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Beyond the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois and Postcolonial Studies

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Abstract

Beyond the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois and Postcolonial Studies By Roopika Risam

In his final novel *Worlds of Color* (1961), W.E.B. Du Bois offers a powerful vision of oppressed people of “black and brown and yellow” redeeming a world shattered by war and colonial domination. These individuals represent global solidarity in the world of color, the first step in a worldwide reconstruction beyond the color line. Yet, scholarly treatment of the novel reflects a troubling trend in Du Bois scholarship: the separation of African American concerns from those of the decolonizing world in the body of his work. Accordingly, scholarship on Du Bois has given rise to a narrative of his life that isolates his anti-imperialist work on global emancipation from his studies of African American experience in the United States. As such, it misleadingly articulates two distinct paths of Du Bois’s life: an early career dedicated to African American emancipation and a later one that addresses freedom for oppressed people of color around the world.

Situated at the intersections of African American and postcolonial studies, “Beyond the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois and Postcolonial Studies” traces global trends throughout Du Bois’s literary career. Examining *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1910), *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), *Dark Princess* (1928), and *Worlds of Color* (1961), I propose that Du Bois’s work offers a model for theorizing race, capitalism, and imperialism for African Americans and colonial subjects. Juxtaposing Du Bois’s writing with literary texts from the postcolonial world, including Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest* (1969), Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), and Andrea Levy’s *Small Island* (2004), I argue that Du Bois must be read as a progenitor for both postcolonial and African American studies. In doing so, we may engage meaningfully with race across disciplinary formations that often inhibit productive conversations across scholarly, national, and intellectual borders and attend to forms of international cooperation that transcend these divisions. Through such tasks I suggest, we will be better equipped to identify methodologies, sources, and vocabularies for politically engaged studies of imperialism.

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Introduction: In Search of the Postcolonial Du Bois

As a mass over 250,000 strong gathered on the National Mall for the March on Washington on August 28, 1963, one of the forefathers of the Civil Rights Movement was being laid to rest in Ghana, far away from his place of birth. As the crowd eagerly awaited the words of another civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), announced that W.E.B. Du Bois had died the night before. Yet, if truth were told, the March on Washington, a watershed moment for the Civil Rights Movement, outshined the death of this stalwart African American intellectual whose own career was dedicated to civil rights.

The Two Paths of W.E.B. Du Bois

Wilkins called for a moment of silence at the March on Washington, briefly eulogizing Du Bois for the crowd. He told them, “Regardless of the fact that in his later years, Dr. Du Bois chose *another path*, it is incontrovertible that at the dawn of the twentieth century, his was the voice calling you to gather here today in this cause” (Lewis 2, my emphasis). Du Bois’s obituary in *The Crisis*, the periodical he founded as the official magazine of the NAACP, rehearses Wilkins’s remarks, noting that Du Bois’s Leftist and communist leanings isolated him from the black political establishment in the United States from 1948 until his death (“William Edward Burghardt Du Bois” 468).

As these texts indicate, Du Bois's legacy is often represented as a dramatic tale of intellectual height and decline, a narrative that celebrates his deep investment in African American life, history, sociology, and culture but has not been able to properly appreciate

his equally compelling concern for social inequalities and movements for social change on a global scale. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868, Du Bois distinguished himself early as a scholar-activist of what he termed the “color line” in the United States. The first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard, Du Bois's early career included teaching sociology, history, and economics at Atlanta University; establishing the Niagara Movement for African American rights in 1905; and co-founding the NAACP in 1909. Du Bois is particularly well remembered for his longstanding opposition to Booker T. Washington and the Atlanta Compromise, opposing accommodationist and conciliatory approaches to racial segregation and disenfranchisement. Among his prolific writings, Du Bois is perhaps best known for his essays in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a groundbreaking collection of observations on race in the United States and African American life, in which he articulates the key terms for which he is remembered: the color line, the Veil, and double consciousness. Most notable about these accomplishments, however, is that they emphasize Du Bois's work on African American concerns within a United States context. Yet, Du Bois's body of work includes significant, important attention to global concerns, particularly decolonization movements and the relationship between African American experiences and those of oppressed people of color around the world.

Yet, the issue of *The Crisis* honoring Du Bois upon his death includes a resolution passed by the NAACP to honor Du Bois's life as:

The prime inspirer, philosopher and father of the organized Negro protest movement, a founder of the NAACP, an impassioned and eloquent spokesman for equal rights, a fierce and uncompromising foe of

colonialism, and promoter of the Pan African Congresses, and the most eminent scholar and historian for the Negro race in America and Africa.

(“NAACP Mourns Passing of Dr. Du Bois, A Founder” 472)

The resolution describes Du Bois’s career, from the Niagara Movement to his early writing, including *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1896), *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), and *The Souls of Black Folk*, to the founding of the NAACP and *The Crisis*. Around 1910, with 53 years of Du Bois’s life left unaccounted, the article ends with a resounding statement about Du Bois’s “contributions to the ageless struggle for human rights” and the “great void” left by Du Bois’s death (“NAACP” 427-3).

No doubt, Du Bois’s death left a significant void for those invested in civil rights. However, the real void revealed in these documents is the entire second half of Du Bois’s career. Obituaries and eulogies conveniently omit Du Bois’s later work, which includes his prolific, radical writing about the intersections of capitalism, racism, and imperialism. Based on these accounts, one might imagine that Du Bois simply had done nothing after founding *The Crisis*, despite the rich career that followed.

Scholarship on Du Bois tends to reflect these obituaries and eulogies, charting two different paths for Du Bois’s life and shaping the historical legacies through which we have received his work. In such narratives, the Du Bois of the early years appears the consummate race man. His work focuses on African Americans, from *The Philadelphia Negro*’s sociological study of African Americans in Philadelphia to *The Souls of Black Folk*, lauded for its visionary ruminations on black life in the United States. Du Bois’s activism – founding the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, and *The Crisis* – and his well-publicized disagreements with Booker T. Washington firmly credential this first version

of Du Bois as a scholar-activist dedicated single-mindedly to the problem of the color line in the United States.

The other narrative of Du Bois depicts a man in his later years who is at once embarrassing and dangerous to other African American leaders. He begins embracing black separatism, resigning from the NAACP and *The Crisis* by 1934 over ideological differences.¹ He returns to the NAACP in 1944, taking a special position soliciting global support for African American freedom struggles. Four years later, in 1948, Du Bois is dismissed from the NAACP for ideological disagreements, namely his increasingly Leftist stance on global politics and emphatic support for decolonization movements worldwide. Du Bois begins leaning even further towards the Left, alienating himself entirely from the black political establishment. Facing increased scrutiny and surveillance by the United States government, he expatriates to Ghana for the final two years of his life. Indeed, this version of Du Bois took “another path,” as Wilkins speciously states (Lewis 2). Such narratives suggest that Du Bois was drawn away from exclusively African American concerns in favor of the murkier worlds of color in which people of black, brown, and yellow share analogous relationships to power structures conspiring to render them politically, socially, and economically dead.

Henry Louis Gates’s remarks in his editorial front matter to *The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois* (2007) exemplify the scholarly trend towards isolating the two paths of Du Bois.² Gates interprets Du Bois’s interest in pan-Africanism and colonialism, which

¹ During the 1930s, the NAACP maintained a commitment to integrationist politics. Du Bois, however, advocated separatism in the form of schools, economic projects, and institutions controlled by African Americans.

² Other examples include Arnold Rampersad’s *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (1976), which minimizes the global milieu in Du Bois’s work and David Levering

began taking root at the beginning of the 20th century, as a “paradox” for a man whose early work, as Gates claims, focused solely on African Americans (“Introduction” xv). Gates suggests that Du Bois’s global vision does not appear until his later years and remained distinct from his commitment to African Americans:

The “blacker” that his stand against colonialism became, the less “black,” in a very real sense, his analysis of... “The Negro Problem” became. The more “African” Du Bois became... the more cosmopolitan his analysis of the root causes of anti-black and -brown and -yellow racism and colonialism became. (“Introduction” xv)

The language of color – black and blacker – that Gates employs is perhaps part of the problem, for it assigns shades of color to the two competing narratives of Du Bois’s work. Certainly, Du Bois’s views progress from pan-Africanism to black and brown and yellow. However, the language of blackness in this particular instance correlates too easily with Du Bois’s marginalization from the black political establishment in the declining years of his life, suggesting that intersectional interests between African Americans and other people of color around the world are irrelevant at best and nonexistent at worst.

Gates reinforces this dualism by characterizing Du Bois’s work as an “arc” (“Introduction” xvi). According to Gates’s account, Du Bois’s national, African-American oriented work represents the upswing of the arc while his global work comprises the downswing. Gates slots Du Bois’s work neatly into these arcs, though this career trajectory is a misrepresentation of Du Bois’s work. An arc seems perhaps a

Lewis’s two-volume biography of Du Bois, which splits Du Bois’s life into periods of 1868-1919 (*Biography of a Race*) and 1919-1963 (*The Fight for Equality and the American Century*), reinforcing this bifurcated sense of Du Bois’s work.

kinder and less binary representation of Du Bois's career than two distinct paths but it rehearses a scholarly trend of relegating Du Bois's global vision and interest in decolonization movements to his waning years. Thus, as Gates's account demonstrates, rather than softening the blow, the arc correlates Du Bois's twilight years in age and influence with "another path" articulated by Wilkins (Lewis 2). To be sure, Du Bois's politics undergo remarkable transformation over his life. For example, Brent Edwards's introduction to *The Black Flame* trilogy traces Du Bois's intellectual trajectory from integrationist to separatist and black radical to pan-Africanist, socialist, and eventually communist (xxv). Compared with the movement of the African American establishment towards anticommunism, Du Bois's effective exile from the NAACP and declining reputation are unsurprising because of his affinity for Leftist politics.³ However, scholarship has incorrectly linked Du Bois's intellectual development in the direction of communism with his investment in global concerns. These concerns, I propose, have subtended Du Bois's work from the very beginning of his career.

While it is true, as Gates suggests, that the rise of Africa in Du Bois's thought correlates with his movement away from the NAACP ("Introduction" xv), Du Bois's relationship to a global milieu has a longer history. Binary representations of the national and international in Du Bois's work position his early writing as national, neatly confining Du Bois's international vision to his later years. However, Du Bois's international vision originates at the very beginning of his work, from *The Suppression of*

³ Both Peggy von Eschen's *Race Against Empires* (1997) and Gerald Horne's *Black and Red* (1986) mark the beginning of the NAACP's anticommunism with its turn away from a more militant, global agenda. Du Bois continued to pursue the global implications of black freedom struggles, actively challenging the NAACP's position and alienating himself from the black political establishment in the process.

the African Slave Trade in 1896. Thus, his scholarship starts with the African diaspora writ large, even if Du Bois's only use of the term "diaspora" in his body of work references the Jewish diaspora in relation to African American suffering.⁴ Consequently, when Gates speaks of Du Bois's late global turn, he fails to locate *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* in its rightful global context. As a result, he perpetuates the presumption that Du Bois's work must be read as either African American or global – and never both.

By the time he pens *The Gift of Black Folk* (1924), Du Bois has embraced Marxist analysis and writes, "It was black labor that established the modern world commerce which began first as a commerce in the bodies of the slaves themselves and was the primary cause of the prosperity of the first great commercial cities of our day" (9). Gates reads this quotation as Du Bois's commentary on African American labor ("Introduction" xvii), yet Du Bois's invocation of slaves and their relationship to global capitalism suggest a diasporic perspective. Considering Du Bois's embrace of pan-Africanism and the staunchly anti-imperialist stances he took in his writing, however, his statement resonates with the later work of scholars such as Cedric Robinson and Paul Gilroy,⁵ who argue that slavery, imperialism, and modernity are inextricably linked. Indeed, Du Bois's

⁴ Du Bois uses the term "diaspora" in "Jacob and Essau," a commencement address delivered at Talladega College in 1944. Du Bois's appeal to Jacob and Essau and the Jewish diaspora is allegorical, representing African American freedom struggles in the United States alongside a global struggle of the Jacobs of the world. This gesture toward a diaspora anticipates the emergence of the African or black diaspora as an analytical category from the 1950s onward, when it was initially adopted for African historiography by scholars including George Shepperson and Joseph Harris. For a fuller account of the etymology of the African diaspora, see Brent Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora* (2003).

⁵ See Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* (1983) and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993).

position on labor is constitutive of his later anti-imperialist writing, which positions inequalities of global labor as an integral site of struggle and subject of analysis.

Through a critical look at the role of the global in Du Bois's career, what comes to light is not the oft-suggested dichotomy between African Americans and the worlds of color in Du Bois's work. Rather, Du Bois's domestic and international concerns co-exist in his writing from the very beginning. How Du Bois's work is read, however, determines the extent to which these domestic and international concerns are emphasized within scholarship. Just as Du Bois's early work is often read exclusively for his commentary on African American experience, so too is Du Bois's later work solely examined for its global outlook. For example, Gates proposes that African Americans become little more than a metaphor for global class relations in Du Bois's later writing ("Introduction" xvi), reiterating Werner Sollors's similar assertions in *The Invention of Ethnicity* (84). This particular reading takes on shades of critique, suggesting that Du Bois reneges on his earlier commitments to African Americans, whose functions are merely tropological in his later work.

Yet, what if we read the roles of African Americans in Du Bois's later work as instrumental players in attacking the fundamental problems shared by people of color around the globe? What if these obstacles could not be overcome through the work of African Americans alone, nor without them, rather through the combined and united efforts of a global mass – a global underclass of color – that lives under the thumb of imperialism? If we were to revisit the politics that divide Du Bois's career into two distinct paths or a trajectory that privileges more African American oriented work, perhaps we could better understand Du Bois's body of work as a journey that culminates

in a fuller understanding of African American experience through the global. Du Bois's writing suggests that the lived experience of African Americans is shaped by similar forces as that of people of color around the globe; therefore, the recourse is a coalition of color to confront and overthrow such forces.

In light of these questions, the goal of this project is to explore the global intersections of Du Bois's writing and to position him as a progenitor for postcolonial studies. This is possible by engaging with Du Bois's role in black radicalism, which brings together critiques of imperialism with race rights discourse in the United States. Recuperating the global Du Bois intervenes not only in the study of black radicalism but also in the relationship between postcolonial and African American studies, two fields that have historically been kept separate. To accomplish this task, I pair readings of Du Bois's writing with postcolonial literary texts to explore how Du Bois's writing anticipates a range of concerns raised later in postcolonial studies: parallel forms of colonial education in the United States and in the colonies; the relationship between inequalities based in color and caste around the world; the role of kinship in affinities that form in diasporic populations; and solidarities among global subjects of capital, forged from the ruins of imperial projects. What emerges from this study is a new narrative about the relationship between African American and global concerns in Du Bois's work, Du Bois's concrete engagement with key concepts that comprise contemporary postcolonial studies, and a strong connection between the interests of postcolonial and African American literary studies.

W.E.B. Du Bois and the Politics of Postcoloniality

No doubt, certain politics undergird the manner in which Du Bois's career is remembered. For the African American political establishment of his day, namely the NAACP, Du Bois occupied a more radical position than it was willing to embrace and, even worse, he made his disagreement public. As a result, this particular set of politics, exemplified by Gates's interpretations, has continued to influence how Du Bois is read. How would a different set of politics, a politics of postcoloniality, allow us to revisit Du Bois's body of work with a new appreciation for the role of the global throughout his career? After all, Du Bois's work demonstrates on-going, sustained analyses of colonialism and his politics were largely anti-imperialist.

Far from marking the well-worn dichotomies in Du Bois scholarship, the "postcolonial Du Bois" seeks to heal the rift. Du Bois's work is tremendously complicated and does not lend itself to easy delineations between African America and abroad or domestic and international struggles. Nonetheless, he has been valorized for the former while his contributions towards the latter have been marginalized, criticized, or represented as a betrayal of African Americans, as Gates's remarks suggest ("Introduction" xv). How would examining the postcolonial Du Bois bridge the perceived gaps within his work? While Du Bois's African American-centered work demonstrates his dedication to the cause of African Americans, his more global work only emphasizes this investment. Although his vision encompasses both the national and the international, Du Bois does not betray the African American cause. Rather, he envisions African Americans as part of a larger, global narrative of emancipation and solidarity, a

corrective for the complex interplay of oppressions situated at the intersections of race and class.

The malleability of Du Bois's politics has been used to relegate his global legacy to a subordinate position in the putative hierarchy of his work. This flexibility, in turn, can be used to restore that global legacy. The danger with Du Bois's work is that its sheer breadth and depth lends itself very easily to appropriation by multiple disciplines.⁶ Taking up the postcolonial Du Bois plumbs the depths of his work so yet another body of knowledge can claim him as a predecessor. Yet, interrogating the postcolonial sensibilities of Du Bois's work situates him as a progenitor for postcolonial studies in the tradition of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. More importantly, it reconciles the two paths distinguished in Du Bois's scholarship: the body of work that ingratiated Du Bois to the black political establishment in the United States and the work that led to his expulsion from it.

Thus, to find the postcolonial Du Bois is not to claim Du Bois from African American studies for postcolonial studies. Rather, it is to restore to African American studies a whole Du Bois whose later work does not eschew African Americans in search of a global struggle. Moreover, reading Du Bois in the context of the postcolonial demonstrates coherence within his intellectual trajectory; his investment in African Americans never wavered but led him deeper into the trenches of inequality on an international scale to fully explore that commitment to African Americans.

⁶ Accordingly, edited collections such as *Du Bois on Religion* (2000) and *Du Bois on Education* (2002) and studies of Du Bois in sociology, literary criticism, and political science demonstrate how easily multiple discourses appropriate Du Bois's writing.

Examining Du Bois in a postcolonial frame, we must juxtapose Du Bois's work with that of postcolonial studies to see what the combination yields. Both the concepts of juxtaposition and combination have appeared in scholarship on Du Bois, particularly work that forges relationships between Du Bois's writing and disciplines that fall outside the typical lenses through which Du Bois is viewed, including history, sociology, and African American studies. For this scholarship, engaging with Du Bois's own work on combination lays the groundwork for the act of juxtaposition.

Susan Gillman and Alys Weinbaum take up this issue by exploring a politics of juxtaposition that undergirds Du Bois's own engagement with the combination. Du Bois's use of the combination takes many forms, from labor combines to amalgamations that cross boundaries such as genre, race, and nation. Examining Du Bois's essay collection *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (1920), Gillman and Weinbaum suggest that just as Du Bois juxtaposes fiction, poetry, and essay, so too does he juxtapose social issues; while race and African American emancipation are crucial to Du Bois's work, gender and sexuality are issues that reside next to the color line (2). Du Bois's scholarship takes on issues of great scope, Gillman and Weinbaum suggest, through "a politics of juxtaposition that positions multiple political issues and related world historical movements for social justice as associated, as necessarily juxtaposed, if not fully interlinked, or self-interwoven" (3). Such politics of juxtaposition are significant for exploring Du Bois's globally oriented work because they do not reduce the concerns of African Americans and colonial subjects to a simplistic comparison. Rather, they enable us to view them as parallel and analogous, rather than identical.

Even earlier than *Darkwater*, Du Bois raises the issue of combination in *The Philadelphia Negro*. He writes:

Two sorts of answers are usually returned to the bewildered American who asks seriously: What is the Negro problem? The one is straightforward and clear: it is simply this, or simply that, and one simple remedy long enough applied will in time cause it to disappear. The other is apt to be hopelessly involved and complex – to indicate no simple panacea, and to end in a somewhat hopeless – There it is; what can we do? Both of these sorts of answers have something of truth in them: the Negro problem looked at in one way is but the old world questions of ignorance, poverty, crime, and the dislike of the stranger. On the other hand it is a mistake to think that attacking each of these questions single-handed without reference to the others will settle the matter: *a combination of social problems is far more than a matter of mere addition, - the combination itself is a problem.*

(Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* 268, my emphasis)

The precise definition of combination that Du Bois employs suggests that the sum of the whole is greater than its parts. This insistence on the combination recalls Du Bois's investment in dialectics. Influenced by German Romanticism and G.W.F. Hegel, Du Bois's work frequently explores the philosophical possibilities of the dialectic. For example, Du Bois represents history as dialectical in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), though he rejects Hegel's idea that history is progressive. Similarly, Reiland Rabaka argues that Du Bois's work examines "the diabolical dialectic of white intellectual superiority and black intellectual inferiority" (*Du Bois's Dialectics* xviii). Indeed, Du Bois's willingness to engage with Hegelian dialectics enables him to think

beyond the binaries of black and white and embrace a more global vision. The dialect of oppression and liberation – whether for African Americans or other oppressed people of the world – runs throughout Du Bois’s body of work and the combination yields a transformative result: global solidarity.

With a politics of juxtaposition at work in Du Bois’s writing, it is surprising that Du Bois’s anti-imperialist work has only begun to be studied recently. Although there have been no sustained attempts to take up Du Bois’s relationship to postcolonial studies, my work here is indebted to scholars who have pursued the Afro-Asian connections within Du Bois’s work.⁷ This scholarship examines Du Bois’s role in a history of interactions between African Americans and Asians and Asian Americans, particularly around issues of racism, imperialism, and labor from historical perspectives. In the social space of the United States, heavily delineated as black and white, Du Bois’s interest in Asia provides an option outside of binary race relations.

Accordingly, I am arguing for a new politics of juxtaposition for Du Bois’s work. We must examine Du Bois’s writing, which resides at the crossroads of African American and postcolonial studies, through the frame of global solidarity. Scholarship from both African American and postcolonial studies has taken up similar issues, yet few gestures have been made towards putting the two in conversation with each other to examine their radical political and liberatory possibilities. Indeed, my own juxtaposition is offered in the hope that its own whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Du Bois, in his most visionary of modes, portends a powerful world of color while revealing the

⁷ See Bill Mullen’s *Afro-Orientalism* (2004), Vijay Prashad’s *The Karma of Brown Folk* (2001) and *Everybody Was Kung-Fu Fighting* (2002), Fred Ho and Bill Mullen’s *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections* (2008), and Heike Raphael-Hernandez’s *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics* (2006).

complex interplays of racism, capitalism, and imperialism. He does not compare the plights of people of color; rather he juxtaposes these struggles, suggesting they are united against a common enemy. This very juxtaposition breeds transformation for Du Bois, who envisions a politically engaged group that comes to constitute a world of color.

Du Bois's postcolonial leanings – his criticism of imperial structures and support for decolonization movements – certainly appear in his work on pan-Africanism. His position as a transnational figure extends beyond the African diaspora, but Du Bois's literary writings demonstrate that he engaged in anti-imperialist thought through his investment in pan-Africanism. Yet, Du Bois was committed to the fullest possibilities of postcolonialism: ripe political engagement across race, nation, and class centered around critique of the dialectic of racism and capitalism, as well as its synthesis in imperialism. Indeed, Du Bois's postcolonial imaginings are precisely what postcolonial studies as a field has left woefully unexamined. However, while like-minded figures such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Albert Memmi are cited as progenitors of contemporary postcolonial studies, Du Bois himself is not included among them.

However, Fanon, Césaire, and Du Bois are often cited as important players within the history of black radical thought in the United States. Du Bois's relationship to black radicalism is important because black radicalism represents a significant line of inquiry that has taken up colonial critique outside the bounds of postcolonial studies. Along with Du Bois, black radicalism counts among its major figures Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral. Unlike Du Bois and Garvey, black radical scholars James, Fanon, and Cabral are considered progenitors for postcolonial studies as well, though postcolonial studies itself has developed in many directions, from materialist to

post-structuralist.

In recent years, Reiland Rabaka has been one of the most ardent voices arguing for the importance of black radical thought to African American studies. He frames the centrality of black radicalism in terms of imperialism and its resonances for our contemporary moment, which he argues is characterized by “the reemergence of anti-black racism, (neo)colonialism, and a new unprecedented stage of global capitalist development” (Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory and the Black Radical Tradition* 2). Despite the significance of black radicalism, scholars including Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, among others, have charged it with Eurocentrism for its engagement with Marxist thought and theory. This critique, however, suggests a fundamental misunderstanding of both black radical thought and capitalism itself. Although the discourse of Marxism itself is of European origin, capitalism is no longer the sole domain of Europe. In its global iteration, capitalism has commandeered bodies from outside of Europe to function as key players in production, distribution, and consumption - at all levels of class hierarchy. Moreover, capitalism ceased to be a solely European enterprise with the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade and large-scale reliance on the labor of enslaved Africans. As Bernard Magubane suggests, the enslaved were the first proletarians of global capitalism (407). Similarly, Paul Gilroy argues that the Atlantic slave trade is inextricably linked to the development of modernity and European colonialism, both of which are deeply implicated in the rise of capitalism in its global dimensions (*The Black Atlantic* 3). While having access to technologies of capitalism and being subjects of capitalism represent two distinct positions within class hierarchies, once it engaged with imperialism, capitalism ceased being purely European and became a

transnational enterprise. Such developments followed what Vladimir Lenin proposes is logical capitalist development in *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*; imperialism represents the final stage of capitalist development, designed to most effectively generate profit (93). As a result of such developments, the ability to launch critiques of capitalism was no longer the domain of Europe either, Karl Marx notwithstanding.

