inhabited and maintained that racial ideology had been invented to justify the atrocities of enslavement. Others, however, like advisor and chief propagandist under Henri Christophe, Baron Pompee Valentin de Vastey, upheld and rearticulated the European racial theories for his own ends. Being that the Europeans had used their racial theories to subdue their Black

slaves,²⁸ de Vastey believed that these same racial theories turned against the White Europeans could serve similar ends. De Vastey believed that groups of human beings were “naturally” prejudice towards other groups to promote their own interests. However, he did deny inherent differences between human groups, arguing that they constituted ideological mechanisms to justify poor treatment of Blacks under colonialism and enslavement, while diminishing the personhood of those enslaved. Additionally, he argued that Blacks, in the New World and in Africa, could (should) demonstrate their ability to create civilization using the European kingdoms as models. While Dessalines’ prohibition of white land ownership was abided throughout 1806, by 1807, and once more in 1811, Christophe’s northern kingdom omitted the article, guaranteeing foreign merchants and investors the protection of their property on the island. In fact, de Vastey voiced his opposition to this Dessalinian policy publicly, calling the exclusion of white’s from owning Haitian properties “not only far from reasonable, but unjust, impolitic, and contrary to the laws of polished nations.”²⁹

De Vastey was also aware that the French may, and very well were, using Haiti’s color distinctions to their advantage. He warned mulattoes on more than a few occasions to be wary of this political tactic, especially among Alexandre Petion’s territories to the South and West where many mulattoes lived and migrated to after the revolution. In fact, disintegrating the deeply engrained Haitian color distinctions became a primary objective for the Christophe regime, which did its utmost to convince Haitian Blacks and mulattoes that their interests were shared, with de Vastey, always the skilled propagandist, arguing that the conflicts between L’Ouverture and Rigaud, and Christophe and Petion were not based in color for there were Blacks and mulattoes on either side. Furthermore, de Vastey

accused Petion, like the French, of using Haitian color distinctions for his own political advantage – appointing light-skinned diplomatic representatives and staffing his administration with mulattoes.³⁰ In response, the Petion regime levied their own accusations of color prejudice against de Vastey and the rest of the Christophe regime, insisting there was no color prejudice to be found in the West or South and that all Haitians belonged to the same national family.

While Africa, as symbol and unifying force, did not figure much in the minds of these early leaders, by mid-century, under the leadership of President Jean-Pierre Boyer, it became a source of solidarity based in historical origins rather than the arbitrariness of skin pigmentation and familial lineage. This allowed Boyer to make appeals to African Americans to migrate to Haiti and acquire full citizenship. Therefore, not only did his vision of racial solidarity include Haitians of all shades of Black but sprawled across the Caribbean Ocean to the US, where fellow Africans (to his mind) still toiled under enslavement to a white economic power.

Independent Haiti and its Revolution became for abolitionists like Zacharie Macaulay, William Wilberforce, and Thomas Clarkson a symbol of what Black liberation could mean across the colonies. However, this rhetoric merely papered over the clear color divisions which grew extensively under Boyer. Foreign writers wrote frequently of the color division on the island at this time, even going so far as to claim the President and his regime consciously kept Haiti's Black population in a "state of poverty and ignorance" and that mulattoes celebrated Boyer's succession of Petion for "the sceptre of power was not to depart from their race," referring to mulattoes.³¹

Opposition ideologues, mostly mulattoes like Beauvais Lespinasse and Emile Nau, began speaking of Haiti as the “cradle of African independence” and the leaders of advancing the Black race globally. Under such a point of view, national development not only meant material stability and advancement, but a method for extinguishing racial prejudices on the world stage. The various anti-Boyer journals which sprouted during this time, like *La Patriote* and *Le Manifeste*, were to play a substantial role in keeping alive a revolutionary nationalist identity under American occupation in the early-20th century. Once the Boyer regime was overthrown in 1843, though, Black Power politics reasserted itself in the subsequent Soulouque and Geffrard regimes. Political leaders exploited old racial tensions between Blacks and mulattoes that had largely laid dormant under the Boyer administration and made frequent appeals to color to project their interests and consolidate power. The outsized role mulattoes played in the Haitian administrative state, relative to their diminutive share of the population, incensed poor rural Blacks, allowing them to be manipulated by more wealthy Black landowners (mainly descendants of the *nouveaux libres*) according to their interests. For example, by 1821, a significant amount of peasant laborers had acquired small landholdings confiscated after the revolution and the unification of Hispaniola the same year which directly inhibited larger landowners from obtaining adequate and sufficient agricultural labor to plant and harvest their crops.

In response, President Boyer halted the allocation and sale of state lands altogether and in 1826 passed the *Code Rural* which imposed penalties for vagrancy, expanded military surveillance, and instituted a rural police force to monitor agricultural laborers on large farms. Of course, being that the mulatto minority constituted the majority of large landholders, and the Black majority constituted the vast majority of

agricultural laborers, the *Code* produced the unintended consequence of stoking color tensions even further, as the agricultural laborers suffered the greatest losses under the *Code* of any class in Haiti – particularly in the northern regions.

Adding insult to injury, Boyer had also appointed Bruno Blanchet to head the committee tasked with drafting the legal system of the new lands acquired in the East. For his part, Blanchet, an old light-skinned man of 62 years of age at the time, had led a revolt in La Grand Anse in September 1791 and had joined Rigaud's separatist movement in the South in 1810. Under his guidance, the prohibition of land ownership under the Code Rural was to extend not only to whites, but to what were referred to as *metis*, *mameloucs*, *quarteronnes*, and *sang-meles*, which were based on a "128 part" scale. Blanchet's proposals were tabled before they could go into full effect, however, due to his death in April 1822. The plan, though, represents an attitude or appetite, at the very least, for discriminatory policy distinguishing and targeting several racial categories to be locked out of land ownership and thus impede the individuals who fall into these categories from accessing the means for upward mobility.

During the 1843 Revolution, color rose to the fore once again as a central issue of division – this time among the ruling elite. Those opposing Boyer's regime accused the President of oppressing the Black laborers and mulatto sympathizers threatened to hand power over to the British if their property rights were not guaranteed. The revolt that ensued in the South set as its explicit goals the overthrow of mulattoes' hold on political power and the election of a Black president. In the event of victory, confiscated land from large landholders would be redistributed among the peasants of whatever color and the

prohibition on white landholding would continue to prevent the re-establishment of colonialism through foreign investments.

Boyer was deposed and replaced by the elderly Black general, Philippe Guerrier, followed by a declaration of independence from the eastern region of the island, formerly controlled as a colony of Spain, and the subsequent military defeat in attempting to reconquer it. Guerrier retained much of the mulatto Boyer supporters in his administration, but it did not matter considering his reign lasted roughly two years. The Black general, Louis Pierrot, took Guerrier's place and called for a separation of the North and for power to be in the hands of Haitian Blacks. Shortly after his ascendancy, Pierrot instituted a policy meant to suppress speech perceived to be stoking color tensions among the public. A military coup upended Pierrot, however, which brought the short-lived regime of Jean Baptiste Riche and the Ardouin brothers to power. Blacks held power for a short period of time under Riche and the Ardouin until yet another coup in 1848 brought the self-proclaimed Emperor Faustin Soulouque and his mulatto administrators to power. He did not rule with the tensions of color in mind, however, focusing his sights on controlling foreign investments and attempting to reconquer the Dominican Republic for national security purposes. His administration was amenable, though, to Vodun, despite ruling as an explicitly Catholic government.

Soulouque's reign lasted ten years until General Fabre Nicolas Geffrad staged yet another coup. Within a few years of his rule, now President Geffrad contacted and reached an agreement with the Vatican in the interest of suppressing "the last vestiges of barbarism and slavery, superstition and its scandalous practices."³² The Roman Catholic church then took on a significant role in the social and political life of Haiti with the aid

of French clergy and educators at the behest of the mulatto elite who had been attempting to impose French culture, society and the like onto Haiti for decades. Geffrard also began a campaign attempting to persuade African Americans to migrate to Haiti to reinvigorate the island's cotton industry – a committee was even established in Boston with the express purpose of organizing voluntary migrants. His administration was not, however, absent any controversies concerning race and color – he had allegedly rid his administration of Blacks and replaced them with mulattoes; opposition journalists of the period claimed Geffrard intended to subjugate the Black majority under mulatto rule; while members of his own administration levied attacks of their own at the opposition of seeking to eradicate mulattoes from the island.

The fall of Geffrard and ascendancy of General Silvain Salnave in 1867 manifested two color-based political factions: the majority mulatto Liberal Party and the majority Black National Party. The latter organized itself, primarily, behind the light-skinned Salnave in the North and in Port-au-Prince, where they were forced to contend with guerilla forces seeking – and eventually succeeding – to overthrow and execute Salnave. The president enjoyed robust support from the northern small landowning peasantry. Power remained within the National Party, however, under the Jean-Nicolas Nissage Saget regime and continued under Michel Domingue, totaling a period of six unbroken years of Black power in Haiti through the National Party, until the overthrow of Domingue in 1876 by General Boisrond Canal.

Haitian Race Relations at the Start of the New Century

(Racial) politics in Haiti more or less followed the same pattern throughout the late-19th and early-20th centuries: short periods of either mulatto Liberal control or Black

National control, frequent usurpations of leadership and color remaining a significant factor in the acquisition and meting out of power and privilege in Haitian society.

Noirisme developed much more as an ideology at this time, principally through two outlets: *L'Oeil* and *L'Avant-Garde*, and their primary ideologues: Louis Joseph Janvier, Antoine Michel Dorsainvil, and Alcuis Charmant. Central to the ideology was establishing a so called "Black" perspective of history which essentially reinterpreted the past in a way which faulted all drawbacks of Black progress to the self-interest of mulatto elites and the weakness of Black leadership. They framed Rigaud, Herard Dumesle, Geffrard, Boyer, Bazalais as the principal villains of Haitian history and sought a strong, paternalistic head of state that was constitutionally responsible to the masses. They lauded the military, were opposed to African traditions and customs, and were absolutely opposed to Roman Catholicism.³³ They advocated for racial equality and for the country to follow a European pattern of development – even going so far as to claim that color prejudice had since become an obsolete factor in Haitian society.³⁴

Of course, this couldn't be further from the truth. Mulatto writers, politicians, and theorists retained a disposition towards Blacks which held them as inherently, or otherwise irrevocably, lazy and ignorant, and in general a political nuisance to be contained rather than conceded to. While this was mainly true of those elites within the Liberal Party who generally held that power should reside in the hands of "the most competent men," it was certainly true among select mulatto members of the National Party as well. For example, the writer and politician Frederic Marcelin was once excoriated by his fellow National Party member, Hannibal Price, for his alleged hatred of

“les negres d’Haiti” and his view that even with the best education they could only hope to aspire to be “a savage more or less well-dressed.”³⁵

Such vehemence, though, seems to have been rare in this period. In the main, European theories of racial inferiority and superiority emerging from the quickly professionalizing academia were rejected by Haitians of all backgrounds. Among the educated and landed elite and the urban poor and middle class, Vodun and other practices and beliefs associated with Africa were held at an arm’s distance – despite the frequent invocation of Africa as a symbol of unity for many writers and politicians. European culture, religion, and politics were broadly accepted in the mainstream, yet Pan-Africanism had begun to gain traction by the early-20th century.

Haiti Under U.S. Occupation

1915 marked the second time in Haiti’s history that it was occupied by a foreign power. The United States, under the direction of the National City Bank of New York-influenced President Woodrow Wilson, invaded Haiti on 28 July 1915. The US State Department had expressed a desire to seize control of the island since its independence was declared from France. President Andrew Johnson had annexed the island in 1868 and President Benjamin Harrison sent Rear-Admiral Bancroft Gherardi and a fleet of ships to the island in 1890 demanding the secession of the Mole Saint-Nicolas port. Haitian President Florvil Hyppolite refused, whereupon Gherardi returned to the US claiming that the Haitian government would destabilize before long, opening an avenue for the US to exploit the power vacuum and cease control.

At the time, Haiti was reliant upon the US for the importation of goods and upon France for the bulk of its exports. Germany had secured a large colony on the island in

1897 and had been using the colony as a hub to direct other Caribbean nations according to their interests.³⁶ From 1911-1915 Haiti endured devastating political instability that saw six presidents in just four years. The Haitian masses and elites divided themselves along deep lines of color distinction (again) and saw a precipitous rise in popular involvement in state politics. Once the Americans invaded and occupied the island, mulatto elites became the *de facto* power wielders with the support of a growing superpower behind them. Countervailing forces grew immediately from the masses (mainly the peasant class) in resistance to the occupation and race, once again, provided the organizing principle for the resistance, sidelining divisions of color (to a certain extent) that pre-existed during the period of political turmoil.

While many in the Haitian intelligentsia focused their attention solely on racial matters, others, like the popular Communist writer and activist Jacques Roumain, expanded their lens of analysis to include class distinctions within racial groups as well.³⁷ According to these men, colorism functioned as a socially and politically disunifying force which hid deeper class antagonisms lying at the heart of Haitian society. To quote Roumain, the Haitian bourgeoisie and “*industrie internationale*” utilized color prejudice for “*l’exploitation incessante des masses haitiennes.*”³⁸ In response, the Haitian masses turned to their past to cultivate a shared “national identity” to serve as an organizing oppositional force against their American and European occupiers. The dilemma, though, was overcoming the deep-seeded color and class divisions which segmented Haitian society within itself. For Roumain, this meant an identification with Haiti’s national heritage to the extent of superseding divisive ethnic or racial identities in the interest of national unity against the American occupying force.

The central ideologue and intellectual behind this effort was Justin Chrysostome Dorsainvil. In influential articles written for *Le Matin*, Dorsainvil identified the agrarian, industrial, and commercial middle class as the base of social change in Haiti. He advocated the study of history with the objective of cultivating a coherent ethnic identity to serve as a basis of resistance against the American occupiers. Two obvious resources were Haiti's history as a major hub of the European slave economy as well as their ancestral success in overcoming European imperialism. Dorsainvil also embraced Vodun as a vital source for understanding the Haitian "*mentalite*" or "*ame guineenne*" which provided the Haitian people a particularity in the world that distinguished them from their enemies and connected them to a broader legacy stretching back to ancient Africa. Additionally, he took aim at the French education system held over from colonialism which he perceived as attempting to make "Frenchmen" of African people. Haitians were not, however, African people, *per se*, to Dorsainvil. Enslavement, revolution, and independence had manifested a uniquely Haitian character irreducible to those of the American occupiers, European colonizers/enslavers, or to ancestral Africa. Haitians had their own "*personalite*" which was being threatened by occupation and colonial education.