Charges of Eurocentrism against black radicalism bespeak a resistance to theory and demonstrate a failure to understand its underpinnings. As Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), a landmark book on black radicalism, suggests, capitalist critique within black radical thought is not intended to be a reiteration of European Marxism but a discourse of its own (200). Robinson grounds readings of African American and African history, identity, and social change in the paired realities of racism and economic disparity. Unlike Marxism proper, which subordinates to class and posits that any problems arising from discrimination based in racial hierarchies should theoretically be solved by the class struggle to come, a position articulated most notably in Marxist thinker Oliver Cromwell Cox's 1959 monograph *Caste, Class, and Race* (17), black radicalism takes as its primary concern the intersections of race and capitalism. In this way, black radicalism shares concerns with postcolonial studies, such as Edward Said's critique of Marx in *Orientalism* (1978), in which he argues that the *Communist Manifesto*, among Marx's other writings, includes problematic racial undertones through its Orientalist underpinnings, positioning the "others" of the "East" - the "collective Orient" as fundamentally subordinate and unstable in comparison to the "West" (155). Thus, like postcolonial studies, black radicalism

offers a method for critiquing capitalism, yet its theoretical foci emerge out of the unique concerns of the African diaspora. As a result, black radicalism foregrounds Afrocentrism over Eurocentrism. Bringing race and critiques of capitalism together in the study of imperialism, black radical thought has successfully argued that inequalities of capital and labor have long followed dividing lines of race and ethnicity.

In spite of the overlaps between black radical thought and postcolonial studies, scholarly studies have yet to thoroughly examine the relationship between the two. Additionally, postcolonial studies has been reluctant to take on the role of African Americans in postcolonial discourse. This omission is particularly ironic because, as Robinson has argued, race and racism are central to the rise of imperialism (25). The very existence of an African American population, for example, is one legacy of the transatlantic slave trade (Robinson 299). Moreover, racial discourses attesting to the superiority of Europeans played a significant role in justifying colonialism, a subject that has been examined extensively in postcolonial studies as well.

Within postcolonial studies, race has posed problems as an analytical category because of its slipperiness as a signifier. As a context-bound construct, race is often restricted to nation-bound or culture-bound analysis. Postcolonial studies itself resists generalizing and totalizing discourse, and this tendency manifests in a reluctance to articulate theories of race beyond national or cultural contexts. Therefore, race in postcolonial studies is a topic approached with caution, often articulated carefully through black and white binaries. For example, Ania Loomba's *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (2002) explores race and imperialism in the early modern period in terms of “blackness,” though race in the decolonizing world has many other forms (23). Recent

work on whiteness, including Alfred J. López's *Postcolonial Whiteness* (2005) reinforces this trend of emphasizing polarities between black and white (14). The result of this approach to the study of race is that discuss complexities of race across geographies becomes difficult. For example, what does it mean to be Indian in relationship to the hierarchical caste system or as an immigrant in England or the United States; how does racism manifest in multiple contexts, whether within African countries or for African Americans; or how do we discuss race in terms of the legacies of Negritude? Indeed, these are a few of the questions that I take up in this project, arguing that Du Bois himself has successfully managed to integrate the shared sites of analysis of postcolonial and African American studies and the parallel struggles of African Americans and oppressed people of color outside the United States in his own writing.

One likely explanation for the chasm between postcolonial and African American studies lies in the tendency within postcolonial studies to privilege the particular over the universal. Malini Johar Schueller has argued that contemporary postcolonial studies fails to actively challenge racism because it does not consider the local in relationship to the global. Without negotiating this relationship, postcolonial studies runs the risk of simply appropriating the scholarship, history, and literary and cultural production of African American studies when engaging with it. For example, Schueller examines the role of African Americans in the work of postcolonial critics Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Arjun Appadurai. All three, she argues, fail to fully theorize the possibility of race as an analytical category (Schueller 34). Bhabha comes under particular criticism for incorporating Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) into a provisional canon of postcolonial studies without attending to the conditions under which African Americans can or cannot

(or should or should not) be considered postcolonial subjects. Schueller's mediations between global and local draw attention to a fundamental difference between postcolonial studies and African American studies. Whereas postcolonial studies has long been concerned with anti-imperialist movements, critiques of citizenship, and exclusions of the nation-state, articulated by writers including Said, Spivak, Bhabha, Robert Young, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, among others, African American studies has tended to focus more on incorporation of African Americans within the democratic space of the nation. In light of such differences, Du Bois serves as a mediating figure who explores questions of African American experience through both lenses.

Indeed the question of whether or not African Americans are (or want to be) postcolonial is debatable and depends, in part, on how we define "postcolonial." By virtue of the "post" in "postcolonial," debates over the temporality of the term have figured prominently.⁸ This remains a pressing issue because the insistence on a "post" linked to a particular date, history, or intellectual movement necessarily includes omissions. The consensus within postcolonial studies, perhaps articulated best by Kwame Anthony Appiah, is that the "post" is not so much a marker of temporality but a marker of an epistemology of power and knowledge ("Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial" 353). In spite of this definition, however, scholars including Ella Shohat and Arif Dirlik have noted that this version of "post" does not clear up confusion.⁹

⁸ See Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter 1991): 336-357; Ella Shohat, "Notes on the "Post-Colonial." *Social Text* 31/2 (1992): 99-113; Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. NY: Routledge: 2004.

⁹ See Ella Shohat, "Notes on the "Post-Colonial." *Social Text* 31/2 (1992): 99-113 and Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998.

The confusion remains, in part, because although postcolonial temporality has been debated at length, postcolonial geography has not received as much critical attention. Shohat, for example, raises the issue of the “politics of location” (99) in postcolonial studies. She links the problem of spatio-temporality to *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, a foundational text of postcolonial studies that uses the term “postcolonial” to encompass English literary production by societies affected by colonialism. Aside from excluding non-English literary production, according the term “postcolonial” to such a wide array of literatures has the effect of replicating the same problems with the term “third world,” which has also been subject to debate.

Postcolonial critics routinely criticize Three World Theory for its reductive categories. For example, taking up Fredric Jameson's formulation of “Third World Literature,” Aijaz Ahmad famously writes, “We live not in three worlds, but in one” (103). For Ahmad, scholars both within postcolonial studies and outside of it risk homogenizing the “Third World” as a romanticized construct that fails to accurately account for the multiplicity of cultural practices of those who live in the so-called “Third World” (105). Yet, just as the term “Third World” risks submerging difference, the “postcolonial” collapses multiple registers of power relations under its rubric by claiming unqualified investment in colonized geographies writ large. Therefore, settler colonies, like the United States, whose “postcolonial” status was predicated on its colonial occupation of lands populated by indigenous peoples are as “postcolonial” as a colony like Algeria, occupied by the French before they were ousted by way of a nationalist anti-colonial movement. Yet, examining the imperialist tendencies of settler colonies reveals a

very different version of “postcolonial” than a different type of colony. As such, the “postcolonial” encompasses an array of conditions, from settler colonial oppression to postcolonial conditions in which an elite nationalist bourgeoisie gains control of the nation and becomes the sole determinant of its future. The “postcolonial” therefore includes a range of power dynamics, including neocolonial domination via multinational corporations, favorable policies accommodating European-American foreign policy, and active violence against groups disenfranchised in the space of the nation.

In spite of the vast range of opportunities for study afforded by the term “postcolonial,” its underexplored geographies deprive it of its full potential for exploring forms of difference on a global scale. Accordingly, Shohat suggests, “this disorienting space of the 'post-colonial' generates odd couplings of the 'post' and particular geographies, blurring the assignment of perspective” (102). Yet, “postcolonial” does not describe a condition limited to colonies or former colonies. For example, Dirlik suggests that themes from postcolonial criticism have become prominent in places like China, which never was a colony and successfully evaded both European and American domination, yet came into the orbit of European expansion through trade and commerce (342). Therefore, postcolonial studies possesses the flexibility and expansiveness to encompass African American experience by exploring the colonial nature of African American life articulated in black radicalism. In so doing, postcolonial studies could rely on its emphasis on particularity to nuance such study.

Moreover, the political values of the “postcolonial” diverge from black radical thought, though both have aligned themselves with nationalist decolonization movements of 20th century. Black radical thought has not shied away from studies of transnational

solidarities, exemplified in Du Bois's work and the work of those who came after him. At the same time, the politics of postcolonial studies has engendered stern policing of spatial boundaries within the field, resulting in the exclusion of groups like African Americans that may share its concerns. As Shohat and Dirlik have argued, the term "postcolonial" does not provoke the same kind of Leftist panic as "imperialism" or "Third World," or, indeed, "black radical."¹⁰ In spite of the troubling limitations of a term like "Third World," which Ahmad has articulated, the term has been marshaled to describe the political sensibilities of the 1950s and 1960s, a period of time filled with rich examples of solidarity, exemplified by radical groups like the Oakland Black Panther Party. Its dismissal within postcolonial studies is less a function of its own universalizing tendencies than a sense of pessimism that relegates those politically potent times to the annals of history. Whereas "Third World" is associated with activism, hoped-for tricontinental revolutions, and the promise of First World leftists uniting with Third World guerillas, these dreams failed to materialize. Indeed, not all denizens of the decolonizing world are revolutionary, even communist and socialist states have more or less acceded to global capitalism, and migrancy has challenged First/Third World dichotomies.

Despite its seeming irrelevance now, the Third Worldist position inescapably relied on commonalties structured around a mutual relationship to capitalism, specifically as subjects of capitalism. This relationship is constitutive of the alliances that formed. Similarly, Shohat proposes that it "implies a belief that the shared history of

¹⁰ See Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial.'" *Social Text* 31/2 (1992): 99-113 and Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998.

neocolonialism and internal racism forms sufficient common ground for alliances among... diverse peoples” (111). Indeed, the term “Third World” comes to represent everything with which the postcolonial struggles: its relationship to capitalist critique, ability to articulate concerns about racism on a global scale, and commitment to political engagement.

In comparison, postcolonial studies seems reluctant to engage with the possibilities of Third World solidarity in favor of accommodationism or political neutrality. Dirlik attributes the repudiation of “Third World” by postcolonial scholars to the term’s vagueness “in encompassing within one uniform category vastly heterogeneous historical circumstances and locking in fixed positions, structurally if not geographically, societies and populations that shifted with changing global relations” (332). Shohat similarly questions the “ahistorical and universalizing deployments” of postcolonial studies, noting that its “slippery political significations... occasionally escape the clearly oppositional intentions of its theoretical practitioners” (99, 100). Indeed, the reliance on discursive, linguistic analysis popularized within postcolonial studies by Bhabha and even Spivak often produces an over-emphasis on the politics of language and an accompanying sense of political neutrality, one at odds with the anchoring presuppositions of postcolonial studies, which is clearly grounded in a political project.

To be sure, this reliance on discursivity seems to give postcolonial studies a bad rap, as its discursive engagement with post-structuralism, championed by Spivak and Bhabha, strays from the field’s materialist roots in colonial and postcolonial histories – though Spivak and Bhabha themselves may disagree. Accordingly, some of the most vocal detractors of postcolonial studies have posed their critique in Marxist terms.

Ahmad, in particular, has taken issue with the way postcolonial studies has wedded itself to post-structuralist theory rather than Marxist thought. Therefore, he argues, postcolonial studies runs the risk of domesticating its own political potential, becoming nothing more than an ideology of its own that privileges the interests of the postcolonial bourgeoisie and American and Western European intellectuals (Ahmad 1). In doing so, postcolonial theory runs the risk of failing to explain relationships between literature and the world, undermining political critique, and relocating urgent activist concerns to the realm of academic abstraction. Dirlik holds Bhabha particularly responsible for the trend that plagues postcolonial studies: “political mystification and theoretical obfuscation, of a reduction of social and political problems to psychological ones, and of the substitution of post-structuralist linguistic manipulation for historical and social explanation” (333). As such, postcolonial studies risks its own credibility if it ignores the effects and outcomes of the history of colonization on our contemporary moment, particularly in its relationship to capital and race.

Yet, the nature of capitalism is inextricably linked to the concerns of postcolonial studies. As Dirlik suggests, the main preoccupations of the field “resonate with concerns and orientations that have their origins in a new world situation that has also become part of conscious globally” (329). Moreover, the origins of postcolonial studies are linked directly to the rise of global capitalism and the field destabilizes what Dirlik terms the “foundationalism of capitalism” (335), namely the ideology that capitalism has irrefutably structured the world, history, and social relations. While there may be some truth to this representation of capitalism as a deterministic force, it has the effect of minimizing narratives that challenge capitalist hegemony.

The contradictions within postcolonial studies stem, in part, from the field's engagement with the relationship between the local and the global and the universal and the particular. Such a tendency is understandable because trends on local or national scales are easier to discuss and are less likely to produce charges of essentialism, though they are not entirely immune from them. Within the field, we often find ourselves grappling with the relationship between the universal and the particular, emphasizing national analysis or hazarding tentative transnational claims – rarely venturing to discuss global implications of race and its relationship to capitalism. Thus, for studies of race, postcolonial studies risks producing the contradictory results of claiming interest in the act of historicizing or in modes of difference but coming dangerously close to what Gyan Prakash has called the “ahistorical and universalizing tendencies in colonialist thinking” (*After Colonialism* 99). Yet, Prakash reminds us of the continuities between postcolonial studies and earlier critiques raised in Marxist thought, suggesting that postcolonial scholars did not pioneer critique of colonialism or postcolonial consciousness as its main goal. Rather, the value of postcolonial studies is that it “force[s] a radical re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination” (“Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography” 8). Indeed, colonial critique has appeared, even earlier than postcolonial studies, in other lines of inquiry, including Third Worldist thought and revolutionary nationalisms. As such, black radicalism overlaps with the genealogy of postcolonial studies that Prakash identifies.

All of this is to say that while Du Bois's work fits well within a “black radical” or “Third World” context, his status within a “postcolonial one” has been tenuous at best.

This results largely from the legitimate question of whether African Americans may be read as colonial subjects and reflects an understandable reluctance on the part of African American studies to make such a presumption. Yet, as my analysis of Du Bois's literary writings proposes, Du Bois found intellectual currency in exploring the relationship between African American experience and conditions in the colonies, a trend that appears frequently in black radical thought. To address the full possibilities present at the intersections of postcolonial and African American literatures, we need to move away from worries of appropriation across lines of "postcolonial" and "black radical" with the understanding that such an intellectual move is intended as a strategic alliance. This work requires an intervention through a politics of reading that revives the very political spirit shared by both postcolonial and African American studies. Such a goal can be accomplished, I suggest, by reading Du Bois as a postcolonial progenitor. In so doing, Du Bois's work enables us to enact a critical but provisional deterritorialization of literary field.

What I am proposing here is not the kind of approach taken by Paul Gilroy in *Against Race*, in which he critiques "race" as an intellectually valid construct and argues for planetary humanism, an "elusive mindset...allied to nonracial, transblack histories" (2). Rather, I am insisting that Du Bois's work positions race in relationship to questions of transnational capital, anticipating critiques of globalization that have been taken up within postcolonial studies. Du Bois's work at the intersections of African American life and the experiences of oppressed people of color around the world reminds us that postcolonial subjectivity is grounded in social experiences and materialist history, not, as it is caricatured in the American and Western European academy, in the concerns of

bourgeois Third World intellectuals towards the margins. Moreover, African American studies after Du Bois seems to have lost its own sense of connections across space and time, except when the African diaspora is concerned. This loss may be an accident of history, buoyed by the perceived failures of internationalist movements in the 1960s in particular. As such, African American studies has largely marginalized black radical thought and found little need to engage with postcolonial studies. In this engagement, African American studies has lost not only the vibrant global legacies left by Du Bois but also the ability to engage meaningfully with transnationalism beyond the African diaspora.

Du Bois's body of work, from his doctoral dissertation *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1896) through to his final novel *Worlds of Color* (1963), explores how the rise of capitalism, imperialism, and racism are deeply implicated in each other. They have relied on the development of technologies, such as the slave ship, that have made global commerce possible. Indeed, Du Bois's work foresees the rhetorics of global flows of capital and of power, which Arjun Appadurai addresses in "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (296), as well as theories of how ideas travel, which Edward Said takes up in "Traveling Theory" (157). To be sure, Du Bois is one of the earliest scholars of globalization, a site of inquiry that has been explored in both black radicalism and postcolonial studies.

Whereas Appadurai uses the language of "global cultural flows" to describe what he terms "scapes" - the registers of an imagined global landscape that comprise the global economy (298), Du Bois precedes him as he explores the global circulations of capital and power in *The Negro* (1915) and the essay "Worlds of Color" (1925). His work is

guided not only by the famous problem articulated in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (54), but also by his question raised in his 1925 essay “Worlds of Color” about World War I: “How deep were the roots of this catastrophe entwined about the color line? And of the legacy left, what of the darker race problems will the world inherit?” (423). Du Bois's work is carefully aligned with what globalization theorist Jan Aart Scholte identifies as the second definition of globalization to emerge over time: the material global relations and supraterritoriality (a new social geography that transcends territorial space) that emerged beginning in the nineteenth century (62). Indeed, Du Bois's invocation of this particular form of globalization links the fates of African Americans in the United States with the decolonization movements abroad, for it is closely tied to trans-oceanic travel and movements of human populations at the whim of global capital. Moreover, Du Bois's work articulates capitalism as a “world system” long before Immanuel Wallerstein theorized the term in *The Modern World System* (1974) .

Despite the potential pitfalls of bringing together the study of postcolonial and African American literature, it bears remembering that the act of comparison is not new to postcolonial studies. As Sangeeta Ray proposed in her talk at the 2011 MLA panel on “Postcolonial Theory and the Pressures of Comparison,” postcolonial progenitors like Fanon and Césaire remind us that the task of postcolonial studies has always been comparative. As I am suggesting in this project, Du Bois is another voice that reminds us of this very fact. With his invocations to traveling cultures and narratives of globalization, his deep study of patterns of domination and oppression that exist alongside each other,

across each other, across geographies, and in colonial and postcolonial histories, Du Bois identifies key questions of globalization that ultimately became pressing concerns for postcolonial studies.

To explore these intersections between postcolonial and African American studies through Du Bois's writing, I pair readings of Du Bois's literary work with postcolonial literary texts. My first chapter, "Colonial Education, Colonial Labor: Freedom Struggles in W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*," examines the role of colonial education and labor in the development of organic intellectualism in the two texts. Both *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1910) and *A Tempest* (1969) feature characters subject to colonial education, from the Negro schools of the United States South to the grim forms of education issued in the colonies. These educations, while different, share an emphasis on labor designed to maintain difference and inequality. In both texts, emancipation itself is a struggle against dehumanizing forms of education. Responding to these forms of educations, the main characters strive to subvert the lessons given to them in favor of new forms of decolonized subjectivity.

My second chapter, "Religion, Colonial Color Lines, and Caste in W.E.B. Du Bois's *Darkwater* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*," explores intersections between Du Bois's essay collection *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (1920) and Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) along lines of caste and color. Throughout *Darkwater*, Du Bois positions race in the language of caste - both within the United States and on a global scale. Caste, for Du Bois, is a formulation of social hierarchy that links the concerns of African Americans with decolonizing masses abroad, all of whom he sees as targets of wide scale domination by Western Europe and the United States in

the wake of World War I. Du Bois's work on the relationship between caste and race informs how we read the role of caste in Roy's *The God of Small Things*. Thus, I argue, Roy articulates the role of caste in Kerala in racial terms to reveal postcolonial racisms coded in the language of caste.

In “Thicker than Water, Thicker than Blood: Kinship in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Dark Princess* and Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*,” I examine representations of diaspora and kinship in Du Bois's *Dark Princess* (1928) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008). I argue that the two novels propose an iteration of global diasporic relations that enable transracial or cross-cultural solidarities within the Global South. In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois fully explores Afro-Asian solidarity through the relationship between African American Matthew Towns and Indian princess Kautilya. However, Du Bois articulates their solidarity in terms of blood relationships through the birth of their child Madhu, who becomes the “Messiah and Messenger to All the Darker Worlds” (*Dark Princess* 311). In this formulation, Du Bois takes the radical step of articulating solidarity but does so in the most facile of anthropological markers of kinship: blood. *Sea of Poppies*, however, pushes the notion of global diaspora further by articulating solidarities and kinships formed around a very different kind of substance: water.

My fourth and final chapter, “Out of the Ashes: Ruin and Solidarity in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Worlds of Color* and Andrea Levy’s *Small Island*” explores Du Bois's final novel *Worlds of Color* (1961) in conversation with black British writer Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004). I argue that in *Worlds of Color*, Du Bois anticipates discourses of ruin that later emerge within critical theory and postcolonial studies, from Walter Benjamin's work in *Illuminations* (1968) to Ann Laura Stoler's work on imperial debris.

Furthermore, Du Bois articulates the productive possibilities of ruin, namely global solidarities that could arise from the ruins of colonial projects. In turn, I suggest that Levy's *Small Island* explores similar solidarities arising in the ruins of post-World War II London as the first large-scale migration of people from the Caribbean, the Windrush Generation, begins arriving in England. For Levy, these solidarities do not only exist at the margins, as Du Bois proposes, but also in the Mother Country as global migration reshapes the metropole.

My conclusion briefly gestures towards the role of Du Bois in the intersections of postcolonial and African American studies. There, I propose that Du Bois's work enables us to consider a new form of academic discourse: oceanic reading. Bringing together Du Bois's investment in the connections between African Americans and oppressed people of color around the world and recent scholarship on global connections by postcolonial scholars, I suggest that thinking "oceanically" will enable us to address the relationships between capitalism, race, and imperialism more fully.

As such, this project draws attention to the ways Du Bois articulates the relationships between African American experience and the plight of people of color who share analogous oppressions around the world. In doing so, I argue for the vital importance of undertaking scholarly work that investigates subaltern experience under a global color line, particularly by juxtaposing concerns in postcolonial and African American studies and the iterations of discrimination and solidarity that Du Bois envisions over the course of his career. As Du Bois wrote in the 1952 article "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," after his visit to the Warsaw Ghetto:

The result of these three visits, and particularly my view of the Warsaw

ghetto, was not so much clearer understanding of the Jewish problem in the world as it was a real and complete understanding of the Negro problem. In the first place, the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer in my mind a separate and unique thing as I had so long conceived it. It was not even solely a matter of color and physical and racial characteristic, which was particularly a hard thing for me to learn, since for a lifetime the color line had been a real and efficient cause of misery.... No, the race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice, which reached all sorts of people and caused endless evil to all men. (46)

In light of these reflections, the body of Du Bois's literary production suggests that the color line does not manifest equally or identically around the world. Rather, it structures social relations based on the intersections of capitalism, imperialism, and race as well as history and social experience. Indeed, Du Bois spent his entire career negotiating between the experiences of African Americans and oppressed people around the world, between universal and particular articulations of race and oppression. In doing so, he anticipated key concepts and ideas that continue shaping postcolonial studies today.

Chapter 1 - Colonial Education, Colonial Labor: Freedom Struggles in W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*

“Everything that America has done crudely and shamelessly to suppress the Negro, England in Sierra Leone has done legally and suavely so that the Negroes themselves sometimes doubt the evidence of their own senses: ‘Jim Crow’ cars, neglect of education, economic serfdom.” –W.E.B. Du Bois, “Worlds of Color” (1925)

Beginning with the novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), Du Bois articulates links between African Americans and colonial subjects by questioning the educations they receive. As he suggests in both the essays of *Darkwater* (1920), which I discuss in my next chapter, and in the 1925 essay “Worlds of Color,” the United States and the colonies are implicated in colonial education. This form of education is centered on the goal of rendering African Americans and colonial subjects docile and compliant, willing to provide cheap labor for industry.

Postcolonial scholars also have explored the relationship between colonial education and labor practices. For example, Dickson A. Mungazi has examined British educational programs for Africans and proposed that they operated with the goal of developing a large, cheap pool of unskilled manual labor that, at the same time, intended to prevent geographical and social mobility (122). Additionally, Jamil Khader proposes that colonial education was intended not as a step towards emancipation but a step backwards towards colonialism (71). As Robert J.C. Young argues, the French were the first to lay claim to education as part of the civilizing mission of colonialism (30). He

suggests that British imperialism incorporated the civilizing mission but operated under the premise that colonial subjects could never aspire to a British ideal and were naturally inferior. As such, he writes, “The British system of relative non-interference with local cultures, which today seems more liberal in spirit, was in fact also based on the racist assumption that the native was incapable of education up to the level of the European – and therefore implied perpetual colonial rule” (Young 33). This attitude had the effect of shaping imperial policies of education to reinforce inequalities.

Du Bois himself has written extensively about troubling trends in African American education, ones that replicate colonial dynamics in the United States. Unlike Booker T. Washington, who supported vocational education for African Americans, Du Bois wrote with candor about education. For example, in “Negro Education” (1918), Du Bois reviews a report on African American education prepared by the Phelps Stokes Fund, a non-profit organization established in 1911 and well known for its contributions to education programs in both the United States South and colonial Africa. In the review, Du Bois argues that there is no defense for “public schools being used as training schools for cheap labor and menial servants instead of for education” (“Negro Education” 128). Moreover, in “Of the Training of Black Men,” a 1902 article for *The Atlantic Monthly*, Du Bois criticizes the relationship between imperialism and education, noting the tendency, “born of slavery,” to “regard human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends” (54). The effect such perspectives have on African American education in particular, Du Bois notes, means that “race prejudices...keep brown and black men in their ‘places’” (Du Bois, “Of the Training of Black Men” 54). The end result of colonial education, Du Bois suggests, is

that aspirations, culture, and character become the sole domain and privilege of white men and “the danger and delusion of black” (“Of the Training of Black Men” 54).