Equally important to the development of this ethno-nationalist ideology was politician and educator, Jean Price Mars. While early on in his life he had not been supportive of the value and promulgation of Haitian Vodun as some of his contemporaries had been, Price Mars' primary objective was always educational reform. He believed that the curriculum and textbooks of the country's public school system should reflect the lived realities and experiences of its students and avoid the draw to

integrate French or other Euro-American social structures into the curriculum. Unlike Dorsainvil, Price Mars located the core of the Haitian masses' "*personnalite culturelle*" in Africa, believing Haitians and Africans differed little in their orientation towards life and their mannerisms. This was not so, however, of the Haitian elites, who Price Mars believed were too preoccupied protecting their own interests that they shirked their responsibility to lead the Haitian masses sufficiently. On the other hand, Price Mars believed the peasant masses to be skeptical – even hostile – to reform and attracted to strong authoritarian leaders.

There was also significant engagement with African American poetry and literature beginning in the 1920s – a byproduct of what was then known as the “New Negro Movement.” Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay were particularly influential in Haiti thanks to Price Mars’ introduction of their literature to his intellectual circle and Rene Piquion’s translation of much of their work into French.³⁹ Haitian literary critics and intellectuals – mainly mulattoes at first – utilized the New Negro Movement and concomitant arts movement in Cuba as exemplars of a renewed effort by Africana peoples to distinguish themselves from their European antagonists – mapping a way toward what was thought of as a more authentic expression of Africana cultural forms. The Haitian peasant – much like African American folk life meant to the New Negro Movement, among some authors at least – became the representative image of this authentically Haitian character exemplified in the emerging Haitian national literature – though some writers did celebrate Haiti’s connection to France and French culture in their work. They found their distinction decidedly in their African past and traditions, and largely rejected Christianity for Vodun. The “*vertu*” of the masses was

lauded and a call for leadership and order heralded. On the other hand, writers like Jules Blanchet, Max Hudicourt, and Etienne Charlier eschewed this turn towards folk tradition for a sort of technocratic socialism. Distrust in the masses' ability to rule itself and an emphasis on order and discipline remained, but the construction of a mythologized past as organizing principle against American occupation was secondary to social and economic foci.

It is at this point that a distinctly *creole* race was provided a coherent – though rather sparsely adhered to – theory and ideology. To be a Haitian *creole* meant to be essentially an African with French influence. While the mainstream of the Haitian intelligentsia – mostly built of mulatto elites – argued over whether to follow a French or an Anglo model of development and progress, this small group of ethnonational writers and theorists proposed a break from the ways of the Euro-American imperialists. Throughout the 20th century, however, the paradigm largely shifted. The theater of debate focused on whether Haitians were fundamentally African or whether they constituted a discernably *creole* people instead. This shift involved the acceptance, to varying degrees, of European-derived racial fabrications that viewed various groups of human beings as necessarily distinct species with their own discrete, irreconcilable habits, attitudes, behaviors, dispositions, etc.

Despite occupation instilling strong notions of racial pride that superseded color and class antagonisms, to quote Nicholls, “[w]ith the removal of the common enemy in 1934, however, old antagonisms revived and new causes of internal conflict soon emerged.”⁴⁰ The nationalists divided along familiar lines: those seeking to protect mulatto interests, and those seeking a redistribution of resources and power to the masses.

Among the latter were the *noiristes* who perceived Haitian issues as a matter of color antagonisms, and the socialists who viewed them as class antagonisms – both agreed that the established power of the existing elite needed dismantling but disagreed on how this should be done and what system should follow. And, as might be predicted, these divisions, too, fell along color and class lines: the socialists hailed, primarily, from elite mulatto families while the *noiristes* came from the rising Haitian educated Black middle class. In either case their (purported) adherence to these ideologies reflected their own color and class interests. The *noiristes* were particularly critical of the Catholic church and its role in maintaining the elite's legitimacy, insisted on the centrality of Vodun in Haitian life, emphasized Haitians' African heritage and the projection of an essentially African society and culture, and mythologized Haitian history as a struggle between mulatto elites and Black peasants. Perhaps most importantly, they also believed that state power should lie in the hands of an authoritarian, centralized government built of Black bourgeoisie said to reflect the interests of the Black masses. Future President, Francois Duvalier was a leading member of this group from the 1920s until his death in 1971 – first as a member of the small *les Trois D* group with Louis Diaquoi and Lorimer Denis, then as a founding member of the *Griots*.

As a member of the *Griots*, Duvalier attributed Jean Price Mars with laying the ideological foundations for the aspiring national movement. Through their writings, the *Griots* emphasized the centrality of Africa as homeland and cultural center of Haitian society and culture, devoted themselves politically to Black Nationalism, and emphasized the centrality of Vodun in Haitian culture and identity. Perceiving contemporaneous Haitian society as, essentially, a continuation of colonialism, they began demanding a

revolution in values and a swift transfer of power. They held a deterministic view of race which held that each race, biologically, had developed a distinct *personnalite collective* attuned to their own traditional place in the world. Haitians, being African in ancestry, exhibited a particularly “African” way of looking at and being in the world that had withstood enslavement and colonialism. They chastised their fellow Haitians for having assimilated the colonial view of Africa as backward and savage and encouraged them to identify with their ancestral homeland more thoroughly.

Color also factored prominently into the *Griots*’ emerging ideology – for them, color prejudice lay at the heart of the island’s social and political structures as well as in its (seemingly) perennial political battle between mulatto elites and Black paupers and peasants. The masses were believed to have been defended by Black leaders who were responsible for protecting Haitian independence. Mulattoes, on the other hand, were portrayed as having betrayed the Black masses in pursuit of their own selfish interests. Given these supposed social divisions, Duvalier and Denis asserted that Haitian governance must stem forth from the “*psychologie collective*” of the Black Haitian masses – a “temperament” irreconcilable with the Liberal values of liberty, freedom, and democracy.⁴¹ Instead, the *Griots* writers advocated a system of authority and discipline to be carried out by a racially “pure” elite. The education system should forefront Haiti and “*l’histoire de la race,*” and eschew *le canon grec*, as Duvalier referred to it.⁴²

At the same time, a socialist movement emerged in reaction to American imperialism. Founded by Haitian intellectual Jacques Roumain in 1934, the Haitian Communist Party sprung from an analysis of Haiti’s social and political problems from an economic lens. According to Roumain, bourgeois elites had appropriated the popular

nationalist protest for their own ends – an elite he saw as commiserating with the bourgeoisie of the imperial power. Like other communists of the era, such as the Jamaican Claude McKay, American Richard Wright, and Trinidadian George Padmore, color prejudice was perceived as a function of class antagonisms – a veil obscuring the key apparatuses of inequality and exploitation. However, the party, and Communism generally, never enjoyed popular support in Haiti and remained cloistered among the pages of a few educated elites.

The mulatto elites argued that the *Griots* and other *noiristes* were chipping away at the unifying fabric of the nation with their newly minted racial theories. “Back to Africa” was a fanciful rejection of civilization and Catholicism, free-market capitalism, and French cultural and political systems were legitimate pathways to progress. Vodun was perceived as leading the Haitian masses astray from progress and was vehemently attacked by many of the mulatto elite – even so far as being targeted for violent repression. Additionally, supporters of the mulatto intellectual, Dantes Bellegarde, rejected what they perceived as a Nazi-linked concept of race held by *noiristes*. While Bellgarde and his contemporary Francois Dalencour advocated democracy and liberalism, President Stenio Vincent brought an authoritarian version of this disposition to his eleven-year administration in 1930. Vincent chastised the *noiristes* for “add[ing] racial pepper to every sauce” and dissociating the Haitian masses from the true social and economic issues facing their country.⁴³ The criticism was bolstered by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, putting the fascist-sympathizing, Mussolini-supporting *noiristes* on their back foot.⁴⁴ The *noiristes* did, ultimately condemn Italy for this transgression and put their support behind Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, declaring

the European war as a racial one. On the other hand, many Haitian mulatto elites spoke out in support and defense of the Italian war effort, perceiving it as a civilizational struggle between a civilized power and savage barbarians with implications for their own country in Haiti.

Concomitant to these developments were renewed attacks by the mulatto elites upon Haitian Vodun. President Stenio Vincent's so-called "anti-superstition," or "*les pratiques superstitieuses*," regime tightened enforcement of the existing Article 406 of the French colonial *Code penal*, which banned "fortune-telling" and other Vodun ceremonial practices, beginning 5 September 1935. The law mainly effected large fines upon vodun practitioners but was not thoroughly enforced until the regime of President Elie Lescot – President Vincent's successor. Lescot's regime triggered pushback in the press and even caused Marxist writer, Jacques Roumain, to ally with the *noiristes* proclaiming that Haitians were no more "superstitious" than any other people and that vodun provided a mechanism for preserving the masses' folk culture. While he did believe religion and "superstition" served as "false consciousnesses" leading the masses away from class solidarity, he believed that the answer to the problem was expanded education and a transformation in the masses' material conditions rather than mass persecution and repression.⁴⁵

Race, the 1946 Revolution, and Beyond

By the end of the European war, President Lescot had peacefully abdicated office and left Haiti. Haitian activists across the political spectrum organized in the interest of instituting substantive structural change to Haitian government and some demanded the re-writing of the Haitian Constitution. While there were certainly those, like Etienne

Charlier, who insisted that neither color nor ideology were implicated in the 1946 Revolution, the revolutionary and reformist groups, like the Ligue d'Action Social et Democratique and the Parti Populaire National, generally believed a Black president was necessary for providing "authentic representation" of the masses. Characteristic of past political struggles in Haiti, ideological divisions emerged, this time regarding the matter of socialism - the Parti Communiste d'Haiti and the Parti Democratique Populaire de la Jeunesse Haitienne were Marxist in orientation, while the leadership of the Front Revolutionnaire Haitien federation, Emile Saint Lot and Daniel Fignole, were staunchly anti-Marxist. These groups elevated the election of a Black president to the highest priority and rapidly adopted a *noiriste* orientation, perceiving the coming election as a struggle between Blacks and mulattoes – the latter believed to be a self-contained, self-interested "clan" separate from Haitian identity or nationality.

Future President Dumarsais Estime enjoyed broad support from the FRH and Blacks from the North and Artibonite for his progressive political orientations and the perception that he would defend the interests of the growing Black middle class. This created frustration for the Marxists of the FRH who believed that Estime's was a program that utilized Haiti's historic color tensions to consolidate Black middle-class power and interests, and generally criticized the use of color in the election campaign in general. Thus, a vigorous ideological battle, led by Max Hudicourt, Etienne Charlier, Anthony Lespes, Jules Blanchet, and Albert Mangones of the PSP ensued against the burgeoning Estime regime. The PSP, ultimately, endorsed their own candidate for president, Edgard Nere Numa – grandson of former President Geffrard. Estime's FRH backers responded in their journals, drawing attention to the PSP's purported racialism and hypocrisy - the

Marxists, generally, were mulatto elites disconnected from the will of the masses, after all.

With the overthrow of the US-backed Lescot regime – the first successful uprising against a US-backed country in the Caribbean - came the election of *noiriste* President Dumarsais Estime in August 1946. Immediately the regime set about attempting to garner support from the various Black factions – the most substantive coming from the, to use the words of historian Matthew J. Smith, “unprecedented political leverage” of the Black middle class.⁴⁶ The PSP retained their leadership role in the opposition, though this generally included mulattoes critical of what they saw as the Estime campaign’s utilization of color prejudice to gain political favor with the Haitian masses.

Alternatively, Figrole and Saint Lot, through the Mouvement Ouvrier Paysan which became the largest labor organization in Haitian history, galvanized popular mass support among Haiti’s Black working and peasant classes utilizing *noirism* to their advantage.⁴⁷ The double-barrel opposition from these two factions eroded Black middle- and lower-class support for the Estime regime, ending in a military coup, supported by the eminent politicians Figrole and Saint Lot, large corporations, the mulatto PSP Marxists, and the Roman Catholic church in 1950.

President Paul Magloire rose from the ashes of the coup with broad support, particularly from the Roman Catholic church who referred to him in messianic terms. Disenchanted with Magloire and the lack of influence he had within the administration, Figrole partnered with future President Francois Duvalier to challenge the regime through their newly established organization: the Grand Parti National Democrate. In response to growing criticism and oppositional forces, Magloire began a censorship

campaign in late 1952 which shut down several influential opposition journals. Roughly a year later he targeted Fignole and the leadership of the new Ligue de Defense des Libertes Publiques for inciting violence. Some leading businessmen pledged support for the regime, but still others levied criticisms. By 1956 Magloire hemorrhaged enough support to resign from office, leaving, once again, a power vacuum to be filled by existing oppositional political forces that fell decidedly upon class and color lines.

The Rise of Duvalier

From this conundrum rose Francois Duvalier and Lorimer Denis who blamed color and class divisions in Haiti since the colonial period of St. Domingue on the mulatto elites. As early as the mid-1940s, the pair argued against the notion that a truly representative leader of the masses could possibly rise from this group and articulated an historical narrative which positioned the Toussaint-Rigaud rivalry from the perspective of color antagonism. Dessalines was presented as the model leader of the Black masses, assassinated for having dared suggest equality across color lines. President Salomon was propagated as the hero of the masses who was first successful at organizing the Black masses in opposition to their class antagonists – the mulatto elite.

In their 1958 publication, *Le probleme des classes a travers l'histoire d'Haiti*, Duvalier and Denis ask their readers why it was that other than a select few instances since independence, the Black majority had not ruled over the mulatto minority. As answers they posed a lack of solidarity among the Black masses and a commitment to egalitarian principles over hierarchy and tradition which they believed would lead to the Black majority's rise. As a solution they pointed first to the Haitian education system. Through public education a *conscience nationale*, which involved the replacement of

individualism and the traditional colonial hierarchies with what Rene Chalmers called a racial and national “mystique,” could be ingrained within the country’s youth – its future leaders.⁴⁸ By their estimation, Black children were raised through the Haitian education system to internalize an inferiority complex based on a fabricated, racist history as told by Europeans and the mulatto elite. Duvalier and Denis called for 5 essential reforms to the existing education system: (1) reorienting the system towards “*notre ideal national et racial;*” (2) implementation of required courses in civics and ethics; (3) use of creole in primary schools and emphasis on “*sujets pratiques;*” (4) suppression of religious instruction – replacement with “*morale nationale et raciale;*” and (5) the cessation of clerical teachings of Haitian history – the Roman Catholic church was alleged to have installed an education system which subjugated the Haitian masses for the benefit of foreign interests.

Papa Doc, Baby Doc, and Race

With yet more political instability in the wake of Magloire’s fall in late-1956 came a scramble for power. Power was passed from one head of state to another; alliances shifted; battles were fought by the armed forces in the streets; politicians (like Figrole) were exiled. While several leaders came to the fore seeking the presidency, only Duvalier, Figrole, and Dejoie garnered any serious support. Duvalier held majorities in the North and the Artibonite, as well as among the Black middle-class of Port-au-Prince. Figrole leveraged his experience as a *noiriste* schoolteacher and union leader to collect support among the urban poor and parts of the Black middle-class. Dejoie’s support, as a mulatto and grandson of former President Geffrard, lie mainly among businessmen in the capital and Southern regions, former members of the PSP, as well as in the Roman

Catholic church. By the election in September, only Duvalier and Dejoie remained as effective contenders – Duvalier won with a 679,884 to 266,992 majority.

Duvalier's principal goal throughout his presidency was to shift the major locus of political power from the mulatto elite to the Black middle-class under the premise that it would be this class who would most effectively represent the interests of the poor, ignorant masses. By 1957 he had effectively neutralized all opposition groups and had waged a "cultural struggle" against the Roman Catholic church. And despite his notorious political repression through the *tontons macoutes*, he was able to garner the support of a large majority of the population - save, of course, for the urban mulatto business elites in Port-au-Prince – his secret police and their political violence was largely reserved for elite political opponents and organized opposition groups rather than the average Haitian. It was also the *tontons macoutes* which allowed Duvalier to effectively depoliticize the military and the threat they posed to his position – especially under the leadership of General Antonio Kerekou.

Early in the regime, Duvalier enjoyed at least minor support from the United States. From Spring to Summer 1958 the regime had offered missile bases to the Americans on their soil in exchange for military training from the US marines, as well as established trade and financial relations. Tensions grew between the two countries, however, over the appointment of Antonio Rimpel as director of a Haitian development program financed by the US and the activities of the *tontons macoutes*. In Summer 1960, Duvalier criticized the US for their lackluster financial support of his regime. US officials voiced their opposition to Duvalier during his 1961 re-election campaign which resulted in the ostracization of several US ambassadors. In 1963 the Kennedy administration

collaborated with Dominican President Juan Bosch in a failed attempt to overthrow Duvalier and the Haitian intelligentsia began publishing veiled threats to cease relations with the US and declare allegiance with the Soviet Union. Relations healed a bit, however, with the assassination of Kennedy and overthrow of Bosch in late-1963. Nelson Rockefeller visited the capital in 1969 and President Richard Nixon made commitments to shift his foreign policy in the western hemisphere away from explicit imperialism.

Regarding the Catholic church, the Duvalier administration's criticisms focused on the dominant role the church played in Haiti's education system as well as the church's opposition to Haitian Vodun. Vodun was seen by the Duvalierists as a mechanism for preserving Haiti's African traditions and identity which was purportedly being suppressed by the Europeans' and church's outsized role in Haitian education. Thus, the church threatened Haitian nationalism and self-sovereignty, as well as the island's citizen's sense of collective national identity.

While Duvalier was initially tolerant of the church, installing the priest Pere Jean-Baptiste Georges as secretary of state for education in late-1957, by late-1959 Duvalier issued a presidential decree dismantling and banning the Union Nationale des Membres de l'Enseignement Secondaire for alleged ties to communism and recent terrorist attacks. Additionally, Pere Etienne Grienenberger, head of the Holy Ghost Fathers organization, and priest Joseph Marrec were expelled from Haiti on charges that remain unclear.⁴⁹

Duvalier carried out a wave of suppression of the Catholic clergy on the island from 1959 to 1966, at which point the Vatican had acceded to the regime's demands for a "native" clerical hierarchy. Ultimately, Duvalier's objective was to install a curriculum

which centered around Haitian history and literature and instilled pride in Haitians' African roots.

Throughout this period, the role of the *affranchis* was condemned and the actions of the *marrons* were lionized by Black Duvalierist writers – all thorough *noiristes*. In fact, the latter were considered the originators of the independence movement during the colonial era by the Duvalierist government. Leaders like Petion and Boyer were generally panned by the Black intelligentsia for their purported plans to surrender the island to the French, and for having initiated land reforms which benefitted wealthy mulatto interests to the exclusion of the Black peasantry. President Salomon was presented as a hero, even a martyr, and modernizer of a post-colonial Haiti. Africa was projected as the progenitor of Haitian culture and propped up as a legacy from which to draw in building Haiti anew. From such a view, Duvalier was able to proclaim that Haitians “*n'ont rien a apprendre de personne.*”⁵⁰

Due to the Duvalier regime's terror campaigns against journalists and political opponents, emigration, particularly to the US, began to expand as a means for Haitians to escape the terror. This included many writers and other intellectuals opposed to Duvalier and his regime. In an attempt to persuade his compatriots to stay in Haiti and resist Duvalier's suppression, Fignole wrote often of “desertion” and would characterize those writers who chose to abscond from the island as wanting to identify with and be accepted by the more powerful first world countries and their cultures, rather than preserve and protect their own. To quote Fignole and his associate Jacques Brutus directly:

The desire to flee ensures the permanence of the novelistic intention. One travels outside of oneself in order to be transformed. With the certainty

that one must change the world around oneself. But one's perspective varies from one project to the next because it is differently inscribed in the desire to flee. I go elsewhere because I imagine that over there everything is perfect. I go elsewhere because I convince myself that here nothing can ever go right.⁵¹

Jean-Claude Duvalier's policies maintained the broad outlines of his father's regime, with certain exceptions. The use of intimidation and terror against political opponents was lightened; foreign investment increased, particularly from the US; Haiti's domestic economic policy was liberalized; the power of the mulatto elite more-or-less eroded; and the regime's *noiriste* and nationalist rhetoric shifted towards economic and technical development.⁵² Between the early-1970s and mid-1980s emigration from Haiti, mainly to the US, but to Canada, France, and around the Caribbean as well, increased dramatically. Haitian agriculture and manufacturing were stunted, leading to the country's dependence on imports that yielded a rise in the cost of indispensable products. Over 50% of those living in urban centers had access to potable drinking water and only about 45% had electricity.⁵³ Violence erupted between the democratic movement and Duvalier loyalists in the lead up to the 1987 elections, leading to its cancellation for fear of an uprising.

The Contemporary Era and Haitian Migration to the US

Edwidge Danticat was born just as Papa Doc was on his way out and Baby Doc was on his way in. It was a time where people from the countryside were flooding into the urban centers across the country, overwhelming the state's outdated infrastructure and disrupting the state's ability to produce its own food. Adding insult to injury, the elder

Duvalier's paranoid deforestation campaigns had eroded much of Haiti's arable land, making agriculture evermore precarious as an industry. Swine flu wiped out most of the island's pig population – the rest were slaughtered as a precaution. As a result, Haiti became dependent upon food imports from Jamaica and the US to sustain itself. In reaction to the Duvalier regime's *noiriste* emphasis on African heritage and Vodun as a source of collective identity, folk culture began to be denigrated or ignored, with many turning back towards France as an alternative. Furthermore, waves of Haitian immigrants began arriving on America's shores in the thousands.

Refugees claimed that they were fleeing political persecution and violence from Duvalier junior and senior. The situation was particularly acute for (opposition) Haitian women who were targeted by the *tontons macoute* for rape, beatings, and even murder to be kept in line. In response, the US designated them “economic migrants,”⁵⁴ making them ineligible for asylum claims and rejected their authorization to live in the US – even subject to imprisonment and deportation, which were expanded under President Reagan in the early-1980s. In 1988, in response to the growing HIV/AIDS crisis sweeping the nation, Haitians and Sub-Saharan Africans were barred from donating blood.⁵⁵ This patent discrimination triggered mass protests in New York City, Miami, and Boston which highlighted the stigma such actions added to an already precarious existence in the US.

NOTES

¹ Elijah P. Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 251.

² *Ibid.*, 252.

³ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶ William E. Cross, "The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience," *Black World* 20, no. 9 (July 1971): 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Cf. Leigh S. Wilton, Evan P. Apfelbaum, and Jessica J. Good, "Valuing Differences and Reinforcing Them: Multiculturalism Increases Race Essentialism," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10, no. 5 (2019): 681-689 *passim*; Jacqueline M. Chen and Kate A. Ratliff, "Psychological Essentialism Predicts Intergroup Bias," *Social Cognition* 36, no. 3 (2018): 301; Maykel Verkuyten, "Discourses about Ethnic Group (De-)Essentialism: Oppressive and Progressive Aspects," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 42, no. 3 (2003): 371-374, 386-388; John Tawa, "Belief in Race as Biological: Early Life Influences, Intergroup Outcomes, and the Process of 'Unlearning,'" *Race and Social Problems* 8, no. 3 (July 2016): 244, 247-248, 250, 253-254.

¹⁰ Thomas S. Engeman, "Invisible Man and Juneteenth: Ralph Ellison's Literary Pursuit of Racial Justice," in *Ralph Ellison and the Raft of Hope: A Political Companion to Invisible Man*, ed. Lucas E. Morel (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 91.

¹¹ Ralph Ellison, "A Very Stern Discipline," in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. John F. Callahan. (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 737.

¹² Fatoumata Keita, "Conjuring Aesthetic Blackness: Abjection and Trauma in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 11, no. 3 (February 2018): 53.

¹³ Keita explains that it is through Morrison's use of shared ancestral roots and the emotional strain of being black in America that she "conjures stories of racial prejudice and its impact on Black women's maternal practices and the psychological development of their children." (43) "Rebirth," in this instance, meaning the "Working Through" of the Africana subject towards positive self-worth, self-actualization, and agency.

¹⁴ Ellison, "A Very Stern Discipline," 737.

¹⁵ Engeman, "Invisible Man and Juneteenth," 91, emphasis added. Cf. Molefi K. Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 110-126 *passim*.

¹⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 221.

¹⁷ Cf. Molefi K. Asante, *Facing South to Africa: Toward an Afrocentric Critical Orientation* (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 53-62 *passim*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cornel West, “Pragmatism and the Sense of the Tragic,” in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 174.

²⁰ Katherine Henry, “‘Slaves to a Debt’: Race, Shame, and the Anti-Obama Jeremiad,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 100, no. 3 (August 2014), 306.

²¹ Ibid., 306-307.

²² Ibid., 309.

²³ Ibid., 314.

²⁴ Ibid., 303-304.

²⁵ Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, 253.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 253-254; Cf. West, “Pragmatism and the Sense of the Tragic,” 174-175.

²⁸ Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 60-67. Cf. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, particularly chapters I, II, and XIII; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, chapter IX; Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Signet Classics, 2010), chapter V; E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

²⁹ Feagin and Sikes, *Living with Racism*, 76; Cf. Elisa Nascimento, *Pan Africanism and South America* (Buffalo: Afrodiaspora, 1979); Molefi K. Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge* (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1998), 188.

³⁰ Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, 256.

³¹ Solomon Northup, *12 Years a Slave* (Los Angeles: Graymalkin Media, 2014), 21-23.

³² Asante, in *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, defines “dislocation” as the removal of a person from his or her psychosocial or cultural grounds as a consequence of domination. In the case of the “Encounter,” interpersonal and structural racism.

³³ Cf. Olaudah Equiano, “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself,” in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry L. Gates, Jr. (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 1-226, especially chapters 2 and 3; Mary Prince, “The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave. Related by Herself,” in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry L. Gates, Jr. (New York, Signet Classics, 2012), 227-291; Frederick Douglass, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself,” in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry L. Gates, Jr. (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 299-403.

Although the term has been widely used in academia, Afrocentric scholars object to the use of the term “slave narratives and strongly suggest replacing it with “autobiography” in transcendence of Eurocentric negations. (Cf. Nilgun Anadolu-Okur, *Dismantling Slavery: Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Formation of the Abolitionist Discourse, 1841-1851*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016).

³⁴ Cf. bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), especially chapters 1 & 2; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2002), especially parts 1 & 2; Clenora Hudson Weems, *Africana*

Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves (New York: Routledge, 2020), especially part 1; Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2003), x-xi.

³⁵ Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*, 253.

³⁶ Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 32-62 *passim*. Cf. Yaser Arafat Payne and Hanaa A. Hamdi, "'Street Love': How Street Life Oriented US Born African Men Frame Giving Back to One Another and the Local Community," *The Urban Review* 41, no. 1 (2009): 29-46; Feagin and Sikes, *Living with Racism*, 16-17.

³⁷ Anna Gottlib, "Trauma Unmakes the World of the Self. Can Stories Repair it?" *Psyche* (November 2020): accessed May 2, 2021, <https://psyche.co/ideas/trauma-unmakes-the-world-of-the-self-can-stories-repair-it>.

³⁸ Carolyn Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security is Threatened* (Brattleboro: Good Books, 2005), 27.

Abiola Irele, in *The African Imagination*, refers to this reactive phenomenon as "dramatization," though he offers a more positive view: "Modern African literature, in particular the literature expressed in the European languages, can be interpreted as a dramatization of and meditation upon the problems of existence posed by this situation [dislocation]" (ix).

³⁹ Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 148-149.

⁴⁰ Cf. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Roger J. Kurtz, "Literature, Trauma and the African Moral Imagination." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32, no. 4 (October 2014): 421-435.; Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*.

⁴¹ Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51.

⁴² Cf. Kate Schick, "Acting Out and Working Through: Trauma and (In)Security," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (October 2011): 1837-1855 *passim*.

⁴³ Feagin and Sikes, *Living with Racism*, 236-253 *passim*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 236-237.

⁴⁵ Cf. Anderson, 254-257; Feagin and Sikes, 257-271 *passim*.

⁴⁶ "Constructively" in the sense of mitigating Rose's diagnostics of trauma: "resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions" (66).

⁴⁷ Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing*, 27.

⁴⁸ Cf. Judith Locke, "How to Raise a Resilient Child," *Psyche* (July 2020): <https://psyche.co/guides/to-help-your-children-put-the-helicopter-in-the-hangar>.