In light of the positions on colonial education which Du Bois espoused at various times in his career, it is perhaps unsurprising that he addresses colonial forms of education in his 1911 novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. In doing so, Du Bois provides a framework for readings of colonial education, foregrounding the intersections of troubling labor practices with education through a colonial lens. This reading, in turn, provides insight on the relationship between labor and education in Aimé Césaire’s 1969 play *A Tempest*.

Educating Labor/Laboring to Educate in The Quest of the Silver Fleece

Du Bois’s *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* marked his first foray into novel writing and the beginning of the very productive decade of the 1910s in his career. The same year, Du Bois traveled to London to attend the First Universal Races Congress in London, a four-day anti-racist summit in London, to explore “the general relations subsisting between the peoples of the West and those of the East, between the so-called ‘white’ and the so-called ‘colored’ peoples” and to “further the cause of mutual trust and respect between the Occident and the Orient, between the so-called ‘white’ peoples and the so-called ‘colored’ peoples” (“Circulars Issued by the Executive Council” xiv). During the same decade, Du Bois’s investment in pan-Africanism grew, visible in his 1913 pageant *The Star of Ethiopia*, which traced the origins of the African diaspora from early black man to the kingdoms of Egypt, Sudan, and Zimbabwe and through the transatlantic slave trade to the conditions of African American life in the 1910s. Indeed, these years also

saw the publication of *The Negro* (1915), which marks Du Bois's significant investment in pan-Africanism and move towards Afrocentric history, and Du Bois's essay, "The African Roots of War" (1915) in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which articulates Du Bois's reflections on World War I and its intersections with African colonization. This brief sketch of Du Bois's activities in the 1910s help contextualize *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, a novel that has gone unremarked for its exploration of the colonial condition of African Americans in the United States South.

In *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, Du Bois tells the story of Blessed (Bles) Alwyn and Zora, two African Americans who grow up in rural Alabama on the Cresswell cotton plantation. Together, the two plan to grow cotton, their own "Silver Fleece," and to use their proceeds to free themselves from the endless cycle of debt peonage in which black laborers around them are trapped. Their plot is thwarted when the Silver Fleece is unceremoniously stolen by the Cresswells, who claim that Bles and Zora's family debts render the value of the Silver Fleece moot. The theft of the Silver Fleece reveals the Cresswells' fears of both the economic benefits of raising cotton and of northern capitalists like John Taylor, who has sent his sister Mary Taylor to teach in a local negro school on the Cresswell plantation and to investigate the possibilities of creating a cotton combine to monopolize production, distribution, and consumption of cotton on a global scale. Following the theft of the Silver Fleece, Bles and Zora part, each traveling separately to the North where they continue their educations in formal and informal ways. Ultimately, they both conclude that new forms of education and new approaches to labor are needed in the Black Belt, and they return, reunited in their belief in cooperative education and economics. In *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, Du Bois positions African

Americans as colonial subjects whose relationship to education and labor are intimately linked to conditions in colonies around the world. To achieve emancipation, Du Bois suggests, African Americans must recognize these linkages and overthrow the forms of colonial education to which they are subjected.

Traditional assessments of the novel locate it in the tradition of sentimentalism for its embrace of the romantic tradition and its appropriation of antebellum narratives that represent a South riven by war and reconciliation of strife between North and South through a marital union of characters from each. Keith Byerman argues that Du Bois writes back to antebellum narratives while inventing a black, socialist version. In this new version, “The North-South alignment is shown to be self-destructive, while harmony is achieved through the uniting of the black elite and the masses in a cooperative utopia” (Byerman 116). Reviews of the novel tend to locate it exclusively within post-Reconstruction politics of the United States. For example, James B. Stewart argues that the novel addresses the psychic duality of African Americans and “the impact of ‘King Cotton’ on post-Reconstruction America” (94). Stewart further suggests, “Northern industrialists, Southern aristocrats, and unscrupulous blacks are portrayed as impediments to the attainment of socioeconomic equality by the black masses” (95). Moreover, Byerman locates the realism of *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* within the context of muckraking writing: “the focus on the corrupting and destructive effects of corporate capitalism and machine politics” (155).

While these evaluations of the novel are significant, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* remains deeply concerned with the relationship between the colonial conditions of African Americans in the United States South and people of color around the world. Du

Bois explores these connections through the role of cotton in global capitalism – not just politics and capitalism within the United States but beyond. Through these themes, Du Bois positions the situations of African Americans like protagonists Bles and Zora within a politics of coloniality and postcoloniality. Byerman suggests Du Bois juxtaposes the materialist concerns of the novel with genre romance, and he identifies the arc of the novel as “the quests of the protagonists to their triumph that culminates in a happily ever after” in the marital sense (115). However, I argue that Du Bois addresses these issues through the lens of colonialism in a United States context, one that positions African Americans as colonial subjects. Taking into account the global links that recur in the novel, another reading is possible: the novel’s culmination is not only the “happily ever after” of the love relationship but also the “happily ever after” of a new order emerging from Bles and Zora’s success in overthrowing the systems of colonial education from which they emerged triumphant. Du Bois’s analysis of the African American colonial condition in the novel appears in the representation of black spaces in the novel, depictions of cotton commerce, comparisons between the struggles of African Americans and exploited people of color around the world, and assertions about education’s role as an instrument of colonial power.

Du Bois represents the Alabama swamp in which his black characters live as a colonial space. To the whites that live nearby, the swamp is “a strange land” of “wildness and weirdness” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 7). Emanating from the swamp is foreign music with “no tune nor melody... formless, boundless music” which the whites label “wondrous savage music” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 8). The swamp is “its own world,” where “dreams and devils live” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the*

Silver Fleece 33, 38). It is also a space that serves little purpose for cotton production, as no cotton could grow there, positioning it outside the redeeming space of production. Arlene Elder argues that the novel explores the tension between two worldviews: the swamp and the plantation. In this paradigm, “the swamp represents all that is free, wild, joyful, and loving, the plantation all that is self-serving and exploitative” (358). However, Elder notes that Du Bois avoids simplistically aligning blacks with the swamp and whites with the plantation. While the dynamics between swamp and plantation are significant to the novel, they are further complicated by Du Bois’s representation of the swamp’s wildness in relation to colonies around the world. Thus, it may be more apt to say that the novel explores the tensions between colonial spaces (the swamp, Africa, Asia, indigenous lands in Canada) that are subject to exploitation from the spaces of the colonizer (the plantation, Washington, New York, and Europe).

The character Zora represents the swamp, as she is a wild and willful “child of the swamp,” that “dark and sombre kingdom” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 32). Of the swamp and its black inhabitants, Zora remarks, “We black folks got the spirit” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 34), rehearsing the colonial othering of the irrational or wild colonized in relation to the rational colonizer. Even within the space of the swamp, Zora’s cabin, shared with her mother Elspeth, a conjure woman whom the whites of the Cresswell plantation call a “witch,” is unique and curious, a “mysterious black cabin in mid-swamp” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 26, 34). The cabin itself is subject to a form of double othering – even more troubling and strange to the whites on the Cresswell plantation than the homes of other African Americans. Identifications of Zora’s colonial subjectivity are emphasized later by her employer Mrs. Vanderpool’s

ambitious plans for Zora: “Take her to France and marry her off in the colonies” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 190).

Mediating the colonial space of the swamp and spaces of the colonizer, cotton gives shape to the economic realities that affect the lives, educations, and livelihoods of the novel’s characters. Cotton reveals a disjuncture between whites of the North and South, from Northern capitalist John Taylor, whose plans for a cotton combine promise tremendous economic benefit for his white investors, to Southern plantation owners like the Cresswell family, who are skeptical of the large-scale, industrial plans that Northerners have for their cotton crop. They are, in fact, suspicious about John Taylor’s plans, “a combination of capital and power, such as this nation has never seen” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 60). Yet, the Cresswells seem to realize that John Taylor understands trends in industrial capitalism, namely that global capitalism is the order of the day, and they join the cotton combine. John Taylor’s plan for cotton is, indeed, worldwide in scope: “First there’s England – and all Europe; why not bring them into the trust” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 46). His master plan is to monopolize growth and manufacture of cotton in the United States and “use the first to club European manufacturers into submission” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 46). John Taylor’s plan to corner the world cotton market would give him the “whip-hand of the industrial world” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 83) because he imagines cotton will ultimately become a significant enough commodity that it could supersede the importance of steel on the world stage.

Yet, cotton also reveals a troubling link between whites and blacks in the United States, while further emphasizing the global aspects of the cotton market. John Taylor

models himself on his inspiration, Mr. John Grey, who had “so successfully manipulated the cotton market that while black men who made the cotton starved in Alabama and white men who bought it froze in Siberia,” that he sat, “high on a throne of royal state that far outshone the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 41). Cotton links the African American laborers of Alabama in “the brown back of the world” with the wider world via “trains that run twice a day to tote cotton away” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 38, 28), bringing together cotton’s status as a significant commodity and the racialized labor that produces it. The worldwide ramifications of cotton appear in its representation through the language of waters and oceans, a “glimmering sea of delicate leaves... stretching away to the northward” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 19). When Mary Taylor sees the cotton in the South, she observes that “beyond this little world...it stretched on and on – how far she did not know.... On and on in a great trembling sea, and the foam of its mighty waters would one time flood the ends of the earth” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 19). The invocation of the “great trembling sea” and waters that would “flood the ends of the earth” reinforces the vast global reach of cotton and its distribution throughout the world as a commodity of global capitalism.

Moreover, Du Bois reinforces the global nature of cotton by linking it to oppressed workers, primarily colonized people of color, around the world. He positions cotton in “the cry of the naked” which is “sweeping the world. From the peasant toiling in Russia, the lady lolling in London, the chieftain burning in Arica, and the esquimaux freezing in Alaska; from long lines of hungry men, from patient sad-eyed women, from old folk and creeping children” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40). They cry

“clothes, clothes!” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40), linking unclothed masses of the world to the black labor in the United States that creates the cotton: “the wide black land that belts the South, where Miss Smith worked and Miss Taylor drudged and Bles and Zora dreamed” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40). Emphasizing these connections, Du Bois writes, “The dense black land sensed the cry and heard the bond of answering life within the vast dark breast. All that dark hearth heaved in mighty travail with the bursting boils of the cotton while black attendant earth spirits swarmed above, sweating and crooning to its birth pains” (*The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40).

African American labor answers these cries during the harvest:

When the cry of the naked was loudest in the mouths of men, a sudden cloud of workers swarmed between the Cotton and the Naked, spinning and weaving and sewing and carrying the Fleece and mining and minting and bringing the Silver til the Song of Service filled the world and the poetry of Toil was in the souls of the laborers. (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40)

These laborers sense their vital link to people around the world through the cotton and through the music of their labor. Indeed, they answer the call for cotton:

The cry of the naked was sweeping the world, and yonder in the night black men were answering the call. They knew not what or why they answered, but obeyed the irresistible call, with hearts light and song upon their lips – the song of service. (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 51)

The African American laborers sense their intimate connection to others around the world through their labor, though they approach it in the language of a vocation or calling, not in terms of commercial interests. Conversely, “There were tense silent white-faced men moving in the swarm who felt no poetry and heard no song, and one of these was John Taylor” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40). John Taylor does not perceive a relationship between the labor of blacks and a world crying for clothing. Rather, he is immune to all but the mercenary factors of cotton: “In the rich Wall Street offices of Grey and Easterly, Brokers, Mr. Taylor, as chief and confidential clerk surveyed the world’s nakedness and the supply of cotton to clothe it” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40). Whereas Du Bois links black laborers to genuine concern for the naked and oppressed, John Taylor is simply concerned with business, “neither for his own health nor for the healing or clothing of the peoples but to apply his knowledge of the world’s nakedness and of black men’s toil in such a way as to bring him wealth” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 40). As such, Du Bois provides a utopian vision of black labor, linking cotton to labor and poverty around the world. Conversely, white capitalists are concerned primarily with cotton’s role as commodity of global capitalism.

Perceiving the significance of cotton, Bles and Zora hatch a plan to grow their own as a means to help emancipate their people. Cotton and ownership of it equate to tremendous power. For example, a black worker tells Mary Taylor, “Nuttin’ can buy de Cresswells, dey naturally owns de world” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 26). He goes on to assess the Cresswells as “good white folks” insofar as “white folks will be white folks” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 26). For Bles and Zora, however, the Cresswells “are thieves now” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 25). Bles

imagines their cotton in the language of the ocean, much as Mary Taylor herself did, which speaks to its global links: “We chop out the weak stalks and the strong ones grow tall and dark, til I think it must be like the ocean – all green and billowy; then comes little flecks here and there and the sea is all filled with flowers – flowers like little bells, blue and purple and white” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 21). The cotton itself is linked to an African diasporic sensibility as well. Zora and Bles obtain the seeds from Zora’s mother Elspeth, and they are “not the white-green seeds which Bles has always known, but small, moth black seeds” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 74). These seeds are, for Du Bois, perhaps a heavy-handed symbol of the future possibilities of African Americans and for people of color around the world, particularly of the African diaspora, for they are not white but black and have come from Africa. Despite their care for the cotton and a successful crop, however, it is stolen by the Cresswells who, like Jason and the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece, claim it the Silver Fleece as their own.

With the possibilities of their cotton enterprise dashed, Zora and Bles turn to education, only to find that they have been subject to colonial education, which reflects John Taylor’s plan for monopoly over cotton. He advocates educating blacks for an appreciation of labor and to participate in cotton production. Like the Cresswells, however, he remains distrustful of education for African Americans, troubled by the fact that African Americans are attending school and concerned that this education will do the reverse of producing cheap labor: produce educated people unwilling to replicate Southern labor practices. Indeed, both John and the Cresswells urge restraint in the endowment of new black schools because, “The black man whose wooly head is filled with ideas of rising. We’re striving by main force to prevent this” (Du Bois, *The Quest of*

the Silver Fleece 121). This approach to education is tied closely to the capitalist plot of the novel in the sense that the two are aware that “American cotton-spinning supremacy is built on cheap cotton; cheap cotton is built on cheap niggers” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 121).

The school that Bles and Zora attend appears to have a different mission on the surface. The school was founded by Miss Smith to educate local black children, an uphill battle against the wishes of the Cresswell family, who prefer their cheap labor to remain uneducated. Optimistic and idealistic, Miss Smith is guided by her belief in “a world where every soul counts – white, black, and yellow – all” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 15). However, the school is staffed by teachers, like Mary Taylor, who are skeptical about African Americans’ intellectual capacities. When the novel begins, Mary Taylor has arrived to work in the school and serves as the primary instructor for Bles and Zora. She brings a New Englander’s putative interest in helping educate black children, accompanied by incipient racism. Indeed, her own sense of the world is reinforced by her position as a white woman who has “not as yet perfected in her mind any theory of the world into which black folk fitted” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 43). Through Mary Taylor, Du Bois negotiates the exchange between the global and the local, as she observes that “great as the ‘Negro Problem’ might be as a world problem, it looked sordid and small at close range” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 19). She is particularly critical of Zora, whom she does not think is worth educating. Additionally, she is easily swayed by Harry Cresswell’s assessment of black students, when he says, “All these Negroes are, as you know, of wretchedly low morals; but there are a few so depraved that it would be suicidal to take them into this school” (Du Bois, *The Quest of*

the Silver Fleece 63). One of these is Zora who, according to Harry, “ought not to be here” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 63). As such, Mary Taylor considers her role in educating Zora in colonial terms, calling it “taking the war into Africa” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 53), a task for which she must summon mental fortitude.

In Zora, however, Mary Taylor finds an unwilling student, one whose worldview seems fundamentally alien to the education she imagines she must provide. She embeds her messages to Zora in the language of colonization. For example, her statement to Zora that “everybody likes some kind of work” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 55), speaks to the civilizing mission of labor. Playing on tropes of natives close to nature, Zora proposes a different opinion: “living just comes free like – like sunshine” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 55). Mary Taylor goes on to rebuke Zora, saying, “Stuff! Zora, your people must learn to work and work steadily and work hard!” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 55). Yet, Zora replies, “Do you know my people? They don’t never work; they plays.... Ah my people! My poor little people!” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 55).

In comparison to Zora, Bles has most clearly internalized the messages of their colonial education. For example, he encourages Zora to attend school by telling her, “You’ve found some things worth knowing in this world haven’t you? ... But there are more – many many more – worlds on worlds of things – you have not dreamed of” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 35). His reference to “this world” indicates the swamp, and he encourages Zora to look beyond it to the promises he perceives available to him in education. Bles’s assimilation to the messages of colonial education is demonstrated to be nearly complete as he rehearses a colonial othering of the swamp. He

tells Zora, “When you’re educated you won’t want to live in the swamp” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 37). Yet, Zora responds that she wants to live in “a beautiful great castle here in the swamp” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 37).

However, Zora is not immune to the colonial messages of her education to some degree as well. Looking at a painting of Madonna and child with Bles, Zora asks why there is a lily in the painting. Bles explains that it “stands for purity – she was a good woman” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 73). Zora asks Bles, “She’s as white as the lily, Bles; but – I’m sorry she’s white – Bles, what’s purity, just whiteness?” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 73). While Bles does not go so far as to tell Zora she is not pure because she is not white, he tells her she is not pure because she was raped by Harry Cresswell as a young child. Nonetheless, Zora plaintively repeats, “I’m – pure” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 73). Because of this experience, purity and whiteness become linked in Zora’s mind. This linkage is particularly troublesome because it leads Zora to take on responsibility for her own rape and to believe that she is solely to blame for her alleged lack of purity. Bles subsequently decides that because Zora is not pure, she is not worthy of his love and he departs for Washington for college and government work.

For both Bles and Zora, however, the experience of planning to grow and sell the Silver Fleece plays an important part of their intellectual development. As such, Bles finds himself “becoming conscious of the narrowness and straightness of his black world” and growing angry “ever and again as he felt his bonds” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 94). Through his development, he perceives he is “faintly grasping the fuller wider world, and its thoughts and aspirations” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*

94). His consciousness is not only one of his own situation and experiences but also of other black people, the white world, and the multiple worlds beyond it. In contrast to his colonial education, the cotton is responsible for this development, connecting the narrow land of the swamp to which they have long been confined to a wider world. This is exemplified again through language of the sea and ocean, when Zora sees the first flower on the cotton and observes:

Slowly, wonderfully, the flowers spread – white, blue, and purple bells, hiding timidly, blazing luxuriantly amid the velvet leaves; until one day – it was after a Southern rain and the sunlight was twinkling through the morning – all the Fleece was in flower – mighty swaying sea, darkling, rich and waving, and upon its flecks and stars of white and purple foam.

(Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 96)

As a result, she perceives that “the world was happy, and the face of the black-belt green and luxuriant with the thickening flecks of the coming foam of ocean” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 119). It seems that for Bles and Zora there is more to be learned outside the classroom in which they were being educated towards being effective laborers, an education gleaned through the act of cultivating cotton. The theft of the Silver Fleece coincides with their awareness of the limitations of their colonial condition, and this awareness propels both of them out of the South, to the North and towards new opportunities. They see past the education intended to make the stay and to turn them into laborers for the Cresswell profit.

Therefore, the theft of the Silver Fleece leads both Bles and Zora out of the south, to new lives. Bles relocates to Washington, DC to further his education and to work for

the government. Later, Zora works as Mrs. Vanderpool's maid and travels in the North. The two convene in Washington, which Du Bois represents as a worldly city: “the kaleidoscopic panorama of a world's doing, the myriad forms and faces, the talk and laughter of men” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 177). Zora's impression of the North is that she “did not know the world was so larger” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 187). As she watches the world around her grow, she “compared the lands she passed with the lands she new: noting the formation of the cotton; the kind and growth of the trees; the state of the roads” until “the comparisons became infinite, endless; the world stretched on and on until it seemed mere distance, and she suddenly realized how vast a thing it was” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 187). Travel itself is an education for Bles and Zora themselves, articulated in Zora's musing about “why no one had told her before of all this mighty world” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 188).

While Du Bois gives little attention to the formation of Bles's education, which is largely gained by watching the Washington political machine at work, he represents Zora as an autodidact. In New York, she takes on an independent ambitious reading program:

Hour after hour, day after day, she lay buried, deaf and dumb to all else. Her heart cried, up on the World's four corners of the Way, and to it came the Vision Splendid. She gossiped with old Herodotus, across the earth to the black and blameless Ethiopians; she saw the sculptured glories of Phidias marbled amid the splendor of the swamp; she listened to Demosthenes and walked the Appian Way with Cornelia - while all New York streamed beneath her window.... She saw the drunken Goths reel

upon Rome and heard the careless Negroes yodel as they galloped to Toomsville. Paris, she knew, -- wonderful, haunting Paris: the Paris of Clovis, and St. Louis; of Louis the Great, and Napoleon III; of Balzac, and her own Dumas. She tasted the mud and comfort of thick old London, and the while wept with Jeremiah and sang with Deborah, Semiramis, and Atala. Mary of Scotland and Joan of Arc held dark hands in theirs and Kings lifted up their scepters. (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 192)

Through this reading, she is able to learn more about the world as “she walked on worlds, and worlds of worlds, and heard there in her little room the tread of armies, the paeans of victory, the breaking of hearts, and the music of the spheres” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 192). In no small part, this education has been gained through the Silver Fleece itself. Indeed, when Zora sees the fleece later - as the fabric that comprises Mary Taylor’s wedding dress, she realizes that the fleece “was her talisman new-found; her love come back, her stolen dream come true” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 174). Her ability to see and touch it allows her to realize, “She could face the world; God had turned it straight again. She would go into the world and find - not LOVE, but things greater than LOVE” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 174). Zora's narrative of education is one of trying to find “the way” - she imagines that her trip to the North as Mrs. Vanderpool's maid might lead her to her destiny: “the world, the great mysterious World, that stretched beyond the swamp and into which Bles and the Silver Fleece had gone - did it lead to the way?” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 171). And, in a sense it does; it leads her back to her people.

Unclear of how to redeem herself, Zora, wonders, “Why was she drifting in vast waters; in uncharted wastes of sea?” haunted by her perceived lack of purity and her colonial condition: “the outcast child of the swamp” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 225). Yet, as she listens to a preacher speak, she hears “an earnest voice addressed, by singular chance, to her of all the world” and he says, “Only in a whole world of selves, infinite, endless, eternal world on world of selves - only in their vast good is true salvation. The good of others is our true good; work for others; not for your salvation, but the salvation of the world” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 226). This observation leads Zora to realize that she must go back to the South to work for her people by intervening in colonial forms of education. The fact that Zora interprets the invocation to save the world as a charge to save her people links the fate of African Americans with the salvation of the world. Although Mrs. Vanderpool encourages her to travel to Europe to learn “settlement-work and reform movements” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 228), Zora is determined that the way she can effect change is by working in the Black Belt. Indeed, she does not believe she fits anywhere else because she does “not belong in this world where right and wrong get so mixed. With us yonder there is wrong, but we call it wrong - mostly” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 252). Because of her experiences in New York and in Washington, she has a new view on the Black Belt, of what her “poor people” must endure (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 254):

Zora was looking on her world with the keener vision of one who, blind from very seeing, closes the eyes a space and looks again with wide clearer vision. Out of a nebulous cloudland she seemed to step; a land

where all things floated in strange confusion, but where one thing stood steadfast; and that was love. When love was shaken all things moved, but now, at last, for the first time she seemed to know the real and mighty world that stood behind that old and shaken dream. So she looked on the old with her new eyes. These men and women of her childhood had hitherto walked by her like shadows; today they lived for her in flesh and blood. She saw hundreds and thousands of black men and women: crushed, half spirited and blind. (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 273)

She perceives “thoughts and vague stirrings of unrest in this mass of black folk,” which she links to “suffering for the evil of the world” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 274). She attributes worldliness to suffering, linking the situation of African Americans to the vast world under the thumb of colonialism and imperialism. This parallel suggests that she is invested in overthrowing old orders that render blacks marginal. Zora's experience of a world beyond the Black Belt and knowledge about people of color beyond the United States, whose fates are linked to global commerce like her people's are to the production, distribution, and consumption of cotton, leads her to understanding. She thus hatches a plan to buy the swamp and start a school. Her recourse is to open a school to educate black children, to overthrow the colonial education that she herself received:

She spoke simply but clearly: of neglect and suffering, of the sins of others that bowed young shoulders, of the great hope of the children's future. Then she told something of what she had seen and read of the world's newer ways of helping men and women. She talked of cooperation

and refuges and other efforts; she praised their way of adopting children into their own homes; and then she finally she told them of the land she was buying for new tenants and the helping hands she needed. (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 284)

In response to this speech, comes “a sharp cry... far off down towards the swamp and the sound of great footsteps coming, coming as from the end of the world; there swelled a rhythmical chanting, wilder and more primitive than song” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 287). Recalling the primitive music of the swamp, this response signals the coming of a new order, the coming of revolution.

Bles comes to understand that the forms of education in which Zora has engaged have redeemed her. He realizes that Zora and only Zora has the capacity to envision a “new world” and new way forward for African Americans (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 307). Bles decides he must participate - particularly as a cotton picker in the cooperative economics made possible by Zora’s school. In this work, he discovers, he is “fighting the battle of his color and caste” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 313).