⁴⁹ Asante, in *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, defines the "agent" as a person who is able to act independently in his or her own best interest. The subject may have strong or weak agency, but agency undoubtedly exists.

⁵⁰ Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 5-6.

⁵¹ Molefi K. Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance* (Malden: Polity Press, 2008), 25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵³ Christel N. Temple, *Literary Spaces: Introduction to Comparative Black Literature* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 43.

⁵⁴ Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 19; Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, 81.

⁵⁵ Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, 27-28.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 87-89; Howard Winant, "Teaching Race and Racism in the Twenty-First Century: Thematic Considerations," in *The New Black Renaissance: The Souls Anthology of Critical African-American Studies*, ed. Manning Marable (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 19-20.

⁵⁷ Temple, *Literary Spaces*, 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁶⁰ Lloyd Brown, "The Black Aesthetic and Comparative Criticism," *Council on National Literatures Report* 1, nos. 4-5 (1974): 109.

⁶¹ Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1993), 24, emphasis added.

⁶² Cf. Nilgun Anadolu-Okur, *Contemporary African American Theater: Afrocentricity in the Works of Larry Neal, Amiri Baraka, and Charles Fuller* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-13 *passim*.

⁶³ Cf. Christel Temple, *Literary Spaces*, 10-17, 195-197 *passim*; Christel Temple, *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise*, xvii-xxvi *passim*; Cornel West, "On My Intellectual Vocation," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 19-33 *passim*.

⁶⁴ Cornel West, "On My Intellectual Vocation," 23-24.

⁶⁵ Shirley Moody-Turner and James B. Stewart, "Gendering Africana Studies: Insights from Anna Julia Cooper," *African American Review* 43, no. 1 (2009): 35-36.

This entails a respect for Africana customs and traditions as legitimate expressions of self. However, Moody-Turner and Stewart, in "Gendering Africana Studies," warn against misunderstanding individual achievement as representative of structural shifts. Individual achievement must not overshadow the needs and experiences of the average Africana person.

⁶⁶ Cornel West, "Race and Social Theory," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 257; Cf. James B. Stewart, "Riddles, Rhythms, and Rhymes: Toward an Understanding of Methodological Issues and Possibilities in Black/Africana Studies" in *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Fong (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 179-217 *passim*.

⁶⁷ Cornel West, "Race and Social Theory," 257-260.

⁶⁸ Cf. Cornel West, "The Indispensability yet Insufficiency of Marxist Theory," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 215-229.

⁶⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 84.

⁷⁰ Martha Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity," in *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, edited by Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 496.

⁷¹ bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 16-17.

⁷² hooks affixes the transformative power of dialogue in the human beings' capacity for narrative. According to hooks, storytelling and listening allow us, as individuals, to access a world beyond the self. If we assume, within our roles as teacher-students, that all students or participants in dialogue have something of value to contribute to the learning process, we create spaces for students and teachers to "share their 'inner light,'" and for teachers to "discover what the students know and what they need to know" for their own personal and intellectual growth, as an individual and a community (hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 20, 19).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1993), 81.

⁷⁵ Cf. hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 30-50 *passim*; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 62-65 *passim*.

⁷⁶ Noam Chomsky, "Language and Freedom," in *On Anarchism* (New York: The New Press, 2013), 127.

⁷⁷ bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 14-15.

⁷⁸ James Baldwin, "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel: An Address," in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1961), 123.

⁷⁹ Cornel West, "Fredric Jameson's American Marxism," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 236.

⁸⁰ Jameson in West, "Fredric Jameson's American Marxism," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 239.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 240.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁸⁴ Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 535.

⁸⁵ Cf. Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*, 83-85, 168-173.

⁸⁶ Geto Boys, "Crooked Officer," by Brad T. Jordan, Michael Barnett, and Richard S. Shaw, recorded spring to summer 1992, Rap-A-Lot-Records, track 4 on *Till Death Do Us Part*, 1993, compact disc.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ KRS-One, "Sound of da Police," by Lawrence Parker, recorded 1993, Jive, track 7 on *Return of the Boom Bap*, 1993, compact disc.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Cf. Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 25-32; Serie McDougal, *Research Methods in Africana Studies* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 256-268.

⁹¹ Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, 26.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹⁴ Christel Temple, *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), xvii.

⁹⁵ Temple, *Literary Spaces*, 17.

⁹⁶ Temple, *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise*, xx.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, xxii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

⁹⁹ Cf. Temple, *Literary Spaces*, xv-xviii.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Melvin Dixon, "Toward a World Black Literature and Community," in *Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship*, edited by Michael S. Harper and Robert B. Stepto (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 175-176.

¹⁰³ Darwin Turner, "Introductory Remarks about the Black Literary Tradition in the United States of America," *Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium* 9 (1978): 50.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Henri de Boulainvilliers, *Histoire de l'Ancien Gouvernement de la France: Avec XIV. Lettres Historiques Sur Les Parlemens Ou Etats-Generaux* (London: Wentworth Press, 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Jose Luis Petrucelli, "Brazilian Ethnoracial Classification and Affirmative Action Policies: Where are We and Where Do We Go?" in *Social Statistics and Ethnic Diversity: Cross-National Perspectives in Classifications and Identity Politics*, eds. Patrick Simon, Victor Piche, and Amelie A. Gagnon (New York: Springer Cham Heidelberg, 2015), 101-109.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Warren, *What Was African American Literature?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6-7, emphasis original.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁸ Temple, *Literary Spaces*, 10-17 *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ Cornel West, "The Making of an American Radical Democrat of African Descent," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 10.

¹¹⁰ Temple, *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise*, 2.

¹¹¹ Asante, *Facing South to Africa*, 1-20 *passim*.

¹¹² James Baldwin, "Faulkner and Desegregation," in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1961), 100, emphasis added.

¹ Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 20-21, emphasis added.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 20-26.

³ Cf. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 34-51.

⁴ Elijah P. Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 189; Cf. Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 39-40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

While these attitudinal types manifest across the African American class structure, ethnocentrism is associated more with working- and lower-class African Americans, while cosmopolitanism is more strongly associated with middle- and upper-class African Americans.

Anderson explains that these orientations are usually the result of (a) the social isolation of working- and lower-class African Americans from whites, and middle- and upper-class African Americans' proximity to whites, either professionally, socially, or romantically; or (b) have been exposed to a greater degree of positive relationships and interactions with white society and the broader society in general.

⁶ Anderson, *Cosmopolitan Canopy*, 230-231. Cf. Elijah P. Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 16-17.

⁷ Feagin & Sikes, 113.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ David Levering Lewis, "Introduction," in *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader* (New York: Viking, 1994), xxiii.

Interestingly, however, Du Bois sang a different tune throughout his fiction, such as *Quest of the Silver Fleece*, *Dark Princess*, and the *Black Flame* trilogy. In each, Du Bois not only explores the Encounter phenomenon, but resolves the tensions caused by these traumatic experiences by indicating that Black elites must embrace Black working-class culture and values in their pursuit of overcoming structural barriers.

¹⁰ Cf. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Browsing Reader: Review of *Home to Harlem*," *Crisis* 35 (1928): 202.

¹¹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Cf. Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 53-65.

¹⁴ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 164-166.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165, emphasis original.

¹⁷ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 35. Anderson refers to this phenomenon as "code-switching."

¹⁸ Ibid., 36, 41-42, 64-65.

¹⁹ Ibid., 65; Cf. Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 32-44.

²⁰ Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 99.

²¹ Kotti Sree Ramesh and Kandula Nirupa Rani, *Claude McKay: The Literary Identity from Jamaica to Harlem and Beyond* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., Inc., Publishers, 2006), 41-42.

²² Ibid., 43. Ramesh & Rani do, however, locate this “colorist” orientation exclusively in the Caribbean, framing the phenomenon as a mark of distinction between the African American and Afro-Caribbean contexts.

²³ Cf. Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 186.

²⁴ bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 55.

²⁵ Ibid., 127.

²⁶ Ibid., 131.

²⁷ Carolyn W. Sylvander, *Jessie Redmon Fauset, Black American Writer* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1981), 14.

²⁸ US Department of Commerce, *We the Americans: Blacks*, September 1993, accessed October 10, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/wepeople/we-1.pdf>.

²⁹ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1990), 20.

³⁰ Ibid., 233-234.

Adolph Reed, Jr. argues that these new professionals and merchants secured themselves by exploiting a “captive,” segregated market, garnering the attention of northern white liberals, thus [paving] the way for the reconstruction of new modes of domination of black life.” (Adolph L. Reed, Jr., “Black Particularity Reconsidered,” *Telos*, no. 39 [1979]: 83).

³¹ Frazier, 148-149.

³² This is not to say that either Du Bois or Washington denied the potential of African Americans to exceed the material and political conditions which delimited their progress. Kyle Beckham and Shirin Vossoughi offer, in “From the Poverty of Culture to the Power of Politics,” an impressive critique of the now traditional reduction of Du Bois and Washington to their elitist and accommodationist philosophies, respectively. Beckham and Vossoughi point out that Du Bois saw in African American culture “the seeds of Black liberation” and “a firm foundation for full participation in broader American life... Du Bois never fully saw the problems facing black communities as requiring a fundamental shift in who they were *as a people*” (Kyle Beckham & Shirin Vossoughi, “From the Poverty of Culture to the Power of Politics: The Evolution of W.E.B. Du Bois,” *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 14, no. 2 [2020]: 76, emphasis original).

³³ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Signet Classics, 2010), 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 58.

³⁵ Ibid., 62, 191.

³⁶ Ibid., 85, 112.

Washington, in truth, reflected a broader socio-political shift taking place in the South throughout the 1890's. The landscape of late-19th century African American politics in southern cities like Richmond, Virginia, began to change according to an evolution in attitudes toward, as Elsa Brown says in "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere," the "notion of politics" and what was considered "appropriate political behavior" (Elsa B. Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in Transition from Slavery to Freedom," in *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II: From Freedom to "Freedom Now," 1865-1990s*, ed. Thomas C. Holt and Elsa B. Brown [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000], 102-115). It was expected, as a general rule, that political power would be concentrated in the upper-class, those considered "qualified" to do so, while the mass public was expected to be politically passive and detached from the democratic process. However, Brown points out that, particularly among African American women, "political participation" meant the organization of interest groups, active participation at political meetings, public displays of political advocacy, armed defense, social ostracism, divorce, etc. (Elsa B. Brown, "To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women's Political History, 1865-1880," in *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II: From Freedom to "Freedom Now," 1865-1990s*, ed. Thomas C. Holt and Elsa B. Brown [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000], 78-84).

³⁷ Ibid., 165.

It should be noted that, despite his public ridicule of those pursuing their civil rights as, essentially, getting ahead of themselves, Washington did privately support the building of African American schools, challenges to discriminatory laws in the courts, and various other efforts at eroding Jim Crow segregation (Cf. Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* [New York: Nation Books, 2016], 276-279).

³⁸ Du Bois passed away in 1963, at the age of 95. Washington passed away in 1915, at just 59 years old. Early glimmers of Du Bois' "Talented Tenth" may be found towards the middle of, *The Philadelphia Negro*, where he calls for, "[a]bove all, the better classes of Negroes should recognize their duty toward the masses. They should not forget the spirit of the twentieth century is to be the turning of the high toward the lowly... so hard has been the rise of the better class of Negroes that they fear to fall if they stoop to lend a hand to their fellow." (W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995], 392-393).

³⁹ Cf. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Education and Work," in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002), 183-187.

⁴⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Heredity and the Public Schools," in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002), 118-121.

⁴¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Training of Negroes for Social Power," in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002), 66.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Cf. Irma Watkins-Owens, "Caribbean Connections," in *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II: From Freedom to "Freedom Now," 1865-1990s*, ed. Thomas C. Holt and Elsa B. Brown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 144-148.

⁴⁴ If nothing else, Nathan Huggins argues that magazines like *Crisis*, A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen's *The Messenger*, and the National Urban League's *Opportunity*, demonstrated to African Americans that their issues were valid and that they could do much to have at least a voice on the national stage (Nathan I. Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], 29).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5-9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁹ Lewis, xviii-xx.

⁵⁰ Writing in a March 1925 special issue of the *Survey Graphic*, philosopher Alain Locke wrote, “[o]f course, the thinking Negro has shifted a little toward the left with the world-trend, and there is an increasing group who affiliate with radical and liberal movements,” but warned that, “American nerves in sections unstrung with race hysteria are often fed the opiate that the trend of Negro advance is wholly separatist.... This cannot be – even if it were desirable.” (Alain Locke, “Enter the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic* [March 1925], 4) Locke, of course, positioned his “New Negro” as committed to “the ideals of American institutions and democracy,” thus repudiating the emerging African American socialists’, like A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, critiques of labor relations and their commitment to interracial working-class solidarity. He did, however, perceive Harlem and urbanization as having, in Huggins’ words, “forced the Negro from the simple to the complex life, from rural homogeneity to urban pluralism; he was forced to see himself in broad and sophisticated terms” (Huggins, 57). For a critique of the Harlem Renaissance’s leadership and direction, see Harold Cruse’s classic, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*.

⁵¹ Cf. Anthony Dawahare, *Nationalism, Marxism, and African American Literature Between the Wars: A New Pandora’s Box* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 16-17.

⁵² Ibid., 22.

⁵³ Claude McKay, “Socialism and the Negro,” in *The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912-1948*, ed. Wayne F. Cooper (New York: Schocken, 1973), 54.

⁵⁴ Claude McKay, “Garvey as a Negro Moses,” in *The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912-1948*, ed. Wayne F. Cooper (New York: Schocken, 1973), 68.

⁵⁵ Cf. Dawahare, 60-61.

⁵⁶ Claude McKay, “Enslaved,” in *The Passion of Claude McKay: Selected Poetry and Prose, 1912-1948*, ed. Wayne F. Cooper (New York: Schocken, 1973), 121.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ramesh & Rani, 11-12.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ramesh & Rani, *Claude McKay*, 15.

⁶⁰ Frantz Fanon famously argued in *Black Skin, White Masks* that conformity to the colonial country’s cultural standards and social conventions raised the colonized subject’s status, or at least their prospects for status, among the colonizers, and thus amongst themselves. Additionally, he argued that the degree of conformity exhibited by a colonial subject tended to coincide with the subject’s social position (Cf. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* [New York: Grove Press, 2004], 18).

⁶¹ Ramesh & Rani, 21.

⁶² P.S. Chauhaun, “Rereading Claude McKay,” *CLA Journal* 34, no. 1 (1990): 69.