Through their interventions in colonial education, Bles and Zora are the novel’s organic intellectuals. They possess an innate awareness of global injustice born from their positions as black subjects in the South. For example, Bles is aware that the struggle he faces as a black man is not “man against man... it wasn't even one against main, else how willingly, swinging his axe, [he] would have stood his ground before a mob. No it was one against a world, a world of power, opinion, wealth, and opportunity; and he, the one, must cringe and bear in silence lest the world crash about the ears of his people” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 66). Because Zora and Bles are organic intellectuals,

the true narrative of their tales is a narrative of education. In this way, *Quest of the Silver Fleece* functions as a bildungsroman for the organic intellectual, dramatizing barriers to development, including capitalism and racism. While they perceive the importance of education, they imagine that the combination of that education and their capacity for labor will lead them towards a freer future for themselves and their people. Indeed, Zora and Bles's mutual understanding of the plight of African Americans leads them to each other: "From that day on they walked together in a new world. No revealing word was spoken; no vows were given, none asked for; but a new bond held them. She grew older, quieter, taller, he humbler, more tender and reverent as they toiled together" (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 74).

Whereas the *Quest of the Silver Fleece* is deeply concerned with the relationship between the commodity production of the Black Belt and the way in which it could be exploited by white capitalists for global commodity capitalism and shows some awareness of the relationship between black laborers in the South and the impoverished and exploited around the world, the novel distinguishes between the effects of race on African Americans and people of color around the world. For example, Caroline Wyn, a light-skinned black friend of Bles's acknowledges that "no dark man ever entered their house; they were simply copying the white world. Now I, as a matter of aesthetic beauty, prefer your brown-velvet color to a jaundiced yellow, or even an uncertain cream; but the world doesn't" (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 213). Bles curiously asks, "the world?" And Caroline replies, "Yes, the world; and especially America. One may be Chinese, Spaniard, even Indian - anything white or dirty white in this land, and demand decent treatment; but to be Negro or darkening toward it unmistakably means perpetual

handicap and crucifixion” (Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* 213). This version of the color line is one more complicated than the white/not-white binaries articulated in the novel until this point, and it further complicates the version of the color line which Du Bois articulates in *The Souls of Black Folk*: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (54). It acknowledges color lines within color lines, decidedly different relations between whites and people of various colors, hierarchies of color that circumscribe the permissibility of racism and relegate African Americans to the most vulnerable of locations - at the bottom.´

Overthrowing Colonial Education in Aimé Césaire's A Tempest

At first glance, little seems to link Du Bois’s *The Quest for the Silver Fleece* with Césaire's *A Tempest*. Yet, both are deeply invested in narratives of organic intellectual development and colonial education. Rewriting William Shakespeare’s 1610 play through a postcolonial lens, Césaire focuses on the characters Caliban and Ariel, who have been enslaved by their colonizer Prospero. Prior to Prospero’s arrival on the island, Caliban had been the ruler, but he, like Ariel, finds himself subject to Prospero’s whims. In the play, Césaire dramatizes Caliban and Ariel’s competing desires for independence, which take different forms: Caliban advocates for revolution by any means necessary, including violence, while Ariel favors a non-violent approach. When a shipwreck brings new characters, including Gonzalo, Antonio, Ferdinand, Stephano, and Trinculo to the island, the dynamics of colonization come into sharper focus. While Ariel receives his

freedom, however, the play ends with Prospero and Caliban locked into struggle over the fate of the island and its inhabitants.

Like the swamp of Du Bois's *Fleece*, the island of Césaire's *A Tempest* is rendered in colonial terms. For example, Gonzalo calls the island “magic lands, so different from our homes in Europe,” so different indeed that “even the lightning is different” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 5). Similarly, Antonio identifies the island as “a foretaste of the hell that awaits us” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 5), a play between the afterlife he fears and the hell he imagines awaits the sailors on the island, namely the savages he expects to find. Yet, Césaire turns the questions of human value and of savagery back on the members of the ship when Ferdinand looks at the men on the sinking ship and notes, “Alas! There's no one in hell...all the devils are here” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 5). Moreover, the nature of the island taken up repeatedly the play, particularly when Miranda asks Prospero how they ended up there: “Was it because you found the world distasteful, or through the perfidy of some enemy? Is our island a prison or a hermitage?” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 6). Prospero's responds by saying, “In a way, it is because of all the things you mention” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 7). Perhaps unintentionally, Prospero's response to Miranda illuminates the power dynamics of the island, which are bound up in Prospero's intellectualism, Caliban and Ariel's enslavement, and the colonial education Prospero has given them.

Césaire casts Prospero as a direct colonizer whose studies led him to “the exact location of these lands for which many had sought for centuries” (*A Tempest* 7). He clarifies that Prospero was planning to take possession of Caribbean islands before Antonio and Alonso plotted to steal Prospero's “as-yet-unborn empire” (Césaire, *A*

Tempest 7). Césaire positions Prospero as a Christopher Columbus figure, subject to an Inquisition that charged him with “errors...with regard to the shape of the Earth” (*A Tempest* 7). Prospero’s knowledge is vast and varied indeed, for he can quote “profane writings” of “Strabus, Ptolemy and the tragic author Seneca” and use “Arabic calculations and scriblings in Hebrew, Syrian and other demonic tongues” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 8). Moreover, Prospero announces that his punishment for his pursuit of knowledge is his exile on the “desert island” setting of the play (Césaire, *A Tempest* 8) – an island that was not, however, deserted. Additionally, Prospero imagines himself to be an intellectual by virtue of his “books and instruments” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 9). Through Prospero’s investment in education, Césaire sets up a dichotomy between Prospero’s formal education and the category of organic intellectual. For Césaire, Prospero’s formal education designates him as the colonizing intellectual invested in plotting to prevent Antonio, Gonzalo, and others from reaching “those lands [his] genius discovered” (*A Tempest* 9).

Yet, Prospero is not the only would-be colonizer on the island concerned with the importance of education. When Gonzalo arrives, he suggests they look for guano and “investigate all the caves on this island one by one to see if we find any and if we do, this island, if wisely exploited will be richer than Egypt with its Nile” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 24). Sebastian notes that they will need labor to turn guano into a lucrative commodity, and asks if the island is inhabited. Gonzalo calls it “a wondrous land” filled with “wondrous creatures” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 25). He also raises the problem of the responsibilities of the colonizer and of colonial education: “If the island is inhabited, as I believe, and if we colonize it, as is my hope, then we have to take every precaution not to

import our shortcomings, yes, what we call civilization. They must stay as they are: savages, noble and good savages, free, without any complexes or complications” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 25). Like the colonial education of Du Bois’s *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, colonial education subordinates others, reinforcing distinctions between civilized and savage and paying lip service to the significance of education while using it to maintain distinctions and power differentials between colonizer and colonized. Gonzalo has the opportunity to perform this pedagogical exercise when Ariel arrives to tell them that Prospero rules the island but will not harm them because their repentance “is deep and sincere” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 32). Gonzalo responds with a lesson in grammar: “Attrition: A selfish regret for offering God, caused by a few of punishment. Contrition: An unselfish regret growing out of sorrow at displeasing God” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 33). Ariel responds with sarcasm, thanking Gonzalo for clarifying those definitions and saying, “Your eloquence has eased my mission and your pedagogical skill has abbreviated it, for in a few short words you have expressed my master’s thought” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 33).

Exploring the complex relationship between colonizers and the colonized, Césaire positions Ariel in contention with Prospero, creating tension that Prospero does not seem to understand. He imagines Ariel must be grateful to him for freedom and education, asking, “Who freed you from Sycorax, may I ask? Who rent the pine in which you had been imprisoned and brought you forth?” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 10). However, Ariel responds, “Sometimes I almost regret it” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 10). In return for Prospero’s favor, Ariel must do his bidding, even when the tasks leave him “disgusted” and he only obeys “most unwillingly,” begging Prospero to “spare me this kind of labour” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 10). Prospero dismisses Ariel’s concerns by saying, “It’s always like

that with you intellectuals!” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 9). Indeed, while Ariel has no choice but to do Prospero’s bidding, he does so with a consciousness, one that Prospero disdains with his use of the term “intellectual.” Whereas Prospero imagines he has brought freedom to Ariel, he has simply turned him into a colonial subject and slave. Yet, Ariel has a consciousness that Prospero is forced to recognize, and in recognizing it, Prospero perceives the inherent threat of Ariel’s capacity for intellect. Indeed, Ariel tells him, “You’ve promised me my freedom a thousand times, and I’m still waiting” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 10).

Whereas Prospero senses trouble in Ariel’s intellect, he takes full responsibility for the education of Caliban, whom he worries is “getting a little too emancipated” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 10). Caliban’s first word in *A Tempest* is “Uhuru!” the Swahili word for “freedom” and a term that recalls African decolonization movements such as the Mau Maus of Kenya. Prospero denies this cry for freedom from Caliban by claiming he is “mumbling in [his] native language again!” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). Prospero reveals his role as Caliban’s colonial educator when he tells him, “I’ve already told you, I don’t like it. You could be polite, at least; a simple ‘hello’ wouldn’t kill you” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). With this statement, Prospero further positions himself as arbiter of manners and politeness, skills that he claims to have tried to teach Caliban. In a response laden with subversion and sarcasm, Caliban responds, “Make that as froggy, waspish, pustular, and dung-filled ‘hello’ as possible. May today hasten by a decade the day when all the birds of the sky and beasts of the earth will feast upon your corpse” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). Reinforcing Caliban’s colonial condition by positioning him as an animal, Prospero calls him “ugly ape,” to which Caliban responds in kind, saying that Prospero looks “like some

old vulture. An old vulture with a scrawny neck” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). In contrast to Ariel, Caliban positions himself differently in relationship to Prospero, demonstrating contentiousness where Ariel is largely able to refrain from comment.

The respective educations that Prospero has provided Ariel and Caliban diverge as well. Whereas Prospero positions himself as Ariel’s savior, he imagines that Caliban must owe more to him, particularly for the gift of speech. Prospero tells Caliban he should be grateful for language, saying, “You could at least thank me for having taught you to speak at all” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). He suggests that before Prospero had educated him, Caliban was incapable of language, “a savage... a dumb animal, a beast” whom Prospero “educated, trained, and dragged up from the bestiality that still clings” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11). Caliban speaks to the colonial elements of this education when he tells Prospero:

You didn’t teach me a thing! Except to jabber in your own language so that I could understand your orders: chop the wood, wash the dishes, fish for food, plant vegetables, all because you’re too lazy to do it yourself. And as for your learning, did you ever impart any of that to me? No, you took care not to. All your science you keep for yourself alone, shut up in those big books. (Césaire, *A Tempest* 11-2)

Prospero’s response is to ask, “What would you be without me?” and Caliban answers, “Without you? I’d be the king, that’s what I’d be, the King of the Island. The king of the island given me by my mother Sycorax” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 12). Caliban’s charge against Prospero recalls the nature of colonial education in Du Bois’s *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, an education meant to socialize African American laborers to the need for

their labor without giving them useful knowledge that might enable them to supersede the conditions under which they live.

Along similar lines, Caliban points to Prospero's dependency on the labor that Caliban provides, a dependency that overdetermines his exploitation. Caliban says:

In the beginning, the gentleman was all sweet talk: dear Caliban here, my little Caliban there! And what do you think you'd have done with me in this strange land. Ingrate! I taught you the trees, fruits, birds, the seasons and now you don't give a damn.... Caliban the animal, Caliban the Slave!
(Césaire, *A Tempest* 13)

Yet, in the mode of colonial paternalism, Prospero reiterates that Caliban is a monster, less than human, living in squalor. Whereas Caliban complains that Prospero has forced him to live in a "ghetto," Prospero responds that "it wouldn't be such a ghetto if you took the trouble to keep it clean!" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 13). He further accuses Caliban of uncontrollable animal urges, accusing him of trying to rape Miranda. Caliban, however, realizes that the education and language foisted on him by Prospero have robbed him of his identity and his history, and he tells Prospero, "Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 15). Indeed, he notes that his name reminds him of "a basic fact, the fact that you've stolen everything from me, even my identity!" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 15).

In his relationship with Caliban, Ariel appears to embrace a fully colonized position, telling Caliban, "My master is a sorcerer: neither your passion nor your youth can prevail against him. Your best course would be to follow and obey him" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 18-9). In so doing, Ariel seems to suggest that resistance is futile and seems to

have imbibed Prospero's dictate that Caliban is the enemy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Caliban calls Ariel an "Uncle Tom" for his unwillingness to move against Prospero (Césaire, *A Tempest* 21). Ariel insists that Prospero has promised his freedom and it will come, while Caliban shouts, "Talk's cheap! He'll promise you a thousand times and take it back a thousand times. Anyway, tomorrow doesn't interest me. What I want is freedom now" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 21). Ariel warns Caliban that he will not be able to get freedom because Prospero is too strong, but Caliban goes on to challenge the very nature of strength: "Weakness always has a thousand means and cowardice is all that keeps us from listing them" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 21-2). In spite of Ariel's apparent belief in Prospero's willingness to free him eventually and Caliban's observation that Ariel capitulates to Prospero's demands, Ariel has come to warn Caliban. The two may have wildly differing perspectives on how emancipation can be achieved, but nonetheless have an understanding with each other.

Indeed, both Caliban and Ariel seem to share a sense of fraternity or solidarity, one that emerges from the similar situations in which they find themselves, subject to Prospero's rule, education, and power. Among the characters exists an African diasporic sensibility, one hinted at in Du Bois's *The Quest for the Silver Fleece*. In *A Tempest*, this sensibility appears in allusions to Africa. The first occurs when Ariel retorts to Prospero that he almost wishes he had not been released from the tree:

Sometimes I almost regret it... After all, I might have turned into a real tree in the end... Tree: that's a word that really gives me a thrill! It often springs to mind: palm tree – springing into the sky like a fountain ending in nonchalant, squid-like elegance. The baobab – twisted like the soft

entrails of some monster. As the calao bird that lives a cloistered season in its branches. Or the Ceiba tree – spread out beneath the proud sun.

(Césaire, *A Tempest* 10)

Ariel thus refers to the baobab and the Ceiba, trees that grow in Africa. In addition to his repeated calls for “Uhuru,” Caliban sings songs about Shango, the Yoruba deity, god of fire, lightning, and thunder. The pair also call each other “brother,” of which Ariel says, “We are brothers, brothers in suffering and slavery, but brothers in hope as well” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 20). Indeed, Ariel notes that the two want freedom but “have different methods” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 20).

The two share frustration over each other’s methods for freedom. Césaire himself identifies Ariel’s position with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Caliban’s with Malcolm X: “The dominated can adopt several attitudes. One is Caliban’s revolt. Another is Ariel’s, whose path is more complicated – but is not necessarily one of submission, that would be too simple.... If you want me to specify... I’d say that there is Malcolm X’s attitude, and then there is Martin Luther King’s” (qtd. in Livingston 192). Accordingly, Ariel asserts, “I don’t believe in violence,” whereas Caliban responds, “What do you believe in then? In cowardice? In giving up? In kneeling and groveling? That’s it, someone strikes you on the right cheek and you offer the left.... That’s not Caliban’s way” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 22). Yet, the differences between the two seem to be influenced by their relationship to Prospero, namely the ways that Prospero educated them. Ariel seems to have seen some good in his education from Prospero, taking the position of “no violence, no submission either” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 22). He believes that they can educate Prospero by destroying “his serenity so that he’s finally forced to acknowledge his own injustice and put an end

to it” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 22). Conversely, Caliban’s resistance to the education given to him by Prospero influences his response. He balks at the idea that Prospero has a conscience, and while Ariel believes it is their duty to give Prospero one, saying, “I’m not fighting just for my freedom, for our freedom, but for Prospero too, so that Prospero can finally acquire a conscience” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 22). While Caliban sees the wisdom in overthrowing Caliban by force, Ariel appeals for education.

Whereas Ariel articulates a dream of freedom resulting from this education, Caliban articulates a dream for revolution. Ariel notes that he has had a dream:

That one day Prospero, you [Caliban], and me, we would all three set out, like brothers, to build a wonderful world, each one contributing his own special thing: patience, vitality, love, will-power too, and rigor, not to mention the dreams without which mankind would perish. (Césaire, *A Tempest* 22-3)

Conversely, Caliban insists that Ariel does not understand Prospero. Indeed, Caliban’s education at the hands of Prospero has given him insight that Prospero is not interested in brotherhood and violence is the only option. As a result, he warns Ariel:

The day when I begin to feel that everything’s lost, just let me get hold of a few barrels of your infernal powder and as you fly around up there in your blue skies you’ll see this island, my inheritance, my work, all blown to smithereens, and I trust, Prospero and me with it. (Césaire, *A Tempest* 23).

In spite of Ariel’s plea for peace and unity, his response to freedom is militant and angry in nature as he turns his education back on Prospero. He tells Prospero, “I shall let

fall one by one, each more pleasing than the last for notes so sweet that the last will give rise to a yearning in the heart of the most forgetful slaves yearning for freedom” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 60). He vows to “be the thrush that launches its mocking cry to the benighted field-hand, ‘Dig, nigger! Dig, nigger!’ and the lightened agave will straighten from my flight, a solemn flag” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 60). Indeed, Prospero regrets freeing Ariel, for he deems it a “threatening agenda” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 60). It seems that even Ariel, who once seemed more accommodationist in his approach to Prospero understands the depths of the colonial condition in which he once found himself. As a result, his approach to freedom reneges on his dream for unity among Prospero, Caliban, and himself, but he is radicalized, his solidarity is with oppressed people of African descent.

Prospero and Caliban’s final encounter puts the relationship between colonial education and freedom into greater focus. Prospero asks Caliban what he would do if he were in charge, to which Caliban replies, “I’d get rid of you! I’d spit you out, all your works and pomps! Your ‘white’ magic” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 63). Thus, with this statement, Caliban once again renounces Prospero’s position as colonial educator – both the knowledge he shared with Caliban and all that he kept for himself. Prospero mocks Caliban’s response, calling him “a dialectician” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 63). Yet, Caliban persists that he is interested solely in freedom, not in peace, and charges Prospero with using education against him. As a result, Caliban tells him:

Prospero, you’re a great magician, you’re an old hand at deception, and you lied to me so much about the world, about myself that you ended up imposing on me an image of myself, underdeveloped, in your words,

undercompetent, that's how you made me see myself! And I hate that image...and it's false. (Césaire, *A Tempest* 64).

Caliban's capacity to launch this critique of Prospero attests to his development as an organic intellectual, able to undermine the education given to him. He goes on to tell Prospero that he will be free: "I also know myself! And I know that one day my bare fist, just that, will be enough to crush your world! The old world is crumbling down" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 64-5).

Prospero insists that his role is a sympathetic one and that he has given Caliban so much, particularly in the form of education. As such, he couches Caliban's desire for freedom in his own failing to turn Caliban into a human being: "from a brutish monster I have made man! But ah! To have failed to find the path to man's heart... if that's where man is" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 66). Further outlining his role as colonizer, Prospero says:

I am not in any ordinary sense a master, as this savage thinks, but rather the conductor of a boundless score: this isle, summoning voices, I alone, and mingling them at my pleasure, arranging out of confusion one intelligible line. Without me, who would be able to draw music from all that? This isle is mute without me, my duty, thus, is here, and here I shall stay. (Césaire, *A Tempest* 66-7)

Prospero believes strongly in his mission, one of science, culture, and education – the very education he tried giving Caliban. He tells Caliban, "Ten times, a hundred times, I've tried to save you, above all from yourself. But you have always wandered me with wrath and venom, lit the opossum that pulls itself up by its own tail, the better to bite the hand that tears it from the darkness" (Césaire, *A Tempest* 67). He couches Caliban's

response to him as a failure of colonial education and announces his intention to “answer your violence with violence” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 67). Prospero further defends his domination as defense of the colonial project. He worries that “the jungle was laying siege to the cave” and vows to “stand firm” and “not let my work perish” so he can “protect civilization” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 67). Yet, Caliban demonstrates that he has seen past the colonial education that Prospero offered to him, telling him, “You make me laugh with your ‘mission’! Your ‘vocation!’ Your vocation is to hassle me, and that’s why you’ll stay, just like those guys who founded the colonies and who now can’t live anywhere else” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 65). Further, the play ends ambiguously, with Prospero ready to fight and Caliban in the distance singing, “Freedom hi-day” (Césaire, *A Tempest* 68).

The question of how successfully Caliban has managed to overcome the colonial education given to him remains open at the end of the play. A weakened Prospero, acknowledges that only he and Caliban are left on the island, and Caliban’s calls for “Uhuru” have switched to the English, the language he has cursed Prospero for teaching him. Unlike Du Bois’s *The Quest for the Silver Fleece*, we are left without a satisfactory resolution to the challenges posed by colonial domination. Yet, it seems, that *A Tempest*, like *The Quest for the Silver Fleece*, reiterates the challenges of the color line in its colonial iterations, linking Africans and African Americans through a mutual relationship to colonial education. Du Bois continues exploring the global significance of colonial forms of education in relationship to caste in *Darkwater*, which I examine in the next chapter.

**Chapter 2: Religion, Colonial Color Lines, and Caste in W.E.B. Du Bois's *Darkwater*
and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***

“Here political power has tried to resist the concentration in the power of modern capital. It has not yet succeeded, but its partial failure is not because the republic is black but because the world has failed in this same battle; because the oligarchy that owns organized industry owns and rules England, France, Germany, America, and Heaven. And it fastens this ownership by the Color Line.” –W.E.B. Du Bois, “Worlds of Color” (1925)

By the 1920s, when Du Bois pens *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), the thrust of his work has taken on a darker tone as he reflects on the relationship between colonialism and the recent First World War. More than ever, Du Bois reaffirms the centrality of the color line to historical and social analysis, identifying a color line that is global in scope and broad in its reach. As he suggests in his essay “Worlds of Color,” power is distributed across the color line around the world. Invoking power in “England, France, Germany, America, and Heaven,” Du Bois points to the competing interests of global power and religion – for even Heaven, he suggests, is determined by the color line.

In *Darkwater*, Du Bois lays bare the competing interests of religion, colonialism, and the color line. In doing so, he anticipates the range of attention given to the relationship between imperialism and religion in postcolonial studies. Yet, Du Bois goes further to raise questions about the role of caste and color in relation to imperialism and religion. Du Bois’s readings at the intersections of caste, color, and religion offer a

framework for addressing these themes in postcolonial literary texts, such as Arundhati Roy's 1997 novel *The God of Small Things*.

Du Bois intervenes at the intersections of colonialism, religion, and race by invoking two significant concepts: universal humanism and color caste. The universal humanism in *Darkwater* seems to mark a break from the rhetoric of double consciousness that Du Bois articulates in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Through the concept of double consciousness, Du Bois draws attention to us-them divisions that structure African American experience, proposing that African Americans are forced to view their social lives through the Veil. At once, Du Bois argues, they experience life with a secondary consciousness about how they are being viewed by a dominant, white society.

In contrast, universal humanism speaks to a broader, shared expanse of human experience. Yet, as Du Bois proposes in *Darkwater*, there is a difference between his ideal of universal humanism and the material realities of life at the beginning of the 20th century. In particular, Du Bois suggests that universal humanism is threatened by color caste and sets of race relations revealed through World War I. For Du Bois, the term "color caste" articulates a relationship between race and labor, revealing forms of racialized labor to which African Americans and people of the colonies are subject. Moreover, he proposes that religion has crystalized these divisions and has naturalized them. Taking into account this criticism offered by Du Bois, we are better equipped to consider an important question Roy's *The God of Small Things*: how has caste been racialized in India?

Colored Races and Color Castes in W.E.B. Du Bois's Darkwater

Du Bois's *Darkwater* appeared soon after his attendance at the 1919 First Pan-African Congress, which he organized with Ida Gibbs Hunt, the wife of William Henry Hunt, one of the first African American diplomats. Fifty-seven delegates attended the congress as representatives from 15 countries including the United States, Senegal, Liberia, Haiti, the British West Indies, and West African Colonies. Though called the "First Pan-African Congress," the event followed in the tradition of the Pan-African Conference of 1900, where Du Bois himself had served as a delegate. Du Bois and Gibbs Hunt organized the congress to coincide with the Paris Peace Conference, where the Allied powers of World War I met to define terms of peace after the war's 1918 armistice. The goals of the congress included advocating on the behalf of economic and political interests for African and Caribbean colonies while drawing attention to the conditions of life for African diasporic subjects across the Americas. The Paris Peace Conference itself paid little heed to the gathering and discouraged participation from Africans or Asians, as Western Europe's plans for global reconstruction following the war relied on ongoing colonial exploitation. As a result, the congress lobbied for changes in colonial policy, education, economic development, land ownership, and decolonization, disseminating their resolutions to the officials at the Paris Peace Conference. For all of the congress delegates' efforts, however, attendees of the Paris Peace Conference largely dismissed their recommendations. Yet, they resolved to meet again for the Second Pan-African Congress in 1921 to discuss the situation of the colonies and the African diaspora further.

As such, *Darkwater* reflects the outcomes of the First Pan-African Congress and its effects on Du Bois's approach to political, economic, and social concerns of both

African Americans and oppressed people around the world more generally. Du Bois scholars such as Manning Marable position *Darkwater* as one of Du Bois's "middle works" (vi), a change in direction from his previous writing, most notably *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). *Darkwater* was not well received by Du Bois's contemporary audience; the text was subject to criticisms of both Du Bois's politics and literary skills, much like the rest of Du Bois's literary endeavors. Indeed, critics of *Darkwater* scorned its purple prose and reliance on passé Victorian aesthetics (Lewis 394), the very same critiques that Du Bois received a few years later for the novel *Dark Princess* (1928). While *The Socialist Review* congratulated Du Bois for *Darkwater*'s universal significance for not only African Americans but also the "Hindu, of the dark peoples whom imperialism holds in subjection" (Ovington 381), the *New York Herald*'s review was more typical, decrying Du Bois's "Bolshevist madness" (qtd. in Mullen 12). In no small measure, reviews take exception to the anger and bitterness that emanate from Du Bois's prose (Lewis 370).