⁶³ Lewis, xix.

⁶⁴ Cf. Washella T. Simmon, "The Limitations of Color: Inferiority and Superiority Complexes in the Works of W.E.B. Du Bois and Jessie Fauset," *CLA Journal* 53, no.4 (June 2010): 356-357.

⁶⁵ Fauset had originally intended to attend Bryn Mawr College, just 15 miles northwest of Philadelphia, but was discouraged by some of the college's officials from doing so on account of her race.

⁶⁶ Cf. Sharon L. Jones, "Reclaiming a Legacy: The Dialectic of Race, Class, and Gender in Jessie Fauset, Zoran Neale Hurston, and Dorothy West," *Hecate* 24, no. 1 (1998): 155-156, 158-159.

⁶⁷ Claude McKay, *Banana Bottom* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1961), 254.

⁶⁸ Claude McKay, "The Harlem Dancer," in *Gingertown* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 10-12.

McKay utilizes a similar narrative arc throughout the *Gingertown* anthology in such stories as "The Prince of Porto Rico" and "Truant," and poems like "The Daily Gleaner," "Peasants' Ways o' Thinkin'," and "George William Gordon to the Oppressed Natives."

⁶⁹ Given that, in the real world, it would be light-skinned Jamaicans who would be sent to the colonial motherland to be educated and trained for middling white-collar jobs, Ramesh and Rani argue that Bitá is meant to become an "intermediary who possesses 'native' characteristics but is educated in English manners and culture" (Ramesh & Rani, 159).

⁷⁰ McKay, *Banana Bottom*, 40-41.

Ramesh and Rani argue that Bitá's initial experiences in the Banana Bottom markets upon her return from England mark the beginning of her break from the Craigs by the end of the novel. They cite her wearing of traditional Jamaican dress, attending late-night "tea meetings," dancing to native music, and flirting with local suitors as indications of her "natural" affinities for Jamaican folk culture (Ramesh & Rani, 150).

⁷¹ Cf. Ramesh and Rani, 158-159.

⁷² McKay, *Banana Bottom*, 2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29, 52.

⁷⁶ Cf. Fanon, 18-21; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 66.

⁷⁷ McKay, *Banana Bottom*, 52.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 67. “Hurry-come-up” is a term used in Jamaica to describe the *nouveau riche*. Anderson’s “street” folks.

⁸⁶ Ibid., emphasis original.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 131.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 165.

⁹¹ Ibid., 168-169.

⁹² Winston James has argued, quite interestingly, in “A Race Outcast from an Outcast Class,” that this sort of “civilization vs. primitivity” dichotomy pervades McKay’s work. James posits that McKay’s ire was a byproduct of his having lived in both New York City and London, where he grew to disdain the socioeconomic conditions of African people in the US and UK, as well as the West’s orientation of dominance towards the world. Moreover, James points out that it was in London that McKay began feeling alienated and disillusioned with the black middle-class, finding them far too conservative to achieve any meaningful change for the broad base of less fortunate Afro-Britons.

It was also in England that McKay became disenchanted with London’s and America’s leftists. E.D. Morel, the British pacifist and anti-imperialist journalist for the *Daily Herald*, wrote a column for the paper which intended to raise caution against the large number of black (mainly African) soldiers serving in Germany and the inevitable incidence of interracial sex which would occur in such circumstances. McKay wrote a scathing response letter to the *Daily Herald* shortly thereafter to address Morel’s arguments, warning that the article would drum up white racial resentments and lead to bloodshed, but to no avail. However, McKay found a home for his letter in Sylvia Pankhurst’s socialist newspaper, the *Worker’s Dreadnought*.

For more examples of McKay’s criticism of western “Civilization,” see his poems “The Spanish Needle,” “Flame-Heart,” “Home Thoughts,” and “I Shall Return.”

⁹³ Ibid., 30, 51, 62.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 75-76.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 92.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 121.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 121, 168-169.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 124, 125, 132.

¹⁰² Ibid., 161, 196.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 250.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 217, emphasis original.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 218, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 224.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 264.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 262.

¹⁰⁹ Jessie Redmon Fauset, *There is Confusion* (Minneola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2020), 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 12, 13.

¹¹² Ibid., 67, emphasis original.

¹¹³ Ibid., 68.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 88-89, emphasis original.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 145.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., 146-147.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., 167.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 220.

¹²¹ Ibid., 74.

¹²² Ibid., 57.

¹²³ Ibid., 61.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 77, emphasis added.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 78.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 190-191.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 246.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 250-251.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 251.

¹³¹ Ibid., 14.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 14-15.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 89.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 135.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 149.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 171.

¹⁴² Ibid., 280.

¹ David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 66.

² Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (Speech, Akron, OH, December 1851), Fordham Modern History Sourcebook, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>.

³ This claim seems to have derived from an overreliance on Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. For an authoritative rebuke of Genovese's arguments, see John W. Blassingame's review of the book published in 1976.

⁴ hooks notes that she rejects the notion that African men lost their masculinity in the first place.

Cf. bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 20-21.

⁵ Ibid., 43, 49.

⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷ Angela Davis, "Reflection on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 4 (December 1971): 13.

⁸ hooks, 12.

⁹ Cf. Ibid., 87-88, 91-93.

¹⁰ Ibid., 80.

¹¹ Quoted in hooks, 127.

¹² Ibid., 88.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Niara Sudarkasa, “The ‘Status of Women’ in Indigenous African Societies,” in *Readings in Gender in Africa*, edited by Andrea Cornwall (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 25-31.

¹⁵ Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery’s Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 74.

¹⁶ Cf. Elsa B. Brown, “To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women’s Political History, 1865-1880,” in *Major Problems in African-American History: Volume II: From Freedom to “Freedom Now,” 1865-1990s*, ed. Thomas C. Holt and Elsa B. Brown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 75-85 *passim*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 81-84.

¹⁸ Tera Hunter, in her article, “Domination and Resistance: The Politics of Wage Household Labor in New South Atlanta,” maintains that the Atlanta washerwoman strike of 1881 is so significant for two fundamental reasons: (1) after emancipation, domestic labor was virtually the only industry available to African American women throughout the “New South” of the late-19th century; and (2) it provided the southern white power elite the opportunity to restrict both social and economic opportunities for southern African Americans post-Reconstruction. Despite obstacles initiated by their employers and “their proxies in public authority positions,” the washerwomen were able to force through some of their demands and preserved elements of their work they found satisfactory: e.g., indirect supervision, a day off per week, the ability to care for their own children, and to lodge communal work among adult women as a standard practice of labor. Hunter adds that the accession of these demands by the washerwomen’s employers “also meant preventing employers from exercising unmitigated control over their entire lives” (117).

¹⁹ Elaine Brown became the very first African American woman to chair a major Civil Rights organization in 1974, serving until 1977, as chairwoman of the Black Panther Party; Enolia McMillan became the first African American woman to serve as president of the NAACP in 1984, which she held until 1990. While Ella Baker held several positions of power and influence within the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC, she was never named to any formal leadership position. It would take other Civil Rights organizations until the 2000s and 2020s to officially elect an African American woman as president or CEO with Bernice King’s SCLC presidential election in 2009 and Dr. Seanelle Hawkins’ Urban League-Rochester presidential and CEO election in 2022.

²⁰ Cf. Belinda Robnett, “Women in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: Ideology, Organizational Structure, and Leadership,” in *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New York: Routledge, 1999), 162-163.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

²² In fact, criticisms of African gender norms stretch back as early as the 14th century CE. Ibn Battuta, the Muslim Moroccan explorer, wrote of his travels to Mali in 1354, in which he expressed the awe at witnessing male-female interactions there. He commented on women’s status, their beauty, their “companionship” with men, and the matrilineal line of descent.

²³ The French physician and traveler, Francois Bernier, published a short essay in 1684 titled, “New Division of the Earth by the Different Species or ‘Races’ of Man that Inhabit It,” where he divided human beings into four distinct categories he called “races” by skin color and other physical features. While this may be argued to be the first attempt at dividing humanity into particular “racial categories,” the extent of Bernier’s influence, in terms of racial categorization, remains disputed.

²⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston: Lilly and Wait, 1832), 63, 145.

²⁵ In some cases, this was in fact correct. One example of such a claim being proven true was the case of Abdul Rahman Ibrahima Sori of the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea. Sori was captured by slave traders and transported to the United States in 1788 where he spent forty years enslaved to the family of Thomas Foster

in Natchez, Mississippi. According to local sources, Sori was able to leverage his stature and education acquired at Djenne and Timbuktu in West Africa, and quickly became a manager of cotton and cattle as well as a trusted supervisor of his fellow enslaved Africans. Cf. Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 27-28, 45; Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 65-71.

²⁶ Marlon B. Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 24.

²⁷ Cf. Hazel V. Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Summer 1992): 23.

²⁸ Cf. Ross, 330-354.

²⁹ Baldwin's assistant and biographer, David A. Leeming, for example, reported that upon his first meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Baldwin sensed a hint of anxiety in King's orientation towards him, attributing this tension to King's discomfort with Baldwin's homosexuality.

³⁰ Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: Delta, 1999), 127.

According to Leeming, Cleaver rejected Baldwin's novel, *Another Country*, as "irresponsible" for not accurately portraying "authentic" blackness and social resistance, noting Baldwin's homosexuality.

³¹ LeRoi Jones, "American Sexual Reference: Black Male," in *Home: Social Essays* (New York: Akashic Books, 2009), 204, 206.

In this reprint, Baraka writes in his "Home: New Introduction" a disavowal of his earlier views on homosexuality. He referred to these views, explicitly, as "wrongheaded and unscientific" (13).

³² Angelique C. Harris, "Marginalization by the Marginalized: Race, Homophobia, Heterosexism, and the 'Problem of the 21st Century,'" *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 21, no. 4 (2009): 433; Cf. Paula C. Rust, "The Impact of Multiple Marginalizations," in *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology*, ed. E. Disch (Mountain View: Mayfield, 2000), 248-249; Gregory M. Herek and John P. Capitanio, "Black Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States," *Journal of Sex Research* 32, no. 2 (1995): 95-97.

³³ Stephen E. Kilianski, "Explaining Heterosexual Men's Attitudes Toward Women and Gay Men: The Theory of Exclusively Masculine Identity," *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* 4, no. 1 (2003): 38-41; Dominic J. Parrott, Henry E. Adams, and Amos Zeichner, "Homophobia: Personality and Attitudinal Correlates," *Personality and Individual Differences* 32 (2002): 1270-1271.

³⁴ Cf. Yoel Inbar, David A. Pizarro, and Paul Bloom, "Conservatives are More Easily Disgusted than Liberals," *Cognition and Emotion* 23, no. 4 (2009): 714-716; John A. Terizzi, Natalie J. Shook, and W. Larry Ventis, "Disgust: A Predictor of Social Conservatism and Prejudicial Attitudes Toward Homosexuals," *Personality and Individual Differences* 49, no. 6 (October 2010): 587-588; Bunmi O. Olatunji, Bieke D. Puncochar, and Lindsay Kramer, "Sex Matters: Examination of Disgust and Morality Judgments of Transgressions Committed by Homosexuals and Heterosexuals," *Personality and Individual Differences* 104 (2017): 297-298.

³⁵ Cf. Elizabeth Landau, Zain Verjee, and Antonia Mortensen, "Ugandan President: Homosexuals are 'Disgusting'" *CNN.com*, last modified February 25, 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/02/24/world/africa/uganda-homosexuality-interview/index.html>

³⁶ Cf. Frances Cress Welsing, *The Isis (Yssis) Papers: The Keys to the Colors* (New York: CW Publishing, 2004), 90-91.

³⁷ *LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey: A 27-Country Ipsos Survey*. Paris: Ipsos, 2021.

³⁸ Catherine Burns, "Book Review: Special Issue of Culture, Health and Sexuality," *Sexualities* 10, no. 2 (April 2007): 263-265.

³⁹ Patrick R. Ireland, "A Macro-Level Analysis of the Scope, Causes, and Consequences of Homophobia in Africa," *African Studies Review* 56, no. 2 (September 2013): 51.

⁴⁰ "Mugabe – Homosexuals are Worse than Pigs and Dogs," *ZambiaWatchDog.com*, last modified November 27, 2011, <https://www.zambiawatchdog.com/mugabe-homosexuals-are-worse-than-pigs-and-dogs/>; Ariel Rubin, "Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill: Satan's Agents and the Real Reason Behind It," *HuffPost.com*, last modified May 25, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ugandas-anti-homosexualit_b_397090.

⁴¹ Paul Semugoma, Steave Nemande, and Stefan D. Baral, "The Irony of Homophobia in Africa," *The Lancet* 380, no. 9839 (July-August 2012): 312.

⁴² Ireland, 51.

⁴³ Leah Buckle, "African Sexuality and the Legacy of Imported Homophobia," *Stonewall.org*, last modified October 20, 2020, <https://www.stonewall.org/about-us/news/african-sexuality-and-legacy-imported-homophobia>.

Interestingly, it is those countries who liberated themselves from British colonization who are most likely (19 of the 36 countries with anti-sodomy laws in Africa) to prohibit homosexual activity.

⁴⁴ Ireland, 54; Cf. Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of and Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 1-33 *passim*; Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Culture of New Capitalism* (New York: Norton Books, 1998), 131-178 *passim*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁶ Bob Roehr, "How Homophobia is Fuelling Africa's HIV Epidemic," *BMJ* (May 2010): 340; Buckle, 2020.

⁴⁷ "Letter to US Global AIDS Coordinator about 'Abstinence-Only' Funding and Homophobia in Uganda," *HRW.org*, last modified October 11, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/10/11/letter-us-global-aids-coordinator-about-abstinence-only-funding-and-homophobia#>.

⁴⁸ Kapya J. Kaoma, "The Marriage of Convenience: The U.S. Christian Right, African Christianity, and Postcolonial Politics of Sexual Identity," in *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression*, ed. Meredith L. Weiss and Michael J. Bosia (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 76.

⁴⁹ Nathalie Baptiste, "It's Not Just Uganda: Behind the Christian Right's Onslaught in Africa," *TheNation.com*, last modified April 4, 2014, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/its-not-just-uganda-behind-christian-rights-onslaught-africa/>.

⁵⁰ Marcia Oliver, "Transnational Sex Politics, Conservative Christianity, and Antigay Activism in Uganda," *Studies in Social Justice* 7, no. 1 (2013): 100.