Contemporary scholarship on *Darkwater* has been kinder to Du Bois. *Darkwater* has recently been read as a pluralistic vision of democracy (Kahn 94) and a fair assessment of race in the United States in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Gates, "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black" 249). The text has also been positioned by Harry Stecopoulos, Amy Kaplan, and Carrie Tirado Bramen as one of Du Bois's early visions of international cooperation across lines of race (Stecopoulos 77, Kaplan 180, Bramen 108). Yet, another reading of *Darkwater* reconciles differences in reception between the time of the text's publication and more recent scholarship. *Darkwater* is the first of Du Bois's books to adopt a black radical

internationalist stance. In doing so, it excoriates white racism and Christianity while exploring the possibilities of Marxism for addressing racial inequalities born from imperialism on a world stage. Poised to intervene at the intersections of religion, colonialism, and racism, *Darkwater* is a watershed text for both African American studies and for postcolonial studies. As such, it articulates a global and colonial color line that belts the world, providing a thoroughgoing assessment of the relationship between race and imperialism, which, in many ways, remains underdeveloped in contemporary postcolonial studies.

The subtitle of *Darkwater*, “Voices from within the Veil,” gives the impression that Du Bois builds directly on his work in *The Souls of Black Folk*, which explores the psychic toll of African American life and assesses obstacles to racial progress as the United States enters the twentieth century. The language of the “veil,” which appears most fully articulated first in *The Souls of Black Folk*, recurs in the subtitle of *Darkwater*, as Du Bois’s metaphor for the color line and for the origins of double-consciousness, a racial dualism that shapes African American experience (*The Souls of Black Folk* x). Yet, on the whole, *Darkwater* does not appear to follow in the tradition of *The Souls of Black Folk* – at least not directly. Rather, it addresses African American experience in a global context, one that emerges from global outcomes of World War I. Further, Du Bois does not appear to actually be representing “voices” from within the veil but a single voice, his own, speaking on behalf of not only African Americans but oppressed people of color who live under a global color line.

Formally, Du Bois achieves this goal in *Darkwater* by blending autobiographical essays with short poems and stories. In doing so, he uses what Paul Gilroy calls a “self-

consciously polyphonic form” (*Black Atlantic* 115). Keith Byerman, among other scholars, have argued that *Darkwater* should be read as a sophisticated construction of Du Bois’s self, an object lesson in the very double-consciousness that Du Bois articulates as integral to African American life in *The Souls of Black Folk*. For Byerman, *Darkwater* is driven dialectically by the tension between Du Bois’s articulation of the self and the political concerns he addresses (181). While Byerman’s observations are true, we would be remiss to ignore the literary significance of *Darkwater*. As Robert Gooding-Williams suggests of *The Souls of Black Folk*, literary and political readings of *Darkwater* are inextricable (38). As such, Du Bois serves as the central character of *Darkwater*, dramatizing the struggles of an African American intellectual to understand the changing world around him in the wake of World War I. Through ten essays and accompanying “meditations,” which John Carlos Rowe calls literary “intertexts” (212), Du Bois offers blunt assessments of race on both local and global scales. While the essays and intertexts are often read by scholars as pairs or in threes, they offer a different message when read as independent narratives. The essays propose a sophisticated analysis of the relationship between race, colonialism, religion, and the First World War, while the intertexts offer a literary narrative that foregrounds a liberating vision of religion for people of color around the world.

The first essay in *Darkwater*, “The Shadow Years” is a bit of a red herring, for it is predominantly autobiographical. In style and content, this chapter recalls *The Souls of Black Folk*, combining autobiography, history, and sociology. Du Bois offers details of his family’s background in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, focusing on his mother’s pragmatism and father’s idealism, two perspectives that undoubtedly shaped the mix of

practical concerns and prophetic vision that characterize the body of his work. Examining his education – from Fisk to Harvard – and his sociological research, Du Bois stakes the ground for his capacity to engage sociological observation and historical analysis, the form of analysis that comprises the bulk of the essays in *Darkwater*. Placing this primarily autobiographical chapter at the beginning of *Darkwater*, Du Bois creates a bridge between *The Souls of Black Folk*, offering a nod to the expectations of his readers. Du Bois dispenses with these expectations entirely with the next chapter, “The Souls of White Folk,” in which he begins articulating the black radical analysis that constitutes the remainder of *Darkwater*.

Angry in tone, Du Bois’s *Darkwater* essay “The Souls of White Folk” subverts reader expectations in its play on *The Souls of Black Folk*. Focusing the lens of race onto whiteness and its attendant privileges, “The Souls of White Folk,” provides an evisceration of racism in the United States, which Du Bois situates in a global milieu. Du Bois identifies an inextricable relationship between racism in the United States and exploitation of people the color around the world, particularly in European colonies. He argues that “whiteness” is a nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 29), and while his assertion that skin color was of little importance prior to the nineteenth century may be overstatement, his periodization of whiteness yokes colonialism and racism together. Indeed, during the nineteenth century, scientific racism became popular in Europe, where it often served as a justification for imperialism, allowing white Europeans to claim superiority over other, allegedly discrete, racial categories. Du Bois ironically calls out the privilege of whiteness in the “dominant” world for its insistence on a religious basis for white dominance and equation of

“godliness” with “whiteness” (*Darkwater* 31). Yet, Du Bois’s use of “dominant” is ironic because while the white world may be dominant in power, it is not dominant in number. In fact, the great masses of the world with which Du Bois is primarily concerned are people of color.

Speaking to the persistent power of whiteness, Du Bois observes that “whiteness is the ownership of the earth,” as well as a “new religion,” one located within Christian traditions (*Darkwater* 30, 31). This religion is fetishism of whiteness, which in turn leads to devaluing of the masses of color, evident in the “somnolent writings in black Africa or angry groans in India or triumphant banzais in Japan” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 31). Thus, whiteness comes to color “every great soul, every great dream, every great deed” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 31). In the register of satire, Du Bois asks, “If all this be a lie, is it not a lie in a great cause” (*Darkwater* 32). This cause, it seems, is the white man's burden and the civilizing mission, those vaunted justifications of colonialism: “burning desire to spread the gift abroad, - the obligation of nobility to the ignoble” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 32). Yet, this sense of “duty” to the masses of color is only embraced insofar as the non-white world is grateful for the help and compliant with the putative hierarchies of color that privilege whiteness:

When the black man begins to dispute the white man's title to certain alleged bequests of the Fathers in wage and position, authority and training; and when his attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity; when he insists on his human right to swagger and swear and waste, - then the spell is suddenly broken...Negroes are

impudent...the South is right, and...Japan wants to fight America. (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 32)

This, Du Bois writes, is a source of racism, though it may be more apt to say that it reveals the wellspring of racism that already exists in what Du Bois identifies as “human hatred, a deep and passionate hatred, vast by the very vagueness of its expression” (*Darkwater* 32).

Du Bois takes care to position racism both in the United States and abroad in colonial terms of “civilization” and justice” (*Darkwater* 33) in the context of World War I. He observes that both the United States and the colonies have been subject to the spoils of the colonial project: “orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 33). Du Bois articulates the irony of a phrase quite familiar to those of us aware of United States foreign policy for the last decade, “the crusade to make the ‘World Safe for Democracy,’” and illuminates the irony by asking, “Can you imagine the United States protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared with Memphis, Waco, Washington, Dyersburg, and Estil Springs” (*Darkwater* 33). Moreover, Du Bois suggests that the real crime is the First World War, particularly for its insidious, racialized colonial agenda.

For Du Bois, the war was a time when, “where from beating, slandering and murdering us the white world turned temporarily aside to kill each other” while “we of Darker Peoples looked on in mild amaze” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 35). In this violence, Du Bois observes a reflection of the violence more often turned towards the “Darker Peoples,” and he denounces the war as a failure of “white religion” (*Darkwater* 36), the very religion that sent colonial missionaries to Africa and Asia. The failure of white religion

further bespeaks the religion of capitalism, “an establishment of world credit systems built on faith” as well as on “robbery of other times and races” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 37). Indeed, the “Darker Peoples” truly know the cost of war in ways that whites are only beginning to understand. Yet, Du Bois sees the war as an inevitable consequence of the colonial project: “This is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration nor insanity; this is Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture – back of all culture – stripped and visible today” (*Darkwater* 39). Whereas white America and white Europe have relied largely on their belief in their superiority over cultures in Africa and Asia, Du Bois argues that the greatness of Europe is premised on a different relationship to people of color around the world, their foundations built on colonial plunder: “The iron trade of ancient, black Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and science of the ‘dagga’ Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as well as north” (*Darkwater* 40).

Indeed, the white religion has posited its duty as colonial expansion, to “divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe’s good” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 40). Such rituals have been carried out with success, for “the European world is using black and brown men for all the uses which men know” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 40). It has further developed its dogma through “the theory that the ‘darkies’ are born beasts of burden for white folk,” which has been buoyed by “merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 41, 42). From the souls of white folk have emerged a representation of the souls of black folk: “Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of amusers and maxims; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are

fools, illogical idiots.... half devil and half child” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 41-2). Thus, in this profane “religion,” they are subject to the whims of European civilization: “They are not simply dark white men, they are not ‘men’ in the sense that Europeans are men” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 42). They are valued only insofar as their “very limited extent of their shallow capacities lift them to be useful for whites, to raise cotton, gather rubber, fetch ivory, dig diamonds” and are thus subject to economic exploitation because they are paid “what men think they are worth – white men who know them to be well-nigh worthless” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 42). Thus the religion of whiteness is premised on “the eternal world-wide mark of meanness, --color!” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 42). As such, it is a religion of white supremacy.

Du Bois further links colonialism and slavery and reveals this white religion to be false by acknowledging that slavery was not the invention of Europe but that Europe applied it “on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no former world ever dreamed.... the imperial width of the thing, – the heaven defying audacity – makes its modernness” (*Darkwater* 43). In doing so, Europe enforced a moralistic scheme on color by positing, “everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable” as “white” and “everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable” as “yellow,” “a bad taste is ‘brown’; and the devil is ‘black’” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 44). This scheme is replicated through religion, art, and education, until “a White man is always right and a Black man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 44). This religion, however, is born from capitalism as well as racism. Du Bois argues that it was “a way out of long-pressing difficulties,” namely that the white working class could no longer be subjugated (*Darkwater* 43). Their gains in education, power, and knowledge

justified “a more equitable distribution of wealth” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 43) to be gained through exploitation on a global scale of people of color.

Indeed, this religion, its imbrication in capitalism, and its racism, Du Bois suggests, is the direct cause of World War I. He reframes the war as “jealousy and strife for the possession of the labor of dark millions, for the right to bleed and exploit the colonies of the world” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 45). All other causes, Du Bois argues, are “subsidiary and subordinate to this vast quest of the dark world’s earth and toil” (*Darkwater* 45). Du Bois’s outlook is, indeed, global, spanning “Hong Kong and Anam...Borneo and Rhodesia...Sierra Leone and Nigeria...Panama and Havana,” arguing they are “El Dorados toward which the world powers stretch itching palms” (*Darkwater* 45). Yet, Du Bois seems to suggest that the world war did not serve its purpose for the Europeans; colonies began threatening to revolt and European economies suffered.

Thus out of the failure of the white religion emerges the possibility of global unrest among people of color around the world. Du Bois further suggests that the war:

Must be the prelude to the armed and indignant protest of these despised and raped peoples. Today Japan is hammering on the door of justice, China is raising her half-manacled hands to knock next. India is waiting for the freedom to knock. Egypt is sullenly muttering, the Negroes of South and West Africa, of the West Indies, and of the United States are just awakening to their shameful slavery. (*Darkwater* 49)

Characteristic of Du Bois’s writing at this time, he positions Asia as a vanguard for decolonization, with Africa and the Americas following in suit. Indeed, for Du Bois,

World War I is not an end but a beginning – the beginning of global revolutions positioned against white imperialism.

Whereas “The Souls of White Folk” examines the intersections of Christianity, racism, and capitalism, Du Bois’s essay “Hands of Ethiopia” explores the effects of these forces on people of color around the world through the language of global caste, which directly links the struggles of African Americans with cultural inequalities in India. An earlier version of this essay, “The African Roots of War” appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1915. In the essay, Du Bois situates the continent of Africa and, in particular, African colonialism at the center of social problems. From the spread of Christianity to the emergence of global commerce, Du Bois argues that Africa has been the source of crisis for almost every empire (*Darkwater* 56). Indeed, the contemporary problems with which Du Bois is concerned - namely, World War I - is itself indicative of a long history of imperial intersections with Africa. However, Du Bois expresses this imperialism not as a concern of Africa alone, writing of “future kingdoms of greed built on black and brown and yellow slavery” (*Darkwater* 57).

Writing of the movement from transatlantic slavery to exploited labor on the continent of Africa - in South Africa and the Belgian Congo, for example - Du Bois invokes a version of “caste” that brings together race and labor, referring to “a caste of white overseers and governing officials” that are managing African labor (*Darkwater* 58). Du Bois juxtaposes this particular caste with the caste of black laborers, whose very existence serves to produce “crown estates” for the British Empire, ones which would generate cheap labor and raw materials to mitigate British debt resulting from World War I (*Darkwater* 59). Although Du Bois refers solely to a labor plan for colonies in Africa

alone, he raises the question of how it affects other people of color. As such, he asks:

Consider, my reader, - if you were today a man of some education and knowledge, but born a Japanese or a Chinaman, an East Indian or a Negro, what would you do and think? What would be in the present chaos your outlook and plan for the future? Manifestly, you would want freedom for your people, - freedom from insult, from segregation, from poverty, from physical slavery. (*Darkwater* 60)

In short, Du Bois suggests that all oppressed people of color, people of the colonies, want some insulation from a worldwide notion of caste that renders the laboring bodies of color subject to violence, abjection, and oppression.

What answer does Du Bois provide for this question of outlook for the future for colonized peoples? He suggests that a response to this global system of oppression must be radical indeed:

There is but one thing for the trained man of darker blood to do and that is definitely and as openly as possible organize his world for war against Europe. He may have to do it in secret, by underground propaganda, as in Egypt and India and eventually in the United States; or by open increase of armament, as in Japan; or by desperate efforts at modernization, as in China, but he must do it. He represents the vast majority of mankind. To surrender would be far worse than physical death. (*Darkwater* 60)

Importantly, Du Bois's iteration of solidarity - "war against Europe" - is culturally bound. He does not suggest global warfare but offers a vision of wars comprised of forking paths - versions of warfare that are culturally specific and singular. In representing these wars

as such, Du Bois acknowledges the cultural specificity of the struggles between colonies or minorities and the dominant powers of Western Europe and the United States. He does not naively suggest that the concerns of these people and cultures are shared - they are analogous but not identical. Yet, Du Bois makes the significant claim that iterations of race - of categories and epithets alike - are closely tied to the notion of “color caste.” Therefore, he writes, “Either the white world gives up such insult as its modern use of the adjective ‘yellow’ indicates, or its connotation of ‘chink’ and ‘nigger’ implies; either it gives up the plan of color serfdom, which its use of the other adjective “white” implies, as indicating everything decent and every part of the world worth living in” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 60).

Interestingly, Du Bois references perspectives of black laborers in the Panama Canal Zone who write:

Out of this chaos may be the great awakening of our race. There is cause for rejoicing. If we fail to embrace this opportunity now, we fail to see how we will ever be able to solve the race question. It is for the British Negro, the French Negro, and the American Negro to rise to the occasion and start a national campaign, jointly and collectively, with this aim in view. (*Darkwater* 62)

Through this example, Du Bois articulates a global color caste - here the color caste of blackness - identified by black laborers who see the intersections of race and labor, an intersection that is global and pan-Africanist. Indeed, this is a worldwide problem, a need for a world system, one comprised of “the lowest and the most exploited races in the world” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 62). To be sure, Du Bois identifies a global system of “caste

and color serfdom” that props up European colonialism (*Darkwater* 65). He calls for an “African State” - uniting a vast majority of exploited laborers, “brown and black, curly and crisp-haired, short and tall, and longheaded” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 64). Indeed, without such unity, Du Bois suggests, the modern world will not recognize groups of people who do not constitute nations but “combinations of a dominant caste and a suppressed horde of surfs” (*Darkwater* 67). He thus argues for world-scale decolonization, a world rebuilt through new nations, not “empires of self-governing elements, and colonies of backward people under benevolent international control” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 67). Du Bois’s call for independence, however, is not limited to independence for Africa alone but is oriented towards global emancipation. As a result, he argues that England should let India become independent as well.

Du Bois further articulates the relationship between caste and education in the essay “The Immortal Child.” He juxtaposes the very “human” problem of the “Immortal Child” with the “dark child,” proposing that treatment of the “dark child” reflects human values more generally. Du Bois's reflections in this essay are deeply embedded in his reflections on race in the 1920s and in a version of solidarity that - at this moment at least - is more pan-African than anything else. As such, he writes appreciatively of a group meeting in London after the Parisian World's Fair, “A few slipping over to London to meet pan-Africa” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 193). Du Bois's pan-African interlocutors are rich and varied indeed, as he notes, “We were there from Cape Colony and Liberia, from Haiti and the States, and from the Islands of the Sea” (*Darkwater* 193). He recalls a diverse group in attendance, from “a stiff, young officer who came with credentials from Menelik of Abyssinia...the bitter, black American who whispered how an army of the Soudan

might some day cross the Alps... Englishmen...who sat and counseled with us” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 193) to the half-British/half-Sierra Leonean composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

Through Coleridge-Taylor, Du Bois makes a fascinating comparison between England and the United States. He argues that Coleridge-Taylor was lucky to have been born in England because his music talented would not have been permitted to grow in the United States: “We know in America how to discourage, choke, and murder ability when it so far forgets itself as to choose a dark skin” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 199). Because England, as Du Bois writes, “is slightly more civilized than her colonies,” Coleridge-Taylor's experience of race in England was “just a shade thornier than that of white men.” (*Darkwater* 199). Du Bois's pronouncements about England's “colonies” sounds colonialist at first glance. However, he plays with the civilized/savage binaries of colonial rhetoric to suggest that the less civilized colony is the United States.

To do justice to the “Immortal Child,” Du Bois argues that African Americans must educate themselves not to maintain “present industrial caste” but to develop “human intelligence” (*Darkwater* 206). His use of the term “caste” in this instance is labor- and class-oriented rather than race-based, but by invoking “caste” among the problems of African Americans, Du Bois underscores the relationship between race and social class and their mutual codification in American labor. As such, Du Bois stipulates that the only possibilities for black emancipation rest with “red radicals and revolutionists” because that is “the only way to make the world listen to reason” (*Darkwater* 208). Indeed, this is the only way to address the permanency of what Du Bois terms “color caste” (*Darkwater* 208), a term he does not define but locates at the confluences of race, labor, and

education. Between Southerners invested in preventing African American education, Northerners dedicated to educating blacks to be better workers, and institutions like Tuskegee, modeled on Booker T. Washington's principles of vocational training, color caste is so deeply embedded within the fabric of African American experience that it is, in fact, constitutive of their experience. Moreover, it is constitutive of colonial education on the world stage because, as Du Bois proposes, the American experience of “caste education...has strengthened the idea of caste education throughout the world” (*Darkwater* 209).

As such, Du Bois frames the problem of the “Immortal Child” not as a domestic problem but as a “world problem” (*Darkwater* 209). This world problem of color caste and caste education, Du Bois notes, begs the questions of “Who does the physical work of the world” and “How is the drudgery of the world distributed, by thoughtful justice or the lash of Slavery?” (*Darkwater* 210). Indeed, as Du Bois goes on to decry the effects of race on the types of education available to people around the world, he asks, “Do we despite darker races? Teach the children its fatal cost in spiritual degradation and murder, teach them that to hate 'niggers' or 'chinks' is to crucify souls like their own?” (*Darkwater* 213). Thus, Du Bois suggests that color caste oppression is a global phenomenon. Indeed, Du Bois recognizes that this problem is not an American one but one appearing in England, France, Germany, among black, white, and yellow (*Darkwater* 214). As Du Bois reveals at the end of his essay, the “Immortal Child” is the child “of all races and all colors” (*Darkwater* 217).

The intersections of religion, caste, and solidarity appear not only in the essays of *Darkwater* but also in the intertexts that run throughout the text. The intertexts form a

parallel literary narrative that dramatizes the intersections of race, religion, and caste. They first emerge in the “Credo,” which invokes universal humanism and forms of global unity. Du Bois begins with a brief offering: “All men, black and brown and white, are brothers, varying in time and opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but differing in no essential particular, and alike in Soul and the possibility of infinite development” (*Darkwater* 3). In novels like *Dark Princess* (1928) and *Worlds of Color* (1961), Du Bois moves away from this broader notion of the full potential of humans. Yet, as he develops this idea throughout the intertexts, what becomes clear is that racial discourses have contravened this humanism, rendering a global caste system based on race.

In the trajectory of Du Bois’s work and development of his global perspective, African Americans occupy a unique place in intervening in the forces that have precluded the praxis of universal humanism on a world stage. As Du Bois writes, “I believe in the Negro Race: in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul, and its strength in that meekness which shall yet inherit this turbulent earth” (*Darkwater* 3). Du Bois’s work, as I argue elsewhere in this project, takes a number different view on African Americans and race, locating a larger global movement of Darker Peoples to which they belong. Yet we see the stirrings of these ideas both in the Credo and in the essays of *Darkwater*, as Du Bois identifies African Americans as significant players in a global solidarity that he portends. Therefore, *Darkwater* stands out as a transitional text between *Quest of the Silver Fleece*, in which Du Bois struggles with articulating the relationship between African Americans and colonialism, and *Dark Princess* (and, later *Worlds of Color*), in which he begins to articulate visions of global solidarity more fully.

These ideas are further developed in “The Riddle of the Sphinx,” the intertext that

follows the essay “The Souls of White Folk.” The poem begins with an invocation to “dark daughter of the lotus leaves that watch the Southern Sea!” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53) an invocation of a Global South: “dark” skin, lotus leaves of Asia, the Southern Sea. The image recalls the often ignored second half of Du Bois's famous statement in the *Souls of Black Folk*, “The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line,” which reads “the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in American and the islands of the sea” (19). The “dark daughter,” according to the poem, is “Wan of spirit of a prisoned soul a-panting to be free” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53). As such, she recalls Du Bois's earliest formulation of the color line at the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question as to how far differences of race...will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization” (“To the Nations of the World” 906).

Reiterating a vision of the Global South, the poem continues, “The will of the world is a whistling wind, sweeping a cloud-swept sky./And not from the East and not from the West knelled that soul-waking cry” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53). Despite the significance that Du Bois accords to Asia at various points in his career, the “East” alone does not characterize “the will of the world” (*Darkwater* 53). Rather, the cry for freedom comes from the South: “out of the South,-the sad, black South-it screamed from/ the top of the sky./ Crying: “Awake, O ancient race!” Wailing, “O woman arise!” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53). Yet, this is not an invocation to the American South or African Americans alone, but to the Global South. The Global South is represented by that global woman, “dark daughter of the lotus leaves,” a vision of Afro-Asian unity, who suffers the

“burden of white men” who “bore her back” and “the white world” that “stifled her sighs” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53).

In confrontational, radical mode, the poem excoriates “the white world's vermin and filth,” which includes major cities of the United States and Western Europe: “all the dirt of London/ All the scum of New York”; rapists and plunderers: “Valiant spoilers of women/ And conquerors of unarmed men”; and a rewriting of Rudyard Kipling’s “white man's burden” as one “of liquor and lust and lies!” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 53). Du Bois adds a simple refrain: “I hate them, Oh!/ I hate them well/ I hate them, Christ! /As I hate hell!/ If I were God,/I'd sound their knell/ This day!” (*Darkwater* 53). Thus the poem seems to indict white Christianity, a religion that Du Bois suggests has forsaken the people of color of the world in favor of the whites.

This “riddle” seems to ask but one question: “Who raised the fools to their glory/ But black men of Egypt and Ind./Ethiopia's sons of the evening/ Indians and yellow Chinese/ Arabian children of morning/ And mongrels of Rom and Greece?” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 54). Yet, Du Bois foresees a global force of those that raised up whites to glory dragging them down:

And they that raised the boasters
 Shall draw them down again, -
 Down with the theft of their thieving
 And murder and mocking of men;
 Down with their barter of women
 And laying and lying of creeds;
 Down with their cheating of childhood

And drunken orgies of war, --

down

down

deep down (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 54)

The repetition of “down” coupled with the parallel structure of the lines emphasizes the ferocity of Du Bois's rebuke to the white world. Similarly, the enjambment of the last three lines provides a visual representation of the depths to which Du Bois envisions whites may sink.

Out of the detritus of the white world, the poem envisions “some dim, darker David, a-hoeing of his corn,/And married maiden, mother of God,/Bid the black Christ be born!” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 54). From the manual labor of black royalty, represented by “some dim, darker David” and a woman, “married maiden, mother of God,” comes a black Christ, whose presence indicts white Christianity for its racism and its failures. Though the Christ whom Du Bois envisions is black, he is the forerunner of universal humanism, freeing all from the burden of racial oppressions, replacing that burden with “manhood,/ Be it yellow or black or white;/ And poverty and justice and sorrow” (*Darkwater* 54). Du Bois envisions a man and women singing together of the “Black mother of the iron hills that ward the blazing sea,” a black mother-of-all, a trope that Du Bois will later pick up in *Dark Princess*. She is the mother of a global independence movement, a “wild spirit of a storm-swept soul, a-struggling to be free” and from whom “lo! a world awakes” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 54).

The Black Christ Du Bois describes is born some intertexts later in the vignette “The Second Coming.” Hearing of some unrest in Valdosta, Georgia, the black Bishop of

New Orleans, Japanese priest of San Francisco, and the white bishop of New York arrive to investigate. Like the three wise men present at Jesus Christ's birth, they follow a bright light – here, a glowing sunset – to a small stable in Valdosta where an apparently girl holds a black baby who “was to come the second time in clouds of glory, with the nations gathered around him and angels” (Du Bois, *Darkwater* 107). Indeed, the black, Japanese, and white bishops appear to represent the nations gathered around the Black Christ, seem to reflect the universal humanism of Du Bois's Credo, as well as a utopian vision of equality, unity, and world harmony. Thus, the Black Christ comes to redeem humanity and to rewrite the scripts of race, colonialism, and religion that divide the world.

Caste, Color, and Colonial Racism in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things

In *The God of Small Things* (1997), Arundhati Roy engages in a project similar to Du Bois's: representing voices behind the veil, lives shaped under a color line. As such the novel serves as an example of the intersections of religion, the color line, and imperialism that Du Bois articulates in *Darkwater* and an exploration of colonial and postcolonial racisms. Indeed, her epigraph, from John Berger, reads, “Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one,” a nod towards the many voices and many stories, the stories from behind the veil or color line and the stories left untold: the divorced woman, the child, the Untouchable.

The God of Small Things tells the story of twins Estha and Rahel, raised in Ayemenem in Kerala, India. Shifting back and forth in time between their childhood in 1969 and adulthood in 1993, the novel centers on several narrative threads: the death of the twins' cousin Sophie Mol, who is visiting from England; the affair between the twins'

mother Ammu and the Untouchable Velutha; and Velutha's death. As such, the novel addresses a range of forces affecting life in Kerala during the late 1960s: the caste system, communism, religion, and women's rights. Through the stories brought together in *The God of Small Things*, Roy articulates the relationship between race and caste as a form of the "color caste" described by Du Bois.

Like Du Bois's *Darkwater*, Roy's *The God of Small Things* grapples with the question of colonial color lines and their relationship to caste. These color lines are embedded in articulations of whiteness and blackness, both of which are tied to the larger cultural contexts of colonialism. Roy's notion of caste, one that is imbued deeply in race. In turn, the novel embeds forms of labor into caste categories, producing a vision of race more like the ideas invoked by Du Bois than anything else.

Scholars such as Susan Stanford Friedman have taken up questions of race in *The God of Small Things*, but studies of race in the novel are largely restricted to the relationship between whiteness and Indianness (247). These concerns are often articulated through the whiteness of the twins' aunt Margaret Kochamma, the putative whiteness of Sophie Mol, and the Indianness of the twins' uncle Chacko – but curiously not the blackness of Velutha. In this dichotomy between whiteness and Indianness, however, we find a motif of racial discord replicated in the racialized caste divides of the novel.

From the outset, the novel announces hierarchies of color, when Sophie Mol's tells Estha and Rahel, "You're both whole wogs and I'm a half one" (Roy 17), using the British racial epithet for dark-skinned South Asians or Africans. These hierarchies are further articulated in the family servant Kochu Maria's assumption that Estha's play on

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Et tu, Kochu Maria?" means "something like Kochu Maria, You Ugly Black Dwarf" (Roy 163). When Rahel goes on to state her intention to live in Africa, Kochu Maria responds, "Africa's full of ugly black people and mosquitos" (Roy 175). The links between race and blackness in India and their global connotations are reinforced with Rahel's recollections of life in the United States, where she was called a "black bitch" (Roy 179).

For the characters in the novel, whiteness is heavily privileged over blackness or brownness. For example, Baby Kochamma, the twins' grand aunt, sees no inherent problem in her desire for Father Mulligan, an Irish priest, aside from the fact that his vows of chastity that prevent them from consummating a relationship. Nor does that family find my fault with Chacko's white, English wife - Margaret Kochamma - except for the twins' grandmother Mammachi's general aversion to anyone woman competing with her for Chacko's attention. Nor does Rahel's white, American ex-husband Larry McCaslin receive much comment or, indeed, any criticism. Indeed, the family is, as Chacko tells the children "a family of Anglophiles" (Roy 51), putative cultural hybrids who are therefore "pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history" (Roy 51). Indeed, they are not white but they repudiate their own brownness by embracing Anglophilia. The burden of the Indian Anglophile, as Chacko articulates it, is to "adore our conquerors and despise ourselves" (Roy 52). Yet, for the surprising insight that Chacko's statement shows, it is delivered in his "Reading Aloud" voice, a voice that gives the impression that "he didn't care whether anyone was listening to him or not" (Roy 54). In fact, Ammu calls these Chacko's "Oxford Moods," a nod to Anglophilia and cultural hybridity and suggestion that Chacko is merely pontificating without much

conviction. Indeed, it seems the Indian-white/English/American relationship is aspirational, whereas the Indian relationships are more heavily policed, subject to forces of local culture and to the love laws: “the laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much” (Roy 31).

Anglophilia and the privilege of white culture permeate the novel, from the children's education in English language and literature to the gnome in Baby Kochamma's garden. The family, it seems, is a vanguard of imperialism in India. The twins' great-grandfather grandfather, Reverend John Ipe, was known for having been personally blessed by the head of the Syrian Christian Church, the Patriarch of Antioch, and started an Untouchable schools - shades of the civilizing mission of colonialism. Their grandfather was, until independence at least, an imperial entomologist. Chacko attended Oxford and was a Rhodes Scholar - and it seems to be no small detail that Cecil Rhodes himself was an exemplar of British imperialism.

Accordingly, culture (both English and Indian) and religion compete for attention in *The God of Small Things*. For example, Baby Kochamma labels the children “half-Hindu hybrids whom no self-respecting Christian would ever marry” (Roy 44). Indeed, Baby Kochamma casts aspersions on Rahel who, as an adult is not only divorced but “a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage” (Roy 45). Ammu's marriage and her divorce further reveal the biases of her family. She leaves her Hindu husband because he suggest she become his English employer's mistress, and her father does not believe her - “not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, any English man, would covet another man's wife” (Roy 42). Yet, the English employer exemplifies another troubling aspect of colonial race

relationships and sexual transgression: “Already there were a number of ragged, light skinned children on the estate that Hollick had bequeathed on tea pickers he fancied” (Roy 41). This fact provides another link to race relations in the United States, given the long history of plantation owners and miscegenation.

As in *Darkwater*, *The God of Small Things* seemingly features a symbolic black Jesus figure. Velutha, the Untouchable, recalls Jesus Christ in the novel, revealing how race is deeply embedded in religion, the caste system, and the Kerala community. The first mention of Velutha in the text occurs at the beginning of the novel when Rahel attends Sophie Mol's funeral and imagines the painter of the church ceiling, “someone like Velutha, barebodied and shining, sitting on a plank, swinging from the scaffolding in the high dome of the church, painting silver jets in a blue church sky” (Roy 8). This image of Velutha recalls crucifixes over altars, offering visual representation of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. Indeed, Rahel's vision is soon followed by an image of Velutha's death - his sacrifice - as she imagines him falling and seeing “dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret” (Roy 8).

Like Jesus Christ, Velutha is a carpenter, but his profession is circumscribed by his caste position. We learn that Velutha is a carpenter though his position as an Untouchable should have precluded it. Mammachi recognized his facility with his hands and ensured that he received an education at the Untouchable school and further training with a German carpenter. Velutha's profession recalls Du Bois's statement in *Darkwater*, “We must seek not to make men carpenters but to make carpenters men,” (210). Thus, Roy renders Velutha a man, to render him human, in spite of the cultural, social, and religious forces conspiring to mark him otherwise. Moreover, Velutha's caste identity is

juxtaposed with a racial one through emphasis on his black skin and the fact that his name means “white” in Malayalam, and he is so named because his skin is so dark (Roy 70).

Caste and race coalesce through the overdetermining power of religion on the characters’ social lives. The novel depicts the complicated relationship between religion and caste in Kerala, an Indian state with a significant Christian population. The Syrian Christians of Kerala trace their religious ties to St. Thomas, one of Jesus Christ's disciples who according to tradition traveled to India to evangelize. The complexities of St. Thomas's legacies in India are too numerous to fully explore here, for they include centuries of rifts and divergences, but the Syrian Christians of Roy's Kerala constitute both religious and cultural forms of Christianity, the latter of which blends Hindu and colonial influences. To wit, Syrian Christians like the twins’ family seem to embrace some version of the caste system along with colonial racism. When the British came to Malabar, a number of Untouchables, including Velutha's grandfather, converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican church “to escape the scourge of untouchability” (Roy 71). Encouraged further by gifts of food and money, these Untouchables-turned-Christians earned the title of “Rice-Christians.” Yet, as Rice-Christianity grew in the area, the converts discovered that little about their circumstances had changed: “They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priest. As a special favor they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop” (Roy 71). Such segregation recalls the Jim Crow laws in the United States and social barriers between whites and African Americans. Thus, along with colonial religion came colonial racism, reinforcing the stigmatized status of Untouchables, replicated in church practice and in ongoing

mistreatment from the Touchables around them. Moreover, after India's independence, these Rice-Christians found that they were ineligible for government benefits accorded to people of lower castes and thus doubly othered.

These systemic inequalities for Untouchables appear in their social interactions, which remained marked by the stigma of Untouchability. For example, when Velutha joined his father Vellya Paapen to deliver coconuts to the Ayemenem House as a child, they were unable to enter the house and were forced to wait at the backdoor because Mammachi “would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would” (Roy 71). Further cultural prohibitions against touching “anything that Touchables touched” (Roy 74) reinforces their Untouchability. Thus, as a child, when Velutha offered Ammu small gifts of carved wood, he held them flat on his hand so Ammu could take them without touching him. Untouchables' lives were further proscribed historically by customs of caste: they were “not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed” (Roy 71). The twins recall their grandmother Mammachi's description of an earlier time “when Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan footprint” (Roy 71). Roy sums up these ironies of Kerala life with the phrase “Caste Hindus and Caste Christians” (71) the latter of which appears oxymoronic but characterizes the social bind of Rice-Christians; Touchability and Untouchability are so deeply embedded in the social fabric of the Kerala that cultural dogma takes precedent over religious dogma.

However, the novel offers two different perspectives on Untouchability through the pairing of Velutha and his father Vellya Paapen. Vellya Paapen is “an old world Paravan,” one who remembers “the crawling backwards days” (Roy 73) and believes he owes a great debt to the Touchables around him, including Mammachi, who not only helped Velutha get an education but also paid for Vellya Paapen's glass eye. Indeed, his gratitude to the family is “wide and deep as a river in spate” (Roy 73) and he believes he will never be able to adequately work off the debt he owes them - a debt that is more metaphorical than literal. On the other hand, Velutha's mannerisms do not fit the Paravan mold and Vellya Paapen fears for him because of his ways:

It was not what he said, but the way he said it. Not what he did, but the way he did it. Perhaps it was just a lack of hesitation. An unwarranted assurance. In the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quite way in which he disregarded suggestions without appearing to rebel. (Roy 73)

These are actions which Vellya Paapen believes “could (and would, and indeed, should) be construed as insolence” in a Paravan (Roy 73). Whereas Vellya Paapen has internalized caste prohibitions, Velutha appears to disregard them. After Velutha leaves Ayemenem for four years and then returns, rumors abound that he has become a Naxalite, practitioner of a militant Indian form of communism based in Maoism. Popular sentiment against Velutha grows when he is put in charge of maintenance at the pickle factory, an perceived affront to Touchable factory workers.

The generational differences between Vellya Paapen and Velutha come into greatest conflict when Vellya Paapen learns that Velutha is having an affair with Ammu.

In fact, he is the one who tells Mammachi of the affair and “asked God's forgiveness for having spawned a monster. He offered to kill his son with his own bare hands. To destroy what he had created” (Roy 75). The transgressive nature of Ammu and Velutha’s affair recalls fears of relationships between black men and white women in the United States under Jim Crow and the attendant policing of black male sexuality through legal and extralegal actions, including lynching. Baby Kochamma, burning with anger over the affair, naturalizes the differences between Touchables and Untouchables by asking of Ammu, “How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans? And then she shuddered theatrically, like a child being force-fed spinach” (Roy 75). Baby Kochamma reinforces the distinction between Touchable and Untouchable by her use of “they,” naturalizing her perception of olfactory difference. Referencing Father Mulligan, the white, Irish priest with whom she has been in love her whole life, Baby Kochamma thinks, “She preferred an Irish-Jesuit smell to a particular Paravan smell. By far. By far” (Roy 75). Baby Kochamma's observation of smells is a catalyst for the events that follow: “With that olfactory observation, that specific little detail, the Terror unspooled” (Roy 244). Baby Kochamma rationalizes her participation in the vilification of Ammu and Velutha's affair by thinking of it as “God's way of punishing Amu for her sins and simultaneously avenging her (Baby Kochamma's) humiliation” at the hands of Marxists who ridiculed her during a protest (Roy 243). As such, she imagines herself “a ship of goodness ploughing through a sea of sin” (Roy 243) to regulate the racialized transgression committed by Ammu and Velutha.

Mammachi's own vision of the affair between Ammu and Velutha is rendered in terms of color/race/blackness:

She thought of her [Ammu] naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. She imagined in vivid detail: a Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch in heat. (Roy 244)

In her mind, Mammachi correlates Velutha's black skin with animal smells and behavior, demonstrating disgust that correlates with his Untouchable status. The significance of Velutha's skin color is reinforced with descriptions of Ammu and Velutha's affair: "Her brownness against his blackness" (Roy 316). "Brownness" and "blackness" represent hierarchies of color and social position, recalling Du Bois's articulation of "color caste." Because of the affair Mammachi decides that Ammu has:

Defiled generations of good breeding (the little blessed one, blessed personally by the Patriarch of Antioch, an imperial entomologist, a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, forever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties they'd nudge and whisper. (Roy 244).

Significantly, Mammachi's worries bring together issues of imperialism, religion, and race through her objection to the affair.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the affair between Ammu and Velutha takes on tremendous cultural and racial undertones as Baby Kochamma tells the police, "A Paravan. A few days ago he had tried to, to ...to force himself on her niece," (Roy 245)

claiming that Velutha has raped Ammu. In doing so, Baby Kochamma trades on caste and class biases that render rape all the more heinous when it involves a Touchable woman and Untouchable man. Yet, it further recalls the raced cultural tropes of race in the United States of black men accused of raping white women and of extrajudicial lynchings of men like Emmett Till for perceived transgressions of boundaries between white women and black men. Indeed, the link between the two is all the more chilling because Velutha's death results from an extrajudicial beating of his own.

The affair and its aftermath are linked most clearly to colonial and postcolonial racism through their intertexts. The rape narrative that Baby Kochamma attributes to Ammu and Velutha's affair recalls E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Adela's false accusation that Dr. Aziz tried to rape her. With the notable exception of Fielding, no one believes Aziz is innocent, believing instead that his Indianness implies inherent tendencies towards crime. Throughout the novel, it seems clear that Aziz will indeed be found guilty because his word means little against that of an English woman. Indeed, Aziz's trial for Adela's rape reveals the complex interplay of culture, political, and social forces at work during the Raj. In the same vein, Velutha's persecution for transgressing the Love Laws and his unwillingness to have stayed inside the prescribed rules of appropriate untouchable behavior reveals suggests similar forces at work in the Kerala described by Roy. Colonial racisms are further articulated in the novel's intertextual engagement with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Ammu and Velutha's affair occurred at the old home of Kari Saipu, the "Black Sahib" who had "gone native" and taken a young boy as his lover "in his own Heart of Darkness" (Roy 51). Thus, the house is steeped in motifs of blackness and cultural and sexual transgressions: Kari Saipu's

failure as a good colonial subject - going native - his young male lover and sexual transgression, and the sexual transgression of a brown Touchable woman from a respectable family with an Untouchable black man.

Despite similarities in the articulation of caste, colonialism, and racism in Roy's *God of Small Things* and Du Bois's *Darkwater*, the texts have two divergences: their perceptions of when the inequalities that color the present originated and the role that Marxism has in addressing questions of race. Despite the clear articulation of colonial and postcolonial forms of racism, Roy offers the startling claim that the story behind the novel – behind Ammu and Velutha's affair and Velutha's death – began:

Thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch ascendancy, before Vasco da Gamma arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much. (Roy 33)

We might read this as a nod to the caste system and its ancient laws proscribing interaction among castes, Touchables, and Untouchables. Alternately, we might read it as an invocation of divisions of people, which have their roots in the origins of human history. Yet, the events that Roy describes, all of which indicate significant moments in

the history of colonization in Kerala, seem to have an additive effect. Indeed, colonialism and the attendant racisms that accompanied it seem to have compounded the Love Laws and rewritten them in the language of colonial and postcolonial India. For Du Bois, on the other hand, the privileging of whiteness is very much a nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon, which he articulates in *Darkwater*, rightly or wrongly. As such, it correlates to the rise of racism and imperialism and the exploitation of people of color around the world.

The other significant divergence between the two texts is how they view Marxism. *The God of Small Things* illustrates the failures of Marxist solidarities for addressing issues of race and caste. When Rahel returns to Ayemenem as an adult, she walks by the Lucky Press office, once the office of the local communist party. In the 1960s, the office bustled with activity: “Midnight study meetings were held, and pamphlets with rousing lyrics of Marxist Party songs were printed and distributed” (Roy 15). Yet, years later, the party is defunct: “The flag that had fluttered on the roof had grown limp and old. The red had bled away” (Roy 15). Velutha’s involvement in the Communist Party seemed largely premised on the promises the Party was offering. For example, at the march that so inflamed Baby Kochamma’s hatred for Velutha, Party demands included Untouchables no longer being addressed by their caste names: “They demanded not to be addressed as Achoo Paryan, or Kelan Paravan, or Kuttan Pulayan, but just as Achoo, Kelan, or Kuttan” (Roy 67). Yet, in the events that transpired in Ayemenem, Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, local communist leader, betrays Velutha, arguing that caste divisions are too deep-seated to be effectively challenged, and failing to protect Velutha. Indeed, Pillai is representative of corrupt politicians without real fidelity to Marxist principles or conviction that they

actually could subvert the dominant order of caste hierarchies. Nor does he feel particularly guilty for his role in Velutha's death, dismissing his involvement as "the Inevitable Consequence of Necessary Politics" (Roy 15). In *Darkwater*, however, Du Bois has yet to grasp the potential for failure in Marxism, primarily because his analysis is deeply bound up in a critique of capitalism.

The questions of the viability of Marxism and, indeed, of Marxist critique are significant ones, particularly for considering Du Bois's contribution to both African American studies and postcolonial studies. As I discuss in later chapters, Du Bois contends with the limitations of Marxism in his later work, struggling with Marxist interpretations of the relationship between the color line and class struggles. However, he reaches the conclusion that Marxist thought largely subordinates questions of race to a larger question of class, falsely presuming that change in an economic base will yield social change in superstructures.

**Chapter 3 – Thicker than Water, Thicker than Blood: Kinship in W.E.B. Du Bois’s
Dark Princess and Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies***

“With nearly every great European empire today walks its dark colonial shadow, while over all Europe there stretches the yellow shadow of Asia that lies across the world. One might indeed rede the riddle of Europe by making its present plight a matter of colonial shadows and speculate wisely on what might not happen if Europe became suddenly shadowless—if Asia and Africa and the islands were cut permanently away. At any rate here is a field of inquiry, of likening and contrasting each land and its far off shadow.”
–W.E.B. Du Bois, “Worlds of Color” (1925)

In the essay, “Worlds of Color,” Du Bois announces a decidedly global turn in his work. He imagines a world poised on the brink of decolonization, a vision that remains germane for the decades that follow. As visionary in register as *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois asks African Americans to look beyond the struggles of Jim Crow America to envision themselves part of a worldwide movement for emancipation from a shared enemy: European and United States imperialism. He speculates about a world free from imperial domination and the inevitable collapse of European and American power without the worlds of color on which they rely. As such, Du Bois sounds one of the earliest rallying cries for unity among oppressed people of color, not only in the essay “Worlds of Color” but also in his 1928 novel, *Dark Princess*, which examines the possibilities of unity among “Asia and Africa and the islands” (“Worlds of Color” 423) through a Council of Darker Races resisting white power. Indeed, *Dark Princess* is one of

the earliest African American novels to take up the question of global solidarity and, quite radically, suggest that black emancipation is an international, rather than a national, phenomenon.

W.E.B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008) provide a novel approach to the confluence of people, land, and migration we term "diaspora." They challenge the relationships between citizen and nation and privileged and oppressed, as well the dividing lines of race. Examining these novels for their representations of diaspora and kinship, I suggest that they propose a version of "global diaspora" rife with possibilities for solidarity and revolutionary subjectivity among subjects of the Global South. Crossing temporalities and geographies, the novels construct alternate forms of diaspora that cut across the lines of nation, race, and class that demarcate the boundaries of diaspora.

A New Global Politics of Diaspora

The two novels gesture towards the possibilities of a powerful entity: a global diaspora. What distinguishes this form of diaspora from others, and is "diaspora" a viable analytical category for this form of social organization? Appearing in the Septuagint, "diaspora" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "galut," which means "dispersal."¹¹ The earliest recorded usage of the term refers to the dispersion of Jews from Israel and Judah beginning in the 8th century BCE. The word entered the English lexicon

¹¹ The Septuagint, which translates the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek, uses "diaspora" (διασπορά) for the Hebrew "galut." The English translation of Deuteronomy 28: 25 from the Septuagint reads "The Lord give thee up for slaughter before thine enemies: thou shalt go out against them one way, and flee from their face seven ways; and thou shalt be a *dispersion* in all the kingdoms of the earth" (*Septuagint* 268, my emphasis).

from the Greek word “diaspora,” from “dia-” “about” or “across” and “speirein” meaning “to scatter” (“Diaspora”). This scattering is a sowing of seeds, signifying movements of people, whether coerced or voluntary, beyond their homeland. As a result, in our contemporary usage, the Jewish or African diasporas – at times coerced into movement – and the Indian diaspora – largely the result of voluntary and economically motivated movement – are diasporas alike.

Across many of its iterations, “diaspora” connotes “exile,” intimately linking diaspora with a homeland. Arnold Eisen’s landmark work on the Jewish diaspora, accordingly notes, “In the beginning there was exile” (xi). However, because diaspora signifies voluntary as well as coerced movement, not all diasporic subjects are exiles. This is not to say members of voluntary diasporas do not experience a sense of exile to some degree. Salman Rushdie illustrates this phenomenon in his essay “Imaginary Homelands,” suggesting that for exiles or emigrants in the Indian diaspora, “Physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10). Rushdie’s conditions of emigration and exile prevented him from returning to India for more than a decade, so he correlates impossible return to the homeland with impossible return to the physical location *as it existed* when the diasporic subject left – an experience shared by diasporic subjects, exiles or not.

Consequently, diaspora signifies displacement from a homeland, auguring relationships among diasporic subjects. More often than not, the homeland itself becomes the locus of identification. Accordingly, discourses of diaspora and exile have sprung up

in relation to various nationalisms. Benedict Anderson suggests that the rise of nationalist movements and creation of nation-states are part of “a project for coming home from exile” (319). Nationalisms, like Rushdie’s “imaginary homelands” emerge from the imagination, enabled by an array of nation-building technologies: legislative bodies, national symbols, citizenship, and demarcations of belonging. Anderson uses the term “long-distance nationalism” (326) to describe relationships with the nation-state augured by movement away from it, for expatriate nationalism serves as a powerful force within a diaspora. For example, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)¹² has successfully gained currency in the Indian diaspora, promoting right-wing Hindu nationalism to non-resident Indians. Its success suggests that homeland nationalism forms affiliations among diasporic subjects through shared cultural practice such as religion and ritual. The experience shared by diasporic subjects – distance from a homeland – similarly becomes a source of identification but, as the popularity of the VHP suggests, does not necessarily supersede internal divisions that stratify that homeland.

Could diaspora be reinterpreted to bring people together across those divisions? Can diasporic affiliation exist without a shared homeland, with diasporas from different countries find common cause founded on the premise of the diasporic condition? One trend of scholarship on the United States argues that such connections can form through assimilation. The postethnicity school in American studies – Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt’s name for a group of scholars inspired by Werner Sollors’s ethnicity school including Shelby Steele, Francis Fukuyama, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. – suggests that the United States ethnic landscape moves increasingly towards inclusion, towards a

¹² Vishwa Hindu Parishad loosely translates to “World Hindu Council.”

postethnic society based on consent, pluralism, and hybridity (6). Influenced by Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis,¹³ the postethnicity position suggests that the nation-state and national identity are consolidated by expansion into the global frontier (Singh and Schmidt 6). Taken to its logical conclusion, the postethnicity position suggests that race and ethnicity will disappear in favor of postethnic or postracial society.

What happens, however, when diasporic subjects find themselves in a new place that is not a nation-state? Alternately, what happens if they are denied participation in the new nation-state? What types of affinities form and what possibilities do these affinities afford for resistance to similar oppressions across the dividing lines of race, nation, class, and origin? Together, *Dark Princess* and *Sea of Poppies* take up these questions, challenging the very notion of diaspora through affinities among individuals from different diasporas. This version of diaspora rests not on the notion of a unified national homeland space but on shared conditions in the space of diaspora. Exploring the flexible possibilities of diaspora, these novels rethink what diaspora is and what diaspora can do through the notion of a global diaspora. I use the term "global diaspora" to connote a singular diaspora comprised of individuals who hail from different places, indeed from different diasporas. As such, the "global" acknowledges the varying geographic and temporal origins of global diasporic subjects. The global diaspora contravenes the very notion of diaspora but draws on its model of scattered people to suggest that connections can exist in spite of distance.