⁵¹ Jonathan Dollimore, "Desire and Difference: Homosexuality, Race, Masculinity," in *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, ed. Harilaos Stecopoulos and Michael Ubel (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 24; Cf. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 158-177 *passim*.

⁵² Dawn M. Szymanski and Arpana Gupta, "Examining the Relationship Between Multiple Internalized Oppressions and African American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning Persons' Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 56, no. 1 (2009): 110.

⁵³ Audre Lorde, "There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions," *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin: Homophobia and Education* 14, nos. 3-4 (1983): 9.

⁵⁴ Juan Battle, Cathy J. Cohen, Dorian Warren, Gerard Ferferson, and Suzette Audam, *Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud. Black Pride Survey 2000* (New York: Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2002), 6, 59; Harris, 432; Gregory M. Herek and John P. Capitanio, "Black Heterosexuals' Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States," *Journal of Sex Research* 32, no. 2 (1995): 95-97.

Interestingly, Herek and Capitanio found that both heterosexual African American men and women were more likely than heterosexual white men and women to support civil rights protections for homosexual men and women. However, Gregory Lewis found through a robust, multi-decade survey conducted between 1973 and 2000, that African American men and women held just as, or more severe anti-homosexual attitudes than did white men and women, which Lewis connects to African American religiosity.

⁵⁵ Harris, 433.

⁵⁶ Mark J. Kiss, Melanie A. Morrison, and Todd G. Morrison, "A Meta-Analytic Review of the Association Between Disgust and Prejudice Toward Gay Men," *Journal of Homosexuality* 67, no. 5 (Dec. 2020): 690.

⁵⁷ Molly P. Tapias, Jack Glaser, Dacher Keltner, Kristen Vasquez, and Thomas Wickens. "Emotion and Prejudice: Specific Emotions Toward Outgroups," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 10, no. 1 (January 2007): 35-36.

⁵⁸ Yoel Inbar, David A. Pizarro, Ravi Iyer, and Jonathan Haidt. "Disgust Sensitivity, Political Conservatism, and Voting," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 3, no. 5 (September 2012): 537-538, 541-543; John A. Terrizzi, Natalie J. Shook, and W. Larry Ventis. "Disgust: A Predictor of Social Conservatism and Prejudicial Attitudes Toward Homosexuals," *Personality and Individual Differences* 49, no. 6 (October 2010): 587-588, 591; Cf. Jarret T. Crawford, Yoel Inbar, and Victoria Maloney, "Disgust Sensitivity Selectively Predicts Attitudes Toward Groups that Threaten (or Uphold) Traditional Sexual Morality," *Personality and Individual Differences* 70 (2014): 218-219, 221-222.

⁵⁹ Carolyn F. Wong, George Weiss, George Ayala, and Michele D. Kipke, "Harassment, Discrimination, Violence, and Illicit Drug Use Among Young Men Who Have Sex with Men," *AIDS Education and Prevention* 22, no. 4 (2010): 286-287, 295-296; Anthony, R. D'Augelli and Scott L. Hershberger, "Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth in Community Settings: Personal Challenges and Mental Health Problems," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 21, no. 4 (August 1993): 421-425, 442-446; Gary W. Harper and Margaret Schneider, "Oppression and Discrimination Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People and Communities: A Challenge for Community Psychology," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 31 (2003): 243-244, 246-250; Ilan Meyer, "Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence," *Psychological Bulletin* 129, no. 5 (September 2003): 674-675, 676-678, 683-690.

⁶⁰ Margaret Rosario, Joyce Hunter, Shira Maguen, Marya Gwadz, and Raymond Smith, "The Coming-Out Process and Its Adaptational and Health-Related Associations Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths: Stipulation and Exploration of a Model," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 29, 1 (February 2001): 136-137, 139-141, 151-154, 157; Gregory L. Greenwood, Edward W. White, Kimberly Page-Shafer, Edward Bein, Jay Paul, and Ron D. Stall, "Correlates of Heavy Substance Use Among Young Gay and Bisexual Men: The San Francisco Young Men's Study," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 61, no. 2 (2001): 105-106, 107-112; Cf. Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166-170; Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, and Meyer, 2008a, 510-511, 518-519.

⁶¹ Margaret Rosario, Eric W. Schrimshaw, Joyce Hunter, and Anna Levy-Warren, "The Coming-Out Process of Young Lesbian and Bisexual Women: Are There Butch/Femme Differences in Sexual Identity Development?" *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 38, no. 1 (2007): 46-48; "Ethnic/Racial Differences in the Coming-Out Process of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youths: A Comparison of Sexual Identity Development Over Time," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 10, no. 3 (2004): 216, 225; Cf. Dawn M. Szymanski, Susan Kashubeck-West, and Jill Meyer, "Internalized Heterosexism: Measurement, Psychosocial Correlates, and Research Directions," *The Counseling Psychologist* 36, no. 4 (2008): 525-526, 564-566.

⁶² Doug Meyer, *Violence Against Queer People: Race, Class, Gender, and the Persistence of Anti-LGBT Discrimination* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 25-29.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 43; Cf. Jessie Klein, *The Bully Society: School Shootings and the Crisis of Bullying in America's Schools* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 81-95; Mark McCormack, *The Declining Significance of Homophobia: How Teenage Boys are Redefining Masculinity and Heterosexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23-36; C.J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're A Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 39-51, 71-77.

⁶⁴ Linda Wagner-Martin, *Toni Morrison: A Literary Life* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 12.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁶ Gema Ortega, "The First of Many Heroines: Claudia's Dialogic Escape in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*," *South Atlantic Review* 83, no. 2 (Summer 2018).

⁶⁷ Toni Morrison, "Nobel Lecture," recorded 7 December 1993, on *NobelPrize.org*, streaming audio, accessed June 6, 2022, <https://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/?id=1502>.

⁶⁸ Ortega, 2018.

⁶⁹ Ding Yang and Kong Xiangguo, "Tragedy of Self-Splitting: A Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 4, no. 2 (2010): 298.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Morrison utilized this aesthetic dynamic between mother and daughter again in *Sula*, where Helene Wright is described as being "grateful, deep down in her heart, that the child [Nel] had not inherited the great beauty that was hers," going on to enlist stereotypical physical features of African American "ugliness" (18).

⁷² Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Vintage International, 2007), 91.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 92, 93.

Fatoumata Keita pointed out, in her analysis of Morrison's *God Help the Child*, "Conjuring Aesthetic Blackness," a similar dynamic operating in the character development of Lula Ann Bridewell, whose experience, Keita argues, "illustrates the idea that childhood trauma or sins return like lingering ghosts to visit and haunt their subjects in adult life" (44). Of course, however, Pecola Breedlove does not make it to adulthood in *The Bluest Eye*.

⁷⁵ Toni Morrison, *Sula* (New York: Vintage International, 2004), 20.

⁷⁶ Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 205.

⁷⁷ Pecola's interaction with Mr. Yacobowski, the candy shop owner, serves to emphasize her undesirability from both white and African American interlocutors. Yacobowski avoids making eye contact and physically touching Pecola vis-à-vis his association of blackness with uncleanness and disease.

⁷⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 178.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

⁸⁰ Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 147.

Interestingly, Morrison may be playing off Jim Crow-era stereotypes concerning African Americans' putatively distinctive odor here. By noting the assailants' odor, Morrison turns this stereotype on its head, "othering" the pair within the context of African American narrative and connoting young Cholly and Darlene's social positioning relative to white people in the community.

⁸¹ bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 166.

⁸² Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 149-151.

⁸³ A non-fiction example of this sort of "Encounter" imposed on young African American girls appears in the pages of Maya Angelou's famous memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Maya recalls being raped by Mr. Freeman at the age of eight, an experience which the author uses as a metaphor for racism in the United States. Referring to this man pseudonymously as "Freeman" may be a symbol for Angelou's understanding of the condition of African Americans in the wake of emancipation in the American South: i.e., vulnerable women; debased and dislocated men. Young Angelou, the writer recalls, initially blames herself as an accomplice in her own abuse, oscillating between self-blame and suicidal ideation as she "longed for death" but "didn't want to die anywhere near Mr. Freeman" (80-81). Under the influence of several elders, Angelou interprets the experience as a sort of *rite de passage* – a coming to adulthood. We learn shortly after that, through her molestation, compounded by her experience in court as a claimant and her own perception of the poorer African Americans of St. Louis, Angelou Acts Out her trauma against her less fortunate peers in attitude if not in interaction. For example, she conflates Mr. Freeman's and his lawyer's behavior with racial characteristics as she refers to the latter as an "Old, black, nasty thing" (83-84). This may be a consequence of her color- as opposed to race-conscious upbringing where terms like "quadroon" and "octoroon" were used to describe various family members and acquaintances, setting particular social expectations within public spaces. Similarly, the white supremacist structure of the Arkansas school system that Angelou and her brother were subject to served to reinforce racist notions of intelligence and worth. We find in the memoir's early pages Angelou speaking ill of her classmates as "shockingly backward," while she and her brother "were moved up a grade because our teachers thought that we country children would make our classmates feel inferior – and we did" (62). The St. Louis school system was no better. Angelou explains how teachers there "tended to act very siditty, and talked down to their students from the lofty heights of education and whitefolks' enunciation," demonstrating clearly the distribution of social value and one's proximity to whiteness (63).

⁸⁴ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

⁸⁵ Michael Tillotson, *Invisible Jim Crow: Contemporary Ideological Threats to the Internal Security of African Americans* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2011), 2.

"Fighting for space within the dominant structure of society, through the appropriation of its aesthetics, symbols, and assumption, only to be relegated to its fringe" (Tillotson, 2).

⁸⁶ Keita, 53, 43.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 43-53.

⁸⁸ Cf. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 11-12.

“My mother’s voice drones on. She is not talking to me. She is talking to the puke, but she is calling it my name: Claudia...My mother’s anger humiliates me; her words chafe my cheeks, and I am crying. I do not know that she is not angry at me, but at my sickness. I believe she despises my weakness for letting the sickness ‘take holt.’... But was it really like that? As painful as I remember? Only mildly. Or rather, it was a productive and fructifying pain.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 25-26; Cf. Linda Wagner-Martin, *Toni Morrison: A Literary Life* (New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 6.

One of Morrison’s biographers, Linda Wagner-Martin, argues that Morrison interpreted her own mother’s singing and choice of song as “a kind of probing into something and then working it out, in addition to whatever release it provided.”

⁹² The MacTeers mean well by their children. They have simply acquiesced to the conventions of the aesthetics of whiteness and seek to impart their values onto their children as any parent is wont to do.

⁹³ Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 38-39.

⁹⁴ Ortega, “The First of Many Heroines.”

⁹⁵ Leeming, *James Baldwin*, 53.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ James Baldwin, “East River, Downtown: Postscript to a Letter From Harlem,” in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dell Publishers, 1961), 73.

¹⁰⁰ Leeming, *James Baldwin*, 21.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 23; Cf. James Baldwin, “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood,” *Playboy*, January 1985, <https://www.cusd80.com/cms/lib/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/1073/Full%20Text%20Here-be- Dragons-James-Baldwin.pdf>.

¹⁰² Leeming, *James Baldwin*, 24.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁴ James Baldwin, “Letter from a Region in My Mind,” *The New Yorker* (November 10, 1962).

¹⁰⁵ Leeming, *James Baldwin*, 45.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Baldwin and Marlon Brando, a heterosexual, became close as frequent patrons of the popular Greenwich Village nightclub, The Calypso. The pair first met while Baldwin worked bussing tables at the club. Later on, they would meet again as fellow artists and intellectuals of the Village. Baldwin explained his reticence to express his emotions toward Brando to biographer David Leeming, who reveals that Baldwin cherished his friendship with Brando too much to risk losing it. The pair remained lifelong friends until Baldwin's death in 1987.

¹⁰⁹ James Baldwin, *Another Country* (New York: Vintage International, 1993), 24.

¹¹⁰ The scene is not altogether dissimilar to the initial dynamic between Clay and Lula in Amiri Baraka's play, *Dutchman*. Clay becomes interested in Lula as a result of Lula's flamboyant behavior and thick flirtation directed at Clay. Clay plays along at first, declaring "I'm prepared for anything. How about you?" to Lula, interpreting her advances as sexual rather than predatory. He seemingly ignores her entitled behavior (e.g., littering, admitting to being a chronic liar – "It helps me control the world" – chiding Clay for his youth and appearance, grabbing and jostling Clay's arms without permission). Lula leads Clay on, promiscuously, allowing the young man to believe he is about to acquire the object of his desire – a white woman's body – until the second scene where Lula begins to berate and demean Clay. Eventually, Clay lets loose on Lula once her racial prodding becomes too much. "I could rip that *Times* right out of his hand," decries Clay, "as skinny and middle-classed as I am, I could rip that paper out of his hand and just as easily rip out his throat. It takes no great effort. For what? To kill you soft idiots? You don't understand anything but luxury." Rather than throw his life off a bridge like Rufus, Clay throws his away in a fit of rage against a train car full of white on-lookers led by his white nemesis, Lula. In either case, submission or assertion, the African American man, struggling to comprehend his sexuality within a white supremacist superstructure, caves in and loses his life as the result of a lifetime of struggle for identity – selfhood.

¹¹¹ Baldwin, *Another Country*, 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Baldwin, "Letter from a Region in My Mind."

¹¹⁸ Baldwin, *Another Country*, 27.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Eric, an old lover of Rufus introduced much later in the novel, is also white. However, Baldwin provides very little detail of the couple's relationship from a racial perspective – the relationship is very much marked by the homophobia of mid-century American society and its aftermaths.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 44.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 323, emphasis original.

¹²⁹ Ibid, emphasis added.

¹³⁰ Cf. Elijah G. Ward, “Homophobia, Hypermaculinity and the US Black Church,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 7, no. 5 (October 2005): 493-501.

¹³¹ Cf. Welsing, *The Isis (Yssis) Papers*, 81-92.

¹³² Cf. Ken Braun, “Dave Agema Sees ‘Genocide’ by ‘Homosexual Agenda’ Against African Americans – What’s Next?” *Mlive.com*, last modified March 12, 2014, https://www.mlive.com/lansing-news/2014/03/ken_braun_dave_agema_paranoia.html.

¹³³ Ibid., 333, emphasis original.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 336, emphasis original.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 30, emphasis original.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 51, emphasis original.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 52.