My formulation of "global diaspora" complicates both current definitions of diaspora and the concept of the nation. In diaspora scholarship, sociologist Robin Cohen

¹³ Turner's "frontier thesis" suggests that the nation-state and national identity in the United States were consolidated by westward expansion.

uses the term “global diasporas” to represent the proliferation of multiple diasporas that have emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries. He outlines the defining features of diasporas, including dispersion of a group from a singular homeland to multiple places because of labor, imperialism, or trade; the development of collective memory about the homeland; idealized vision of homeland and dedication to it; impulse towards return, either permanently or as a visitor; ethnic consciousness based on common history, cultural practices, religion, or fate; conflicted or ambivalent relationship with new residence; and empathetic connections with other subjects of the same diaspora (Cohen 6). Different diasporas, he proposes, exist based on the primary impetus for expatriation, including victim diasporas (e.g. Africans or Armenians), labor and imperial diasporas (e.g. indentured Indians in the British Empire), trade diasporas (e.g. Chinese or Lebanese), and deterritorialized diasporas (e.g. the Black Atlantic) (Cohen 15).

A “global diaspora” reframes the locus of identification away from the homeland and towards the space of diaspora as a response to the exclusions of the nation-state. While Cohen’s typology is based on relationship to a homeland, he emphasizes the ambivalent relationships to homeland that emerge from diaspora. This ambivalence is exacerbated by nostalgia for the homeland and perceptions that the new residence is unaccommodating. Conversely, “home” itself becomes troubled as the new home exerts its own pressure on the diasporic subject. Careful to acknowledge the fluidity of diaspora, Cohen allows for the possibility of “deterritorialized diasporas,” or diasporas comprised of individuals from different nation-states. His example is “the Caribbean,” which is comprised of multiple nation-states and ethnic origins. Drawing on Stuart Hall’s work on diaspora, Cohen’s formulation resists the lure of ethnocentrism, allowing for hybrid

identification (125). Nonetheless, the deterritorialization in his work does not go far enough, for his Caribbean diaspora still exists by virtue of relationship to the collection of islands he somewhat monolithically calls “the Caribbean.”

In this regard, Cohen seems to ignore the possibilities proposed in the idea of a global diaspora. Indeed, his use of the term “global” seems less exploration of a worldwide milieu than a nod to the global’s vogue. He cites but glosses over a significant objection to deterritorialized diasporas: in the case of the Caribbean, those who comprise the Caribbean diaspora – when those from the Caribbean migrate elsewhere – frequently are members of *other* diasporas. However, the doubly diasporic subject illuminates the flexibility of diaspora, a flexibility that Hall acknowledges in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” as “constantly reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (235). Indeed, Hall’s formulation attends to the complications of national participation and incorporation of diasporic subjects into the space of the nation.

Although the Caribbean is not a focus of this chapter, it provides an interesting case for diaspora. Antonio Benitez-Rojo’s work in *The Repeating Island* suggests that the Caribbean is a machine, not a machine in and of itself, rather “machine” in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari suggest: a conglomeration of multiple machines working together, each comprised of even smaller machines, *ad infinitum*. He suggests, “Every machine is a conjunction of machines coupled together, and each one of these interrupts the flow of the previous one; it will be rightly said that one can picture any machine alternative in terms of flow and interruption” (6). Rather than presenting the Caribbean as an isolated or singular culture, Benitez-Rojo emphasizes the multiplicity of “Caribbean” while suggesting that it lacks singular and identifiable roots.

Nomadism presents an alternative to diaspora for explaining migration, but global diaspora is a more fitting model for the type of movement I am describing. This movement, often mediated by capitalism and imperialism, creates conditions that challenge both. Nomadism is significant to my formulation of global diaspora, however, because it complicates nation-based claims of affinity. Moreover, it provides an example of identifications that exist in extraterritorial spaces, a form of identification that is integral to the concept of global diaspora.

Scholarship on nomads has taken up questions of how relationships form among people when a point of origin does not exist. John Durham Peters suggests that nomadism is a direct contrast to diaspora precisely because of the lack of origin. He describes nomadism as “a face-to-face community, usually linked by ties of kinship stemming from a real or imagined common ancestor, that travels as a unity” (Peters 134-4). The nomad, according to Peters, is consequently always at home and yet always homeless (144). Philosopher Rosi Braidotti theorizes nomadism as an existential condition as well as an epistemological position that can transcend boundaries (1-2). bell hooks’s work, which cuts across issues of race, gender, class, etc. exemplifies this vision of nomadism. Rather than singularly rooted, subjectivity is rhizomatic, in the sense suggested by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (7).

The term “nomadic” has been applied to a wide variety of groups of people in motion. Anthropologists have done much of the work on nomadism, examining rhizomatic patterns of nomadic peoples. Without roots, they move with kin or others with whom they have forged connections, making more as they go. They join others and separate, making decisions based on subsistence or local economic enterprise, as well as

threats from enemies. Both hunting and gathering and pastoral nomadism are, in a sense, an economic response to conditions in which resources are unevenly distributed.¹⁴

Anatoly Khazanov proposes that nomadism is both widespread and global, rather than rare and isolated. Thus nomads play particular roles as intermediaries between different cultures, while their experiences have both economic and historical specificity (3).

Nomadism, however, has been used to describe forms globalization in its contemporary incarnation. Possible motives include opposition to sedentary life or reaction to a nation-state or society. The latter is similar to the claim I am making for global diaspora.

Contemporary nomadism, suggests Anthony D'Andrea, challenges utilitarian or essentialist positions on migrancy (7). His neo-nomadic subjects, including artists, traders, drug dealers, and fans of techno music, participate in transnational countercultures shaped by global travel and trade. Other scholarship on military and foreign service families use global nomadism to describe the social and historical significance of the practices.¹⁵

Dick Pels argues that nomadism itself has been fetishized, becoming what he scathingly calls “a cognitive plaything of the educated elite ... its newest fad in self-stylization and self-celebration” (64). Indeed, Deleuze’s nomad is metaphysical, rather than anthropological. It does not have to be in motion but can exist in the mind, staying in the same place to “continually evade the codes of settled people” (149). Taken in conjunction with Braidotti’s nomadic subject, for example, this form of nomadism

¹⁴ See Barth. *Nomads of South Persia*. NY: Humanities Press, 1964; Lee. *The Kung San*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979; Lancaster. *The Rwala Bedouin Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

¹⁵ See Ender, Morten. *Military Brats and Other Global Nomads*. Praeger, 2002; Pollock, David. *Global Nomads: Meeting the Needs of ‘Third Culture Kids’ in Schools*. Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, 2000.

specifically resists migration in favor of a nomad of the mind, or a nomadic subjectivity that is nomadic in the epistemological mobility it provides – a mobility that may or may not be, for lack of a better word, mobile. Pels’s critique suggests that theoretical work in deconstruction, postcolonialism and feminism lose political potential as they “transmute bohemian self-fascination and self-complaint into political apology and self-aggrandizement” (71). While nomadism, unlike orthodox notions of diaspora, safely lacks a center, Pels suggests that nomadism in critical theory privileges centers and peripheries, reserving the third space of hybridity, articulated by Homi Bhabha (*The Location of Culture* 37), as the position from which the intellectual speaks (Pels 77).

Conversely, scholars have argued that the role of nomadism in the postcolonial world stems from the unique position of the postcolonial subject, a position closest to those who participate in global diaspora. Michael F. O’Riley’s work argues that the postcolonial nomad is distinctly different from Deleuze and Guattari’s nomad. Rather than defined by freedom of movement and rearticulation of the self, the postcolonial nomad he sees articulated in Algerian novelist Assia Djebar’s work is subject to colonial memories that dislocate the nomad from the present, who can only occupy a “non-place” (O’Riley 93). O’Riley’s version of the nomad’s “non-place” resonates with the deterritorialized nature of a global diaspora. May Joseph proposes “nomadic citizenship” to acknowledge multiple loci for urban nomads. She studies the case of South Asians who fled Tanzania in the 1970s, fearing threats of expulsion after Idi Amin expelled South Asians from neighboring Uganda in 1972. Far from dislocating urban nomads from their homeland, the framework of nomadic citizenship puts them in relationship to multiple homes – South Asia, East Africa, England, and the United States – where they

experience varying degrees of inclusion and exclusion. For Joseph, nomadic citizenship, a performative citizenship, is an alternative to “the competing citizenscapes that shape the political imaginary of urban nomads” (11). Joseph recoups a political potential to nomadism, but her urban nomads have access to forms of citizenship, however contested. Nomadism has taken a further transnational turn in Cindy Horst’s recent study of transnational nomads. Focusing on Somali refugees at several camps in Kenya, Horst argues that these refugees’ experience can only be understood in a transnational context, particularly because of their connections with Somali immigrants in other countries. The transnational dimension structures their experience in particular ways (22).

Like Joseph and Horst, Cohen imagines that nomadism is sufficient for understanding multiple sets of migrations: “If home has always been on the move, it is doubtful that the word ‘diaspora’ can add anything useful to the expression ‘nomad,’ other than providing a novel label” (124). The global diaspora, I suggest, is not simply a novel way of describing particular sets of circumstances. Nomadism encompasses migratory experience of a different tenor than global diaspora, for it remains by its very nature fragmentary and fleeting, challenging the possibility of sustained political praxis. Global diaspora, on the other hand, emphasizes politically contingent identification. If we take seriously the possibility of a deterritorialized global diaspora, then what are the bases of affiliation among those who count themselves among it? Just as homeland serves as an organizing principle, so too do families. In the absence of both, a new kinship provides a source of identification among global diasporic subjects. Alternative forms of kinship that challenge the relationship between kinship and the state allow these subjects to form flexible alliances among each other.

Much of the early work of anthropology privileges kinship as a primary form of social organization relying on biological relatedness. In critical theory, structures of kinship have become currency for understanding social organization, such as Louis Althusser's suggestion that the family unit is an "ideological state apparatus" that legitimates and reproduces both the family system and the conditions of production under capitalism (127). Social practices such as adoption, blended families, foster parenting, or queer kinship push the boundaries of the biological basis of relationships.

Durkheim's 1893 work, *The Division of Labour in Society*, proposes differences between so-called "primitive" societies and advanced, industrial ones, using the term "solidarity" to identify two different forms of social relations. He aligns primitive society with "mechanical solidarity" in which collectivity and common conscience maintain social order (61). Conversely, he accords to industrial society, "organic solidarity," which is social organization based on division of labor with the larger goal of maintaining order (Durkheim 61). In this schema, transition from "primitive" to industrial is progressive. Global solidarity, however, runs contrary to the state's desire of maintaining order, creating an alternate order among subjects of capital. Just as capitalism functions through symbolic exchange, so too do affinities among individuals and attendant socialization. Anthropologist Fernando Santos-Granero's 1991 study of the Amuesha, *The Power of Love*, suggests that love functions as symbolic exchange that legitimates relationships (202). Similarly, Peter Rivière proposes that love and violence are two of the many forms of symbolic exchange that have the power to draw unknown people into social organization (108).

Blood Bonds in W.E.B. Du Bois's Dark Princess

Both W.E.B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* explore the role of love in the affinities that form among people. *Dark Princess* begins with the frustrations of Matthew Towns, an African American medical student who leaves the United States when he cannot complete his obstetrics course at a white hospital. But even Germany holds little solace for Matthew who finds himself, as in the United States encountering "the white leviathan ... that mighty organization of white folk against which he felt himself so bitterly in revolt" (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 7). The fact that Matthew's experience is not entirely United States-bound suggests that he is subject to a larger system of oppression: capitalism and its bastard child, the imperial project. It is in opposition to this white leviathan comes Kautilya's organization challenging European and American imperialism. The titular princess Kautilya is an Indian woman who wanders the globe assembling a coalition of people of color. Global solidarity and love intertwine in the novel, as Matthew finds himself drawn to the enigmatic princess.

Criticism of *Dark Princess* – like that of Du Bois's other fiction – is often unkind. The *New York Times* assessment of the novel as "flamboyant and unconvincing" ("Race Discrimination") is shared by other critics, and it is only in 1995 that Claudia Tate recovers the novel for print with a psychoanalytic reading of the novel's "eroticized revolutionary" style, instead of social realism (ix). In fact, it is perhaps the very love that makes the novel so rich for the study of global solidarity that turned off Du Bois's contemporaries. While Kautilya frequently makes claims to blackness – a multivalent blackness including Indians, Turks, Egyptians, and African Americans – and recognizes

Matthew as “a stranger of my own color” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 17) the fact remains that the relationship between Matthew and Kautilya is an interracial or interethnic one.

In very different ways, both Matthew and Kautilya are characters in transit who hail from multiple homelands and possess troubled relationships to them. As an African American in the 1920s, Matthew experiences racism and challenges to his attempts to exist in the United States nation space. Matthew’s travel renders him a mobile black diasporic subject, and he calls himself an “outcast in his own native land” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 7) – in this way, his situation constitutes a particular experience of failing to belong, one that renders him, against his will, incapable of full participation in the democratic project of the United States. And yet, he identifies the United States as his home, for there can be no black without white – “in leaving white, he had also left black America – all that he loved and knew” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 7).

Matthew’s memory of black America is encoded in the intimacy of kin: “What would he not give to clasp a dark hand now, to hear a soft Southern roll of speech, to kiss a brown cheek? To see a warm, brown crinkly hair and laughing eyes” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 7-8). Tellingly, it is just as Matthew is longing for these absent sensations that he sees Kautilya, a jarring sense of identification emphasized by Du Bois’s punctuation: “And then—he saw the Princess!” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 8). Because her appearance follows closely on the tail end of Matthew’s reveries and longings for black America, Kautilya, in a sense, becomes part of that longing, her “wildly beautiful phantasy” and his “first ecstasy” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 8). Indeed, she comes into Matthew’s world in blazing Technicolor – indeed, as much color as the brown folks for whom he had been so lonely:

First and above all came that sense of color: into this world of pale yellowish and pinkish parchment, that absence or negation of color, came, suddenly, a glow of golden brown skin. It was darker than sunlight and gold; it was lighter and livelier than brown. It was a living, glowing crimson, veiled beneath brown flesh. It called for no light and suffered no shadow, but glowed softly of its own inner radiance. (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 8)

A bit over the top, perhaps, and bordering on the fetishistic, certainly. Nonetheless, Kautilya's color resonates with Matthew who feels drawn to her, perhaps because he recognizes the synecdochal symbolism of color, imagining she too might feel the oppressive weight of the white leviathan. And, indeed, she has made it her life's work to confront it. Despite the fact that she is a woman of color and that Matthew finds himself drawn to her, she is also designated as different, "something foreign and exotic," which leads him to ask, somewhat dubiously, "Was she American?" (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 8). As a result, the two offer the possibility of a global diaspora, which Kautilya voices by asking Matthew to consider his geography:

From Hampton roads to Guiana is a world of colored folk, and a world, men tell me, physically beautiful beyond conception; socially enslaved, industrially ruined, spiritually dead; but ready for the breath of life and resurrection. South is Latin America, east is Africa, and east of east lies my own Asia. (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 278)

In *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature*, Yogita Goyal suggests that the romance form of the novel allows Du Bois to "imagine diaspora as a utopian horizon, one

that breaks away from existing forms of social organization such as nation or ethnic group” (9). Taking Goyal’s proposition one step further, it allows for the formation of new social organization around kinship that challenges not only racial order but also the idea that African American emancipation was to be achieved solely through domestic action.

Their twinned similarity and dissimilarity makes Matthew curious about Kautilya, and the novel hinges around this curiosity. In fact, the ramifications of the global diasporic vision promised in the novel relies on two poles of similarity and dissimilarity. The fact that Matthew recognizes Kautilya as different, foreign, and exotic helps resist easy identifications between them and their struggles. For, the struggles that Matthew faces as an African American and, putatively, a member of the Talented Tenth *is* a different struggle than that engaged by an Indian princess, herself royalty. Kautilya’s own Bwodpur, a fictional kingdom in India, exists under ever growing threat from a British Empire determined to keep its colonial holdings. Although not explicitly identified as such, Bwodpur is likely one of the princely states in India, which were nominally sovereign and subject to British rule under suzerainty, holding only limited domestic autonomy. Indeed, Kautilya, widowed as a child bride, faces pressure from the British to marry a British colonialist, suggesting that her limited domestic autonomy functions both in her public and private spheres. As such, the relationship between kinship and the state become important, for this marriage, like Kautilya’s first, were directly related to her role as quasi-sovereign leader of Bwodpur.

In *Antigone’s Claim*, Judith Butler has articulated critical questions on the relationship between kinship and the state, namely if kinship threatens state authority and

engenders its own repression, can it exist without the state?¹⁶ Antigone, daughter of Oedipus and his mother Jocasta, is herself a product of an incestuous relationship and therefore already outside the bonds of kinship in forms sanctioned by the state (Butler, *Antigone's Claim* 5-6). Butler further suggests that Antigone troubles the relationship between kinship and gender by defying Creon's orders and burying her brother Polynieces, challenging Creon's right to kingship (*Antigone's Claim* 6). While the linguistically similar *kinship* and *kingship* seem mutually constituting, Antigone's social usefulness, suggests Butler, lies in "the social deformation of both idealized kinship and political sovereignty that emerges as a consequence of her act" (*Antigone's Claim* 6).

My contention that kinship factors prominently in alliances formed in the global diaspora likewise raises questions about the role of the state. Indeed, when diasporic subjects find themselves in a place that is not governed by the legitimating gaze of the state, what do social relations look like? In the case of *Dark Princess*, Kautilya circumvents the state – both her kingdom of Bwodpur's advisors who wish her to marry and the British Empire – by the birth of Madhu, her son with Matthew. Having borne the heir to the Bwodpur throne, she is free to marry Matthew, who can become the Maharajah of Bwodpur.

Further, Kautilya's fascination with Matthew's mother, whom she calls "Kali, the Black One; wife of Siva, Mother of the World!" (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 278) suggests the intimate link of kinship and is related to her statement, "Out of black India the world was born. Into the black womb of India the world shall creep and die" (227). In *Wayward*

¹⁶ Butler clearly states that she does not equate "kinship" with family. Additionally, she questions whether the state can exist independently of kinship, a topic too vast to take up here.

Reproductions, Alys Weinbaum reads Kautilya's interest in Matthew's mother as symbolic of:

The dignity of manual labor that Kautilya herself will know, a Hindu goddess of life (Kali) who is specifically racialized as black, a symbol of the fertility of the earth, and an 'ancient prophet' whom Kautilya views as a direct descendent of Gotama, the Buddha of the world, an incarnation of 'his perfect and ineffable self' who is meant to lead to atonement. (207)

Du Bois's invocations of Kali link the concerns of African Americans and Indians through Hindu mythology. In the Hindu tradition, Kali, whose name derives from "kala," meaning "black," is represented as a violent and dark figure, a destroyer of evil forces. One of the significant Kali stories in Hindu mythologies depicts Kali assisting Durga and the Matrikas in war against the demons of Raktabija (Rushby 229). Needing help, Durga summons Kali who, armed with a sword and decorated in skulls, defeats the demonic order. Tales of Kali also include anecdotes of drinking the blood of her victims and dancing on their corpses (Rushby 229). Drawing on the tradition of Kali, Du Bois proposes a mythological basis of unity in articulations of her blackness and her desire for retribution against unjust foes. By identifying Matthew's mother with Kali, he posits a cosmic link between struggles of African Americans and colonial Indians. By identifying similarities between Indian and African American causes – between Kautilya herself as a mother and Matthew's own mother – furthers his claim for the necessity of African American global vision.

As Claudia Tate writes in her introduction to the 1995 reissue of *Dark Princess* – her argument for the novel's recovery – the birth of Matthew and Kautilya's son Madhu

“signifies the heroic synthesis of double-consciousness among African Americans and the liberation of all peoples of the world” (xxi) as well as the solution to the 20th century problem of the color line that Du Bois proposes in *Souls of Black Folk*. What is telling is that this synthesis between African Americans and the global liberation – “liberation of all peoples of the world” – is that it appears coded in terms of kinship: the biological child of Matthew and Kautilya becomes, essentially, the blood link between African Americans and other people of color in search of liberation. Whereas the Japanese man in Kautilya’s coterie derisively remarks of African American participation in a global movement, “The blood must always tell” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 23), Matthew and Kautilya’s son becomes the refutation of blood’s ability to tell. In this son, both royal and non-royal, African American and Indian bloods co-mingle to create the “messenger and messiah to all the darker worlds” (Du Bois, *Dark Princess* 311). Whereas this vision of mingling blood is powerful and redemptive in *Dark Princess*, the novel’s reliance on blood reiterates much of the anthropological work on kinship that relies on the notion that “blood is thicker than water.”

Yet, Madhu is not only a literal link between Matthew and Kautilya and between African Americans and Indians. He symbolizes Du Bois’s hope for a solidarity movement that integrates the parallel concerns and oppressions shared by African Americans with colonial subjects. While the details of the kinship formed between Matthew and Kautilya – namely, racial or ethnic difference, actively challenges the codes of kinship that structure the societies in which they both live, the novel relies heavily on the trope of blood relationships to articulate affinities and solidarities.

Water Worlds in Amitav Ghosh's Sea of Poppies

If blood is thicker than water in *Dark Princess*, then water is resoundingly thicker than blood in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. The novel compiles stories that cross boundaries of race, class, caste, gender, and sexuality, bringing together a cast of unlikely bunkmates on the *Ibis*, a former slave ship refitted for the opium trade. The year is 1838, the transatlantic slave trade has been abolished. The owners of the *Ibis* doubt the ability of the double-masted schooner to participate in the illegal slave trade, as she would not be able to outrun the United States and British Navy vessels patrolling the coast of West Africa for illegal traders, so they refit her as an opium trader.

Sea of Poppies is, in one regard, the story of how the various individuals came to reside on the *Ibis*. Each character is, in some way, alienated from his or her land of birth, so the ship itself becomes the floating locus of identification and, consequently, a proving ground for global diaspora. Like the chronotope of the ship in Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1995), the ship is "a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" (4), recalling the Middle Passage and its centrality to the rise of imperialism.

The *Ibis* itself becomes the locus for kinship in absence of any state. This is true for the indentured migrants in particular, but unlikely affinities form between the various types of people aboard: The closeted seaman Jack Crowle who lusts after the passing octoroon Zachary Reid; Zachary and Paulette, a French girl raised in India who, like Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, feels more at home among Indians than with Europeans; and upper caste Deeti and Untouchable Kalua. These relationships exist because each character is subject to capitalism and imperialism, playing a particular role – sailor, stowaway, coolie – in the opium trade. Without a homeland, these characters experience

an alternative form of diasporic longing, not the longing for a homeland but the longing for each other.

The new form of kinship represented in the novel – that water is thicker than blood - hinges on the fact that traveling across the “Black Water” strips the migrants of the most essential form of kinship and social organization that governed the culture from which they came both legally and socially: caste. According to orthodox Hinduism, crossing the ocean strips one of caste, and this fact is mentioned several times in *Sea of Poppies*. When opium trader Benjamin Burnham asks his accountant Baboo Nob Kissin if he is not worried about this, he tells him, that since pilgrims have begun taking ships for pilgrimages, “Pilgrims cannot lose cast” (Ghosh 198) and likens his own mission – to build a temple to Ma Taramony – to a pilgrimage. Later, when Paulette joins the ship’s migrants, masquerading as an upper-caste Bengali woman, she reiterates this idea: “On a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same: it’s like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannath, in Puri” (Ghosh 328). Paulette, however, marshals the concept of caste-loss in pilgrimage in a different way than the Baboo, who clearly intends to maintain his caste-status. She says, “From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings – jahazbhais and jahazbahens – to each other. There’ll be no difference between us” (Ghosh 328). Rather than characterized by caste or region, they will be characterized by siblinghood. In stating this, Paulette urges them to act out of love, a form of kinship described by anthropologist David Schneider as “enduring, diffuse solidarity” (245). While Schneider coins this phrase for blood relations, he suggests that love is a powerful substance of kinship. And although he specifically studies kinship in

the American context, the mechanism by which love creates enduring, diffuse solidarity need not be culturally specific.

With her statement, which shocks the fellow women, Paulette instantiates a new social organization, one that, contradictorily, strips them of their castes, and while Deeti would never have dared to believe such a thing possible, she concurs, “Yes, there are no differences between us. We are jahaz-bhais and jahaz-bahens to each other; all of us children of the ship” (Ghosh 328). Indeed, Deeti’s decisions – particularly her decision to leave her daughter Kabutri to be raised by relatives – reject conventional notions of kinships. In doing so, she takes the new name “Aditi” when becoming a girmitya (indentured migrant), acknowledging that she is leaving behind an entire identity tied to her designation as “Kabutri-ki-ma” (Kabutri’s mother). Once Deeti had feared the severing from the kinship she has known wondering:

How was it possible that the marchers could stay on their feet, knowing what lay ahead? To know that you were forever an outcaste; to know that you would never again enter your father’s house; that you would never thrown your arms around your mother; never eat a meal with your sisters and brothers. (Ghosh 67)

In her older, fraught identity, however, the role of kinship was already troubled by incestuous bonds. Her daughter is the product of rape by her impotent husband’s brother, and that very same brother offers to clear Deeti’s debts by taking her as his mistress, arguing, “Your husband and I are brothers after all, of the same flesh and blood. Where is the shame?” (Ghosh 144). Leaving behind that past, she embraces a new set of kin relations along with a new future.