We learn later, ironically, that Leona believes the same of Rufus. That it is he who “sees it where it ain’t.” According to her, since forging their relationship, Rufus had been growing more and more self-conscious of his being with a white woman, while she remained relatively oblivious. Rufus would notice sideways glances on the subway or in the street from white men, women, and children, and grew increasingly emboldened to address them forthright – typically with harsh words and/or violence. This “Encounter” serves to emphasize the disconnect between white liberals and African Americans concerning race – the former sympathetic, though oblivious; the latter hyper-aware, and self-conscious.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 57, emphasis original.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 52, emphasis original.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴⁴ His initial reaction to Vivaldo’s concern was mockery and contempt.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 78-79.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 86.

¹ Cf. Anna-Leena Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms in African and Afrodiasporic Literatures* (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021), 1; Emma Bond, *Writing Migration Through the Body* (Cham: Palgrave

Macmillan, 2018), 1-4 *passim*; Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2-23.

² Cf. Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 2; Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings," *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3.

³ Cf. Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 5-10 *passim*.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 10; Hiroki Igarashi and Hiro Saito, "Cosmopolitanism as Cultural Capital: Exploring the Intersection of Globalization and Stratification," *Cultural Sociology* 8, no. 3 (2014), 225; Vered Amit and Pauline Gardiner Barber, Barber, "Mobility and Cosmopolitanism: Complicating Interaction Between Aspiration and Practice," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 22, no. 5 (2015): 545.

⁵ Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 12.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 11; Pnina Werbner, "The Dialectics of Urban Cosmopolitanism: Between Tolerance and Intolerance in Cities of Strangers," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 22, no. 1 (2015): 570.

⁷ Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 89. Cf. Kudzai P. Matereke, "'Breaking Free from Epistemic Enclosures': Re-Imagining 'Travel' and 'Mobility' in Discourses of Cosmopolitanism," *Transfers* 1, no. 2 (2011): 20.

⁸ Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 90. Cf. Nina Glick Schiller and Andrew Irving, "Introduction: What's in a Word? What's in a Question?" in *Whose Cosmopolitanism? Critical Perspectives, Relationalities and Discontents*, ed. Nina Glick Schiller and Andrew Irving (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 3.

⁹ Toivanen, *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms*, 92.

¹⁰ Cf. Christopher I. Foster, "'This is How We Refugee': Neoliberalism from Haiti to Palestine and the Economics of Refugee Form," *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 352-357; David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 106.

¹¹ Shelly Habecker, "Becoming African American: African Immigrant Youth in the United States and Hybrid Assimilation," *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 2017): 55.

¹² Cf. Latoya Teague, "Not American Enough: African Diaspora, Unfinished Migrations, and Transnational Children's Literature," *Journal of Children's Literature* 47, no. 2 (2021): 35.

¹³ Kevin J.A. Thomas, "Racial Identity and the Political Ideologies of Afro-Caribbean Immigrants," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 45, no. 1 (2018): 23 & 26; Cf. James D. Unnever and Shaun L. Gabbidon, "Do Blacks Speak with one Voice? Immigrants, Public Opinions, and Perceptions of Criminal Injustices," *Justice Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (May 2013).

In fact, Thomas found that Africana migrants from the Caribbean tend to get more conservative in their sociopolitical views as they get more and more assimilated. The lines of demarcation between them and African Americans are criminal justice, race relations, and attitudes toward immigrants.

¹⁴ Cf. Habecker, 55.

¹⁵ For example, Haitian youths have been observed to distinguish themselves between "just comes" – those with foreign speech patterns and dress – and "cover ups" – those who self-identify as African American in response to racial discrimination. On the one hand, the "just comes" either attempt to retain their traditional heritage and distinguish themselves from African Americans based on preconceived notions of their behavior and cultural dispositions, or they identify themselves with the mainstream society and seek to

assimilate to its culture. They tend to group together in separate communities, build community organizations, and establish distinct social, economic, and cultural networks to protect/project their interests in the mainstream. On the other hand, the “cover ups” refuse to succumb to social pressures to assimilate to American culture and throw their lot in with African Americans in solidarity against racial discrimination. In either case, the Africana migrant remains marginal to both the white mainstream and African American culture and society, and experience discrimination based on either their racial or cultural background.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid.; Emeka Onwubu, “Two Patterns of Migration (Nigeria and the United States): Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Immigration,” *Forum on Public Policy* (Spring 2007).

¹⁷ Cf. Tanya Golash-Boza, Maria D. Duenas, and Chia Xiong, “White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Global Capitalism in Migration Studies,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 63, no. 13 (2019): 1742-1743; Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants,” *Interminority Affairs in the U.S.: Pluralism at the Crossroads* 530 (Nov. 1993); Min Zhou and Carl L. Bankston, *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1998), 71-107 *passim*.

¹⁸ Saskia Furst, “Palimpsests of Ancestral Memories: Black Women’s Collective Identity Development in Short Stories by Edwidge Danticat and Dionne Brand,” *English Academy Review* 34, no. 2 (2017): 66 & 69.

¹⁹ Ibid., 69

²⁰ Ibid., 70-71.

²¹ Golash-Boza, Duenas, and Xiong, “White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Global Capitalism,” 1749.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cf. Violet S. Johnson, “When Blackness Stings: African and Afro-Caribbean Immigrants, Race, and Racism in Late Twentieth-Century America,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 36, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 40.

Johnson raises the point that due to African Americans’ exposure to anti-Haitian propaganda during the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, African Americans were generally averse to working or socializing with Haitian immigrants, despite Reverend Jesse Jackson’s and the NAACP’s willingness to partner with Haitian community leaders to challenge US immigration policy.

²⁵ Ibid., 1750-1752; Cf. Portes & Zhou, “The New Second Generation,” 82-87; Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 258-305 *passim*; Teague, “Not American Enough,” 35-36.

²⁶ Cf. Thomas, “Racial Identity and the Political Ideologies of Afro-Caribbean Immigrants,” 26 & 29; Habecker, “Becoming African American;” Steve Song, “Finding One’s Place: Shifting Ethnic Identities of Recent Immigrant Children from China, Haiti, and Mexico in the United States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 6 (June 2010): 1006.

²⁷ Cf. Mary C. Waters, “Ethnic and Racial Identities of Second-Generation Black Immigrants in New York City,” *The International Migration Review* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 803-805, 807.

²⁸ Johnson, “When Blackness Stings,” 54.

²⁹ Song, “Finding One’s Place,” 1021.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.,

³² Thomas, "Racial Identity and the Political Ideologies of Afro-Caribbean Immigrants," 28.

³³ Johnson, "When Blackness Stings," 31.

³⁴ Ibid., 39.

Johnson notes that there is acute tension between Haitian and Jamaican migrants living in Boston, MA, rooted in both competition over available resources and in the historical relationship between Haiti and Jamaica.

³⁵ Onwubu, "Two Patterns of Migration."

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cf. Annett Fleischer, "Family, obligations, and Migration: The Role of Kinship in Cameroon," *Demographic Research* 16, no. 13 (2007): 413-440 *passim*; Derik Gelderblom, "Towards a Synthetic Model of Migration," in *Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants*, ed. Pieter Kok, Derik Gelderblom, John O. Oucho, and Johan van Zyl (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), 7-38 *passim*; Marie Wentzel, Johan Viljoen, and Pieter Kok, "Contemporary South African Migration Patterns and Intentions," in *Migration in South and Southern Africa: Dynamics and Determinants*, ed. Pieter Kok, Derik Gelderblom, John O. Oucho, and Johan van Zyl (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), 171-204 *passim*.

³⁹ Douglas S. Massey, "Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration," *Population Index* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17; Fleischer, "Family, Obligations, and Migration," 413-414.

⁴¹ Massey, "Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration," 3.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Gordon F. De Jong, Kerry Richter, and Pimonpan Isarabhakdi, "Gender, Values, and Intentions to Move in Rural Thailand," *The International Migration Review* 30, no. 3 (Autumn 1996); Gordon F. De Jong, Andrea G. Johnson, and Kerry Richter, "Determinants of Migration Values and Expectations in Rural Thailand," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 5, no. 4 (1996): 414.

⁴⁴ 'Dimeji Togunde, Ayobami Ojebode, and Amanda Vocke, "Chapter 2: Media Representation of America and Youth Migration Intentions," in *Across the Atlantic: African Immigrants in the United States Diaspora*, ed. Emmanuel Yewah and 'Dimeji Togunde (Champaign: Common Ground Publishing LLC, 2010), 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 10; Cf. Charles Ambler, "Mass Media and Leisure in Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 1 (2002): 119-136 *passim*.

⁴⁶ Togunde, Ojebode, Vocke, "Media Representation of America and Youth Migration Intentions," 20.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18.

Other popular US topics that receive coverage in Nigerian print media include the country's promotion of democracy and philanthropy throughout the world (13.1%), trouble with social issues (10.8%), and crime and insecurity (10.6%). In total, though, 59.6% of all print media stories published in Nigeria – mainly newspapers and soft sell publications - portrayed the US in a negative light.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

⁵¹ Ibid., 33.

⁵² Bridget Teboh, "Chapter 5: Reproducing African Communities in the US: Settlement Patterns and Social Organizations," in *Across the Atlantic: African Immigrants in the United States Diaspora*, eds Emmanuel Yewah and 'Dimeji Togunde (Champaign: Common Ground Publishing, 2010), 79.

⁵³ Maximilian Feldner, *Narrating the New Diaspora: 21st Century Nigerian Literature in Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 15.

⁵⁴ This can also be explained by the socioeconomic disparity between Haitian immigrants and Nigerian immigrants. Those who choose to leave Nigeria, for example, to migrate to the US tend to be educated, young, and middle class.

⁵⁵ Teboh, "Reproducing African Communities in the US," 75.

In fact, the first order of business for Nigerians upon landing in America is to set about looking for national or ethnic-based aid and/or community organizations that they can use to get them by, both culturally and financially, until they are able to secure employment and enough savings sustain themselves. Teboh reports that roughly 95% of all Nigerian migrants to the US are affiliated with at least one African social organizations in the US.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid., 76.

⁵⁷ Toyin Falola and Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniya. *Nigeria* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2015), 176.

⁵⁸ Feldner, *Narrating the New Diaspora*, 20.

⁵⁹ Chinwe Ezinna Oriji, "From Biafra to Police Brutality: Challenging Localized Blackness Toward Globally Racialized Ethnicities of Nigerians in the US," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, no.9 (May 2019): 1605.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Emmanuel Ngwira, "Gendering the Transnational: History, Migration and Material Culture in Zoe Wicomb's *The One that Got Away* and Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*," *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2 (2017): 292.

⁶² Ibid., 293.

⁶³ Ezekiel Umo Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States: Race, Identity, and Acculturation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 41.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 42; Cf. Khalid M. Alkhaziji, William L. Gardner, Jeanette S. Martin, and Joseph G. P. Paolillo, "The Acculturation of Immigrants to US Organizations: The Case of Muslim Employees," *Management Communication Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (November 1997): 215-263 *passim*.

⁶⁵ Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States*, 41.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 43; Ezekiel Umo Ette, "The Scientific Enterprise, Identity and Power in Africa: The Case of the Annang of Nigeria," *The International Journal of Science in Society* 1, no. 4 (2009): 215-226 *passim*.

⁶⁷ Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States*, 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷⁰ Cf. Thomas Y. Owusu, "The Role of Ghanaian Immigrant Associations in Toronto, Canada." *International Migration Review* 34, no. 4 (December 2000): 1155-1181 *passim*; D. Cox, "Welfare Services for Migrants: Can they be Better Panned?" *International Migration* 23, no. 1 (March 1985): 73-95 *passim*; Phyllis Hulewat, "Resettlement: A Cultural and Psychological Crisis," *Social Work* 41, no. 2 (March 1996): 129-135 *passim*; James A. Neff and Sue K. Hoppe, "Race/Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Psychological Distress: Fatalism and Religiosity as Cultural Resources," *Journal of Community Psychology* 21, no. 1 (January 1993): 3-20 *passim*.

⁷¹ Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States*, 44, 47, 49; Hulewat, "Resettlement," 129.

⁷² Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States*, 100; A. O. Olutayo, *Kinship Networks and International Migration in Nigeria* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 28-30.

⁷³ Ette, *Nigerian Immigrants in the United States*, 101.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 141-143.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 103, 121, 132-135.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

Khalid M. Alkheziji, William L. Gardner, Jeanette S. Martin, and Joseph G.P. Paolillo, in "The Acculturation of Immigrants to US Organization," add that the migrant subject's degree of religiosity may also affect how the migrant subject acculturates and adapts as well.

⁷⁷ Amy Hagopian et al., "The Flight of Physicians from West Africa: Views of African Physicians and Implications for Policy," *Social Science and Medicine* 61, no. 8 (2005): 1750; Cf. Rachel R. Reynolds, "An African Brain Drain: Igbo Decisions to Immigrate to the US," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 92 (2002): 277-283.

Nigeria spend over \$20 million annually on its citizens' medical education in the US despite retaining a small percentage of these migrants in hospitals at home. This has contributed to the creation of Nigeria's notorious "brain drain" that began in the mid-1980s, expanded after the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998, and continues to this day. Along with the better financial prospects perceived to exist in the US, educated Nigerians are motivated to relocate to the US for several specific reasons: 1.) US medical schools, as are students educated at these institutions by association, are held in very high esteem by members of the Nigerian medical industry; 2.) additionally, pay for medical workers in Nigeria is substantially lower than it is in the US (the average healthcare worker in the US makes roughly \$65,000 annually versus roughly \$13,000 annually in Nigeria); 3.) furthermore, working conditions in Nigeria, particularly in the rural regions to the North, are far outpaced by the US who have abundant potable water, well-maintained facilities, better job security, and more opportunities for professional training.

⁷⁸ Olutayo, *Kinship Networks and International Migration in Nigeria*, 15; World Bank. *Development Indicator Database*. 2004; World Bank. BRCA Team Interviews in Abuja and Lagos, Nigeria Office: World Bank, 2005.

⁷⁹ Katherine C. Smith, “Splintered Families, Enduring Connections: An Interview with Edwidge Danticat,” in *Conversations with Edwidge Danticat*, ed. Maxine Lavon Montgomery (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 23.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸² Dwyer Murphy, “The Art of Not Belonging,” in *Conversations with Edwidge Danticat*, ed. Maxine Lavon Montgomery (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 155.

⁸³ Opal Palmer Adisa, “Up Close and Personal: Edwidge Danticat on Haitian Identity and the Writer’s Life,” in *Conversations with Edwidge Danticat*, ed. Maxine Lavon Montgomery (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 51.