This definitive rewriting of the bonds of kinship for the migrants echoes a statement made early by another woman of the ship, when Deeti states her cast as Chamar – an Untouchable – and Munia says that they are sisters since she is a Musahhar. A fellow woman tells them, “How does all that matter any more? We are all sisters now, aren’t we?” (Ghosh 217). Deeti had once thought of caste as an intimate part of her identity but acknowledges it as “part of a past life, when she had become someone else” (Ghosh 217). The movement away from caste fundamentally challenges the relationship between caste and biological kinship, clearing space for a new order. Deeti, who had previously had a vision of the Ibis, suddenly finds her prognostication clarified: “her new self, her new life, had been gestating all this while in the belly of this creature, this vessel that was the Mother-Father of her new family, a great wooden mai-bap [mother and father], an adoptive ancestor and parents of dynasties yet to come: here she was, the Ibis” (Ghosh 328). With the ship as their newly imagined ancestors, the girmityas who inhabit its hold must reconsider and redetermine their social relationships.

Deeti’s shrine, at first small sketches on poppy leaves in her prayer room at home and later sketches drawn in the sindoor, red powder marking her status as a married woman, on the Ibis itself, comes to symbolize the new kin relations formed by the Ibis. The Ibis becomes part of the shrine after she has a vision of it early in the novel, becoming part of her personal pantheon, which includes relics of family members. Deeti does not quite know why it should be part of her shrine, but she says, “I just know it must be there; and not just the ship, also many of those who are in it; they too must be on the walls of our puja [prayer] room” (Ghosh 9). These very people become Deeti’s new kin

when she is on the Ibis, and oddly enough, she already seems to feel affinity for them before she even knows about the relationship she has with them.

This introduction to Deeti's shrine also emphasizes the futurity written into the novel. While *Sea of Poppies* is supposed to be the first novel of Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy and the novel ends abruptly without resolution, we learn that "later sailors would admire the accuracy of Deeti's vision and sketch of the ship" (9). More importantly, we are told that "legions ... came to regard the *Ibis* as their ancestor" (Ghosh 9). This statement suggests that the Ibis becomes the *kin ship*, center of the relationships forged among those aboard. The sense of community on the ship recalls the concept of "jahaji bhai," or "brotherhood of the ship" that historically formed among Indian indentured laborers on ships. As Aisha Khan has noted, jahaji bhai emerged from a shared predicament that superseded caste divisions (129). These bonds often continued once the voyage was over and served as an important connection between them (Khan 130). Yet, *Sea of Poppies* depicts a sentiment that transcends labor, national, racial, and ethnic lines. Deeti's shrine includes not only her fellow migrants but also Zachary, whose sketch is known by "the brilliance of his gaze" (Ghosh 10); Baboo Nob Kissin whose likeness shows "a great potato of a head sprouting two fern-like ears" (123); and Paulette, who seems to resemble a coconut. The Ibis itself and those who find their way into Deeti's shrine suggest that solidarity exists among them – across caste, class, race, nation, and gender. Indeed, these are individuals are ones whose presence in the novel troubles easy affiliations along these lines. Zachary is passing for white and, to Paulette's shock, understands how affinities can form in spite of race or ethnicity; Baboo Nob Kissin believes he is slowly morphing into a woman as he dedicates his life to goddess Ma Taramony; and French Paulette loves the Indian Jodu.

In the new order of kinship, new social practices and customs form. Whereas family members would once have arranged marriages between pairs, the migrants are faced with the absence of these relations. Deeti assumes the position of an elder brother's wife (sister-in-law), a critical social position in their previous lives, and in that capacity is sought as a guiding force for her ship-sisters in particular. While social relations have been radically restructured, the migrants are still haunted by the strict traditions under which they previously lived. Consequently, when her ship-sisters seek her counsel for their marriages, Deeti refuses. Despite her break from the past – inaugurated through the abandoning of her daughter, her marriage to Untouchable Kalua, her voyage across the Black Water – she remains tortured by her decisions, believing she might suffer for eternity for her sins. While the ship has created a new family structure among them – “they were all kin now” – Deeti realizes, “they were not yet so much a family as to make decisions for one another” (Ghosh 397).

Thus, we must be careful to note that the new social relations of the ship have not simply replaced the ones that previously existed. Rather, they have ushered in a new form of interactions, one governed foremost by a sense of individuality that exists alongside newfound solidarity. Indeed, there is a sense of community performed in the marriage rituals in the ship's cargo hold. The Hindu wedding ritual – in which the bride and groom walk seven times around a fire – was not, as they learn, made for a sea voyage. With lamps instead of a fire, many of the migrants surround the bride and groom, holding them upright with their arms, turning the marriage of the two into a “sacramental circle of matrimony” comprised of the community (Ghosh 429).

Although I have focused on the expressions of kinship among the migrants, the case of disgraced raja-turned-prisoner Neel Haldar, who is not among the migrants but on the Ibis for a trip to the penal settlement in Mauritius, similarly reveals a rewriting of social relations. One of the prison wardens explains to Neel that his sentence will divorce him from the kin relationships he has known, telling him, “When you step on that ship, to go across the Black Water, you and your fellow transportees will become a brotherhood of your own: you will be your own village, your own family, your own caste” (Ghosh 290). Unfortunately for Neel, this brotherhood consists of himself and the half-Chinese, half-Parsi Ah Fatt, an opium addict who does not speak and is covered in his own filth. The warden reiterates:

From now on, you will never be able to escape this Aafat [Ah Fatt]. He will be on your ship and you will have to travel with him to your jail across the Black Water. He is all you have, your caste, your family, your friend; neither brother nor wife nor son will ever be as close to you as he will. You will have to make of him what you can; he is your fate, your destiny. (Ghosh 291)

While Neel, by virtue of his social standing before his fall from grace, was accustomed to being taken care of, his redemption comes in the form of taking care of Ah Fatt, from assuming an intimate relationship reflecting that of kinship, with the silent man:

To take care of another human being – this was something Neel had never before thought of doing, not even with his own son, let alone a man of his own age, a foreigner. All he knew of nurture was the tenderness that had been lavished on him by his own caregivers. That they would come to love

him was something he had taken for granted – yet knowing his own feelings for them to be in no way equivalent, he had often wondered how that attachment was born. (Ghosh 300)

Crossing boundaries of race, caste, and nation, Neel's gesture towards Ah Fatt represents, perhaps, the most revolutionary affinity that forms in the novel. He gives of himself, asking nothing in return but the man's name, and realizes that what he can give is not dependent on what is reciprocated. This realization echoes a set of relationships that remain largely marginalized in the novel, such as Paulette's love for Jodu because they were raised together by Jodu's mother, her ayah. It is a relationship that Paulette's guardians, the British Burnhams, cannot understand, and Paulette is shocked that Zach can. However, at the moment he needs it most, after a nightmare that he was "a castaway on the dark void of the ocean, utterly alone, severed from every human mooring" (Ghosh 315). Neel awakes to find Ah Fatt's arms around him, telling him his name. These strange alliances and unorthodox kinships form in the unlikeliest of places in this novel, communicating a sense of hope in the power of new affinities.

At stake in rewriting kinship is a relationship between identity and power. How then, do these new forms of kinship and identity rooted in participation in a global diaspora provide an alternative locus of identification? This form of identity is not meant to supplant other markers with which people identify. It can exist only in conjunction with other, multiple categories of affiliation or identity. Indeed, the purpose is not to take identity in an "identitarian" mode – to borrow Judith Butler's use of the term (*Gender Trouble* 32) - rather to suggest that a specific form of solidarity that can arise across boundaries can happen vis-à-vis a shared identity in the form of new kin relations and

through participation in a “global diaspora.” Indeed, global diaspora is itself linked to imperialism, for static, binary representations of identity that demarcate positions such as “metropole” and “colony” have given way to multiple alliances across borders of nation, race, class, etc. As Edward Said demonstrated in *Orientalism* (1978), such binary oppositions were integral to the rise of imperialism (46). And yet, the rise of imperialism that itself has created conditions of encounter and contact, making possible the unmaking of the binary oppositions. As Said suggests later in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), essential perceptions of identity are challenged by the appearance of new alliances (240).

Another social practice radically rewritten aboard the Ibis is the role of race, enabling new alliances. As I mentioned above, the stripping of caste radically reorders race. Although race and caste are not explicitly correlated in the novel, from our contemporary perspective, caste distinctions in some cases mirror the racialized distinctions that are articulated through Zachary’s mercurial racial identity; the shame associated with Paulette and Jodu’s interactions; and the general disrespect with which the British treat the Indians in the novel. The character through which the racialization of caste is most apparent is Untouchable Kalua, whose blackness is embedded in his name, meaning “black,” for his skin, which has “the shining polished tint of an oiled whetstone” (Ghosh 49). Depicted as simple and innocent, cheated by family members and children alike, Kalua evokes the stereotype of the contented slave articulated by Sterling Brown: docile and childlike.¹⁷

Kalua’s blackness correlates with descriptions of him as an animal, from his insatiable craving for meat, his frenzied roar and agile leap to snatch Deeti from her

¹⁷ Brown’s “Negro Character as Seen by White Authors” identifies multiple stereotypical representations of African Americans in literature by white writers.

funeral pyre, and the brute strength he summons to kill the subedar who flogs him on the Ibis. Because Ghosh pairs Kalua's blackness with his Untouchable status, the novel seems to suggest that race and class dialectically constitute the caste-based plight of Untouchables. As the novel appears invested in revisiting, rather than reifying, racial classifications, Kalua proves his mettle by rescuing Deeti, and when the two are alone together, she interprets Kalua's blackness in a new way: his body for her is "as wide and sheltering as the dark earth" (Ghosh 165). As a result, his size and darkness become markers of safety and solidity, rather than simplicity and animalization.

Just as Ghosh plays with representations of Kalua's blackness, representations of race in the novel become increasingly complicated by Zachary Reid, the curious American who appears in this novel populated by Englishmen and Asians. As Baboo Nob Kissin descends into hyperreligiosity, he hears Zachary playing his penny whistle, which he believes is Krishna playing the flute. Thus begins a set of comedic misunderstandings that challenge manichean relations of white and black. The baboo tries to ascertain whether Zachary is an avatar of Krishna, asking around whether Zachary has shown a preference for butter – an allusion to stories about young Krishna stealing butter from the gopis. He also brings Zachary butter and enquires whether Zachary has been seen in the company of cowgirls – the gopis – who Zachary erroneously interprets as prostitutes.

The ship's manifest, which notes that Zachary is, in fact black, provides further confirmation of Baboo Nob Kissin's beliefs. Rather than understanding the notation as a racial designation, he believes that Zachary is, in fact Krishna, and that he must travel on the Ibis to Mauritius, where he would build a temple to Ma Taramony. The baboo is dismayed that Krishna might reveal himself through a white man – for the Zachary has

been passing as a white man: “He still could not bring himself to believe that Krishna – whose very name meant ‘black’ and whose darkness had been celebrated in thousands of songs, poems ... would choose as his emissary someone of so pale a cast of countenance” (Ghosh 133). He even attempts to peer down Zachary’s shirt, looking for Krishna’s blue skin.

Yet, Baboo Nob Kissin’s freedom from manichean ideas of race and blackness enables him to be come closest to intuiting the truth about Zachary’s racial identity. When he asks Serang Ali if Zachary has ever changed color or turned blue, Serang Ali rewards him with partial truth, saying, “Pink, red, all can do – but blue no can” (Ghosh 140). Although the baboo does not realize Serang Ali is directly revealing that Zachary is passing, he has unwittingly stumbled upon the truth about Zachary. And a very nervous Zachary notes, “He may not be as much of a fool as you think” (Ghosh 141).

The final scene of *Sea of Poppies* crystallizes the relationship between kinship and race in the novel. It ends *in medias res*, with Zachary seeing one of the ship’s longboats crowded with a motley crew of the Ibis’s passengers: “Serang Ali was at the rudder, and the other four were huddled in its middle – Jodu, Neel, Ah Fatt and Kalua” (Ghosh 468). Watching the men from the deck below, “standing with their arms interlinked” (Ghosh 468) are Paulette, Baboo Nob Kissin, and Deeti. In this moment, all nine look at each other as the longboat drops over a wave and disappears. Ghosh leaves the scene unremarked, and yet, the glances between the group, particularly Deeti’s “piercing ... startled grey eyes” (Ghosh 469), imbue the moment with great weight. Indeed, the fate of the Ibis’s passengers, the outcome of the solidarity between these people, remains to be seen. For a single moment, however fleeting, they see each other,

recognize each other. Closing the novel on a mystic note, Ghosh writes that Zachary knows he has seen Deeti before, though not on the ship. Indeed, he was the man at the mast of the Ibis in Deeti's vision early in the novel and inexplicably, he recalls looking at her while she was having that vision. As the global diaspora does not necessarily rely on physical proximity, as I have suggested above, Ghosh's pairing of Deeti's vision with Zachary's memory suggests that time and space are, in fact, mutable, that solidarity can occur across geography and temporality.

Taken together, both *Dark Princess* and *Sea of Poppies* offer complementary perspectives on the role of kinship in the formation of solidarity. *Dark Princess* first puts forth the possibility of global solidarity forged through a biological kinship, probing the role that a global diaspora can play in the creation of solidarity. *Sea of Poppies* takes Du Bois's formulation one step further, examining the role of alternative, non-biological forms of kinship in the formation of alliances. Ghosh radically reorients social relations beyond the biological – from blood running through Madhu's veins to the water on which the Ibis floats. Embracing a new vision of kinship articulated through global diaspora, these novels suggest, perhaps can create alliances and new spaces for resistance for oppressed people of the world.

Chapter 4 – Out of the Ashes: Ruin and Solidarity in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Worlds of Color* and Andrea Levy’s *Small Island*

“Once upon a time in my younger years and in the dawn of this century I wrote: “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line” Today, in the last year of the century’s first quarter, I propose to examine this matter again, and more especially in memory of the great event of these great years, the World War. How deep were the roots of this catastrophe entwined about the color line? And of the legacy left, what of the darker race problems will the world inherit?” –W.E.B. Du Bois, “Worlds of Color” (1925)

W.E.B. Du Bois’s 1925 essay “Worlds of Color,” which later gives the novel *Worlds of Color* (1961) its title, begins with a provocative question about World War I: “How deep were the roots of this catastrophe entwined about the color line?” (423). The thirty years between the publication of “Worlds of Color” and the novel of the same name saw yet another World War and few answers to Du Bois’s question. With catastrophe continuing to reign, Du Bois’s novel *Worlds of Color* examines the fallout of World War I and World War II, representing a world in crisis.

Du Bois’s use of the word “catastrophe” recalls Walter Benjamin’s Thesis IX, which depicts history as catastrophe: “One single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage” (Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” 257). Indeed, Du Bois seems to serve as one of Benjamin’s Angels of History, looking back at the past and examining the horrific march of progress, caught in the storm that “propels

him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward” (Benjamin, “Theses” 258). Consequently, the work of Du Bois’s novel *Worlds of Color*, like Andrea Levy’s 2004 novel *Small Island*, is to sift through the debris – the parallel debris of war and of empire – to see what remains.

The question of what remains has been taken up in discussions of imperial debris in postcolonial scholarship. For Ann Laura Stoler in particular, ruin provides an antidote to problems of temporality when examining imperialism. Indeed, Stoler’s work on ruin is indebted to Benjamin’s, though it stresses that examining ruin is not a task of nostalgia. Rather, it seeks to explain imperial structures that endure past the moment of independence. Studying the “political life of debris” (192), Stoler suggests, demonstrates how these structures persist in the form of ruin. For Du Bois, ruin serves as an antidote to problems of temporality. Through the parallel debris of war and empire, he imagines the possibility of society emerging from crisis through the figure of ruin.

In this chapter, I propose that Du Bois’s novel *Worlds of Color* anticipates the work on ruin in postcolonial studies. Du Bois further examines the productive possibilities in the twinned sets of debris emerging from war and empire. Will these ruins, the novel seems to ask, give rise to a powerful sense of solidarity across race and nation that will challenge enduring imperial structures of dominance? The novel reveals a basis for unity of oppressed people of color around the globe arising from the ruins of the imperial project. Andrea Levy later takes up similar issues but in the form of ruin that exists not in the colony but in the metropole. The ruin has come home just as immigration has started changing the racial landscape of the nation. By exploring ruin within the mother country, Levy challenges distinctions between center and periphery and suggests

how solidarity can be born out of ruin. Suggesting that ruin both serves as a reminder of the ongoing power of imperialism and as a productive force for challenging it, this chapter looks at the motif of ruin to make the case that both Du Bois and Levy put forth ruin as a generative site for an emancipated future.

Solidarity from Ruin in the World of Color

Words of Color provides the final installment of the Black Flame trilogy, three novels that narrate Manuel Mansart's life story, developed first in *The Ordeal of Mansart* (1957) and then in *Mansart Builds a School* (1959). *The Ordeal of Mansart* traces Mansart and his family's experiences from Reconstruction through 1916, while *Mansart Builds a School* examines African American life between 1912 and World War II. *Worlds of Color* covers the period of time between 1936-1954 and finds 60-year-old Mansart traveling abroad to see the world and seek reprieve from what he imagines is the "essentially trivial and temporary question of skin color" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 19). Mansart does not anticipate that his trip will shift his interest from the color line in the United States towards what Du Bois elsewhere terms "the color line [that] belts the world" ("The Color Line Belts the World" 42). He imagines he will experience firsthand how "to mankind at most times and in most places color of skin was no more important than color of hair or length of foot" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 19). Instead, Mansart learns a different lesson that radicalizes him: oppressed people of color are a powerful force waiting to be united in a great struggle against imperialism, capitalism, and racism. Through Mansart's travels, Du Bois focuses on the global dimensions of human rights, turning away from national civil rights and dislocating himself from his once receptive

audiences. In short, *Worlds of Color* frames the urgency of African American freedom struggles as a matter of global solidarity, which, combined with perceptions of the novel's lack of literary merit, proved an unpopular tactic.

Whereas Lothrop Stoddard once prophesized the feared rising tide of color,¹⁸ Du Bois suggests that the tide may be high indeed in *Worlds of Color*. While critics tend to emphasize the labor and socialist history aspects of the novel, Du Bois's novel is also forward-looking, laying bare a political project that identifies a global system of oppression visible amid the decay of colonialism. But Du Bois does not only draw attention to a larger map of imperial detritus; rather, he articulates the possibility of a global response - global solidarity - that could emerge from the ruins of empire. The Black Flame trilogy in general and *Worlds of Color* in particular advocate for a more global, and perhaps threatening, vision of unity among denizens of the worlds of color. This solidarity, Du Bois suggests, is a fundamental, shared responsibility of the oppressed remnants of empire, both the declining empires of Europe and the rising empire of the United States. Perhaps it is only in fiction, however, that Du Bois can advocate for the solidarity that may arise from the smoldering ashes of the colonial project. Accordingly, he employs the figure of ruin in the novel to suggest that global solidarity may be forged from ruins of empire and the spoils of war. In addition to the motif of ruin in the novel's content, the novel's fragmentary aesthetics mirror Du Bois's political concerns about the relationship between ruin and solidarity.

The global solidarity that Mansart begins to identify in *Worlds of Color* is not simply a new iteration of Marxist internationalism, one emerging from shared

¹⁸ See *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920)

oppressions at the hands of literal and figurative colonial powers. Mansart's travels originate in his plans for a cooperative study of African American education, which require him to first travel in Europe to "broaden his vision of the Race Problem" (Du Bois, *Worlds* 18). The purpose of the trip is to deepen Mansart's perception of race, which is "one of education and ethics" (Du Bois, *Worlds* 18). Limited in nature, Mansart's beliefs about race do not account for "the role of industry, the plight of the worker, and the work of the trade union" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 18). This rhetoric of labor foreshadows Mansart's Marxist-oriented trip, which is steeped in production, distribution, and consumption, and accompanied by an education in materialist history. Scholars who have taken up *Worlds of Color*, such as Edward Blum, Vilashini Cooppan, and Brent Edwards¹⁹ generally point to the presence of communist themes in the novel as the rationale for Mansart's radical reorientation towards leftist politics. Mansart receives a grounding in materialism that he did not previously possess, and he embraces Marxism as a viable economic possibility. Indeed, this is one of the possible explanations for the novel's reception. As fears of communism ran high during the McCarthy era, writers such as Du Bois were among those under suspicion of communist sympathies. Although Du Bois had rejoined the NAACP in 1944 after his 1934 resignation, he was ousted in 1948, as the NAACP embraced the anticommunism of the times.²⁰ But perhaps the novel's communism is not the only threat. Instead, what if the problem is that people of

¹⁹ See Edward Blum, *W.E.B. Du Bois: American Prophet* (2007) and Vilashini Cooppan, "Move on Down the Line: Domestic Science, Transnational Politics, and Gendered Allegory in Du Bois" and Brent Edwards, "A Late Romance" in *Next to the Color Line* (2007).

²⁰ Gerald Horne describes an "anti-imperialistic, militant" agenda in the 1944 NAACP, when Du Bois returns to the organization. By 1948, however, when he leaves, anti-communism had taken precedence within the NAACP (20).

color around the world, whether colonial or Jim Crow subjects, share similar concerns and could find a way to work in tandem, that movements could be forged across lines of color? We might imagine that there would be much – perhaps enough – to be learned about workers, unions, and industry in the United States, particularly in the north during the 1930s when Mansart undertakes his voyage. That Mansart’s travel takes him abroad, specifically to learn about the colonies, gestures towards the importance of a global orientation amid the changing politics of the time.

To suggest that *Worlds of Color* is exclusively Marxist in its orientation is to miss its message of global solidarity emerging throughout Mansart’s trip, a solidarity that shares concerns with Marxism but expands the boundary of materialist histories of the metropole towards histories of the colonies. Mansart’s colleagues claim, “We and Mansart know nothing of the central problem of the colonies of the world” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 18). Yet, they seem to know that there is a problem, that there is knowledge to be uncovered about the colonies, and, however elusive, their own fate is linked to those in the colonies. Their sympathies for solidarity, therefore, exist even before Mansart embarks on his journey. Accordingly, when a British man questions Mansart about African independence, Mansart replies, “We really know comparatively little of Africa, but of course theoretically what we want is that Africa should be free and independent.... That is the heritage of mankind” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 35-6). Despite his limited knowledge, Mansart wagers this opinion, demonstrating his fundamental commitment towards human rights. Indeed, the human angle conveyed in “the heritage of mankind” is a global position.

As he travels east from his origin in the United States to his terminus in Japan, Mansart's orientation towards African American issues takes him on a global journey through the debris of empire. His education is two-fold, consisting of reading material supplied by his secretary Jean Du Bignon and the experiences he has while traveling. Reading history, he broadens his knowledge about Europe, particularly the general peace among Europeans of the 19th century, despite wars for colonial empire linking Europe and North America in world domination of "darker peoples of the earth" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 23), an articulation of burdens shared by those who are not white. Through this education, Mansart wonders, "How much of the real history of the world was being hidden from him?" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 47). Mansart's reading is in a particular kind of Marxist history: World War I becomes a colonial enterprise, with Germany, Italy, and Japan demanding a share of colonial spoils, and the gold standard is a boon for global capitalism that must be preserved against Russia's Bolshevik Revolution. The so-called "peace" of the 19th century gives way to the violence of the 20th as the threat of communism and colonizers' desire to hold onto their colonies coalesce. In his reading, Mansart notes a particular irony:

Just as Western Europe was practically united to overthrow Russia by force of arms, the system of culture which had lifted the West to world domination during the 19th century, built on the conquest of India, Negro slavery in America, the Sugar Empire, and Cotton Kingdom and the Industrial Revolution, crashed in unprecedented ruin. (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 23-4)

In light of this history, Marxism alone cannot completely address the system of world domination by capital inherent in slavery, sugar, and cotton, or the conquest of India because these incidents are linked not only by capital but also by race. Although Du Bois himself was, at times, an ardent defender of the hope that socialism and communism held for African Americans, Marxist internationalism does not fully explain how unity could exist among people of color across the dividing line of race in the novel. Instead, in the novel's own terms, ruin forges these connections. Thus, it seems the paradigm that Du Bois is embracing is global solidarity rather than Marxist internationalism more generally.

Mansart comes to his understanding of solidarity through the debris of empire, the remnants of a perfect storm of imperialism, capitalism, and race, which provide a critical perspective through which he comes to view both history and the present. In postcolonial studies, imperial ruin serves as a framework that challenges linear accounts of history, particularly in the movement from colonial to postcolonial, capturing the lived experience of the colonial in the temporally postcolonial. Ruin provides a vocabulary for the lived experiences of those who continue to experience the repercussions of colonial formations. As Ann Stoler suggests, through the ruins of empire, "Situations of disparate time and place come into renewed view" (197). She questions whether "the Agent Orange-infested landscapes of Vietnam, ... former nuclear test sites of the Bikini Atolls, ... defunct sugar mills of central Java, and ... barracks of India's railway communities" can be thought of as "imperial ruins" (Stoler 197). Mansart's engagement with history is itself a project in colonial ruin, as his travels introduce him to the debris of this history (conquest, slavery, sugar, cotton) and what Stoler terms "the political life of imperial debris" (