⁸⁴ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “Award-winning Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Talks Career, Feminism & Grief on the ARISE Interview,” *Arise News*, August 2, 2021, Interview, 3:32, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_B0YPaiyeQ&t=215s&ab_channel=AriseNews.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:00.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:56.

⁸⁷ Feldner, *Narrating the New African Diaspora*, 107-108.

⁸⁸ In the interview included in the 2015 reprint of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Danticat explains that the family name of the Caco women was appropriated from the revolutionary fighters who resisted the US during their occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. The fighters took their name from a Haitian bird called a *taco* known for eating lizards. The fighters, in turn, referred to the Americans as *zandolits* – lizards – to round of the reference. Danticat’s own grandfather was, in fact, a Caco as a younger man.

⁸⁹ Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (New York: SOHO Press, Inc., 2015), 19.

⁹⁰ This is perhaps an allusion to the transition of power and the chaos that ensued after the Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier regime in 1986. Changing the airport’s name represents the rebels’ pursuit of moving past the Duvalier era, leaving Jean-Claude – the crying child on the plane and the head of state – with only two options: flee the country or die. The protesters outside the airport represent the urban elite who made up the Duvaliers’ base of support throughout their reign.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 4, 135.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 41, emphasis original.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 48, 93.

Emphasis is placed on retaining the Creole language for migrants among those Haitians who choose or are forced to remain in Haiti because of the power the language has in ensuring the speaker remembers its roots. This value is consistent with the rural Haitian preoccupation with preserving Haitian tradition and

culture, especially after migrating to foreign lands. However, in both Haiti and America, the value placed upon retaining one's traditional language and culture contradicts the pressures of the mainstream culture to assimilate and conform. In America the migrant and/or minority is expected to speak "proper" English, dress modestly (as a woman), be educated – but not "too educated" – and live or pursue a middle-class lifestyle. Among the upper-class in Haiti this is similar. For generations one's social status has been demarcated by one's physical and cultural proximity to the French and French culture. For example, Martine explains that "[i]n Haiti, it would not be possible for someone like Marc to love someone like me. He is from a very upstanding family. His grandfather was a French man."⁹⁷ This perspective harkens back to Haiti's history of mulatto hegemony.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 48-49

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 53, 56.

¹⁰² Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 29.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Carolyn M. West, "Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel: Historical Images of Black Women and their Implications for Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 32, no. 3 (1995): 458-466 *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Joel R. Anderson, Elise Holland, Courtney Heldreth, and Scott P. Johnson, "Revisiting the Jezebel Stereotype: The Impact of Target Race on Sexual Objectification," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (August 2018): 461-464, 466-467, 470-474 *passim*; Seanna Leath, Martinique Jones, Morgan C. Jerald, and Tiani R. Perkins, "An Investigation of Jezebel Stereotype Awareness, Gendered Racial Identity and Sexual Beliefs and Behaviours Among Black Adult Women," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 24, no. 4 (2022): 517-520, 523-529 *passim*.

¹⁰⁷ Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, 232.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 67.

Of course, it helps that Joseph also spoke "a form of Creole," having originated "from a middle-class New Orleans family."

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 69.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 70.

¹¹² Ibid., 71.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ibid., 93.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 97.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 157, emphasis original.

¹¹⁸ Marion C. Rohrleitner, “Collecting and Releasing Embodied Memories,” in *Narrating History, Home, and Diaspora: Critical Essays on Edwidge Danticat*, ed. Maia L. Butler, Joanna Davis-McElligatt, and Megan Feifer (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 231.

¹¹⁹ Carine Mardorossian, “‘Aha!’: Danticat and Creolization,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat*, ed. Jana Evans Braziel and Nadege T. Clitandre (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2021), 442.

¹²⁰ Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, 235.

¹²¹ Ibid., 239.

¹²² Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Anchor Books, 2014), 7.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ibid., 10-14.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 136.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 137.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 303.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 273.

¹³¹ Ibid., 361.

¹³² Ibid., 303.

¹³³ “Americanah,” here, resembles Danticat’s “in-between person.” The term connotes a Nigerian migrant who has absorbed enough of their host country’s cultural and social peculiarities that they no longer belong to any one group. Their cosmopolitanism effectively alienates them from their country of origin and maintains a barrier between themselves and full inclusion into their host country.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹³⁵ The reader is not made aware of Bartholomew’s ethnic background.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹³⁷ “Lost” in the psychic sense rather than the physical. In other words, Bartholomew had gone off to America and had become enough of an American to be unrecognizable to Nigerians back home, yet too foreign to sufficiently assimilate abroad.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 150.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 35-36.

¹⁴⁴ The principle of American/British as superior applies in the commercial context as well. The reader gets a brief glimpse of how Obinze was able to acquire his newfound real estate wealth with the help of Chief. In addition to his pitch, Chief provides Obinze with a bit of business advice: “And after you register your own company, you must find a white man. Find one of your white friends in England. Tell everybody he is your General Manager. You will see how doors will open for you because you have an oyinbo General Manager. Even Chief has some white men that he brings in for show when he needs them. That is how Nigeria works. I’m telling you.” While ambiguous, again, the implication is that the involvement of white intermediaries in one’s business grants a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of other Nigerians due to Americans’ and English supposed intellectual, social, and economic place in the minds of Nigerians throughout the novel.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 170.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 170-171.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 171.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 171-172.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 172.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 173.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 215.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 216.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 257-258.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 258.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 336-337.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 337.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 339.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 340.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 341.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 377.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 388.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 396.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 396-397.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 397.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 409.

¹⁷² Ibid., 418.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 428.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 470.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 475.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 475-476.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Ibid., 495, 502.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 503.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 504.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 538-539.

¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Heredity and the Public Schools," in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 2002), 118-121; Cf. Maulana Karenga, "Afrocentricity and Multicultural Education: Concept, Challenge and Contribution," in *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, ed. Ama Mazama (Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2003), 80-81.

² John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 38.

³ Cf. Noam Chomsky, "Democracy and Education," in *Chomsky on Miseducation*, ed. Donaldo Macedo (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 37-47.

⁴ Cf. Molefi K. Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance* (Malden: Polity, 2008), 79.

⁵ Cf. Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2009), 18, 56.

⁶ Cf. Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 45.

⁷ Cf. bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 18-21; Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 39.

⁸ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 39.

⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹¹ Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 62-65.

¹² Ibid., 64.

¹³ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 73.

¹⁴ Cf. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 66.

¹⁵ Cf. Ibid., 69-71; hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking*, 38.

¹⁶ Christel N. Temple, *Transcendence and the Africana Literary Enterprise* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 191.

¹ Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 226

² John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French St.-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 3-4.

³ Ibid., 8.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 12; Cf. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies: A Comparison of St. Domingue and Cuba* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

⁶ Cf. Alexis Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haiti suivies de la vie du general J.-M. Borgella*, ed. Francois Dalencourt (Port-au-Prince: 1958).

⁷ Garrigus, 142.

⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁹ Critics of the regulations argued that the manumission tax incentivized colonial administrators to increase the granting of permissions for manumission for the revenues it garnered. Garrigus (2010) provides several examples of colonial government projects that were funded by the manumission tax between 1780 and 1789. Despite these complaints, though, manumissions levelled out between the north and the south - where manumissions halved between the 1760s and 1780s.

¹⁰ Ibid., 174.

This precipitous growth produced a greater reliance on armed free people of color for the colonial government to enforce and maintain the social order of St. Domingue.

¹¹ Ibid., 177.

¹² Ibid., 186.

¹³ It should be noted that these labels did not infringe upon free people of color's ability to amass wealth and property on St. Domingue; it meant only a social annoyance and marginalization in the public sphere. As discussed above, by the 1780s, free people of color on St. Domingue's wealth accumulation, primarily in landowners and planters in the southern regions, outpaced their white European counterparts by a significant margin.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁵ Elsewhere, such as in the West, free people of color were forced to declare loyalty to and respect for white authority. However, free militiamen in the Verrettes and Petite Riviere parishes refused these demands.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁸ David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 4.

¹⁹ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 17.

²⁰ Of course, as Sylviane Diouf has revealed in her masterful, *Slavery's Exiles*, enslaved peoples all over the New World had the capacity to communicate vast distances rather quickly through networks of free sympathizers, cunning though trusted slaves, cunning maroons, and others.

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 18-19.

²² Guillaume Thomas Francois Raynal quoted in C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 25.

²³ Cf. James, *Black Jacobins*, 80.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁵ Cf. Stenio Vincent, "Anti-Superstition Laws," in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds. Laurent Dubois, Kaima L. Glover, Nadeve Menard, Millery Polyne, and Chantalle F. Verna (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 265-266.

²⁶ Allegiance came at a price, though. According to James, the mulattoes drafted a concordat that demanded, among other things, their full equality in the goings on of the colony. The alliance ended in shambles just a few months later when voting began to ratify the aforementioned concordat. The poorer whites of Port-au-Prince, seeking to stir up chaos, captured and hanged a free Black man. A fire broke out in the city, which was blamed on the mulattoes who were retreating, and the fighting began. Pralotto, leader of the poorer whites, targeted rich whites, mulattoes, men, women, and children for slaughter. By the end, 2/3 of Port-au-Prince burned to the ground and dozens were killed in the streets.

²⁷ Jean-Jacques Dessalines quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 38.

²⁸ De Vastey specifically referred to Haitians as Blacks rather than as Africans, reflecting his allegiance and identification with the island nation and its struggle for liberation from colonialism and the writer's ambivalence towards Africa as a homeland for Blacks.

²⁹ Baron Pompee Valentin de Vastey quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53. De Vastey did, however, concede to disallowing French ownership of Haitian properties on account of their hostile relationship to Haiti.

³⁰ David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 56.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³² Guillaume Fabre Nicolas Geffrard quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 84.

³³ Cf. Nicholls, 117-118.

The Catholic church was perceived as yet another foreign power meddling in the affairs of an otherwise independent Haiti, allegedly upholding white supremacy within its Haitian hierarchy, and was held responsible for the development of color prejudice on the island.

³⁴ Louis Joseph Janvier quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 115.

Nicholls argues that, rather than believing these claims, Janvier was simply attempting to “project a favourable picture of Haiti” and the Salomon administration as a regime of national unity to the foreign press. He points out that when addressing his countrymen directly Janvier made clear that he viewed color prejudice, at least among the mulattoes in the Liberal Party, as a present obstacle to national unity and progress. The sentiment that color prejudice had disappeared in Haiti was one echoed by the mulatto opposition, as attested by its chief ideologues – Leon Laroche, Arthur Bowler, and Jacques-Nicolas Leger.

³⁵ Hannibal Price quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 126.

³⁶ According to the American State Department, by 1914, a year before the US invasion of Haiti, Germany controlled roughly 80% of Haitian commerce. The colony at Port-au-Prince was so lucrative, in fact, that the Germans sent troops to the city to protect the property of German nationals.

³⁷ To be sure, it may be argued that these distinctions, to a degree, were understood, *per se*, throughout the colonial and independent periods of Haiti. In other words, it was understood that when one referred to a “Black,” one more than likely had in mind a landless peasant or at least a poor agrarian individual; whereas when one referred to a “mulatto,” it was generally understood to mean a member of the elite mixed-race class on the island. However, what Roumain and others brought to Haitian sociopolitical analysis and commentary was an attention to the discrete dispositions and experiences of wealthy Blacks and poor(-er) mulattoes (as few of these as there may or may not have been) in order to address the class antagonisms which men like Roumain argued were obfuscated by racialism and colorism on the island.

³⁸ Jacques Roumain, “Color Prejudice,” in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, eds. Laurent Dubois, Kaima L. Glover, Nadeve Menard, Millery Polyne, and Chantalle F. Verna (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 259.

³⁹ Danticat has stated that her own introduction to the New Negro Movement came through the work of Jacques Roumain

⁴⁰ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 165.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 171-172.

⁴² Francois Duvalier quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 172.

⁴³ Stenio Vincent quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 178.

⁴⁴ The Italian invasion of Ethiopia ruptured the *noiristes* and other fascist-sympathizing Haitians who saw in Ethiopia a bond of racial unity and a symbol of Africa's laudatory history.

⁴⁵ Cf. Jacques Roumain, "A Propos de la Campagne 'Anti-Superstitieuse,'" in *Oeuvres Completes de Jacques Roumain*, ed. Leon-Francois Hoffman (Madrid, Nanterre: Agencie Universitaire de la Francophonie, 2003), 1406-1409.

⁴⁶ Matthew J. Smith, "On the 1946 Revolution," in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, eds. Laurent Dubois, Kaima L. Glover, Nadeve Menard, Millery Polyne, and Chantalle F. Verna (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 300.

⁴⁷ Many of these activists wrote articles for the revolutionary, anti-Lescot journal *La Ruche* and would read these articles in popular areas across Port-au-Prince to spread the party's ideas to the largely illiterate, mainly Black poor and working class. Lescot sent his police to raid the journal's headquarters in Port-au-Prince and suspended publication immediately.

⁴⁸ Rene Chalmers quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 196.

⁴⁹ Grienerberger had been a close ally to Duvalier's opponent, Paul Magloire, and Marrec had long-standing tensions with Duvalier's replacement for Jean-Baptiste Georges, Father Hubert Papailler. This was the case for many leading figures of the Catholic church, demonstrating the arduous relationship between the Duvalier regime and the Roman Catholic church.

⁵⁰ Francois Duvalier quoted in David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Identity in Haiti* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232.

Nicholls argues that proclamations such as these provided the Haitian peasantry a sense of citizenship and national significance. Where before the agrarian masses had largely eschewed national politics, Duvalier's rhetoric of inclusion deepened their sense of power and belonging.

⁵¹ Daniel Fignole and Jacques Brutus, "The Trade Union Movement," in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, eds. Laurent Dubois, Kaima L. Glover, Nadeve Menard, Millery Polyne, and Chantalle F. Verna (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 366.

⁵² In terms of public policy, this meant developing schemes to attract evermore foreign investment at the expense of the poor and working class.

⁵³ Carolle Charles, "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti," in *The Haiti Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, eds. Laurent Dubois, Kaima L. Glover, Nadeve Menard, Millery Polyne, and Chantalle F. Verna (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 389.

⁵⁴ The so-called "boat people" American media often panned them as.

⁵⁵ The Center for Disease Control emphasized four groups of caution: homosexuals, hemophiliacs, hypodermic needle users, and Haitians (the so-called "4 H's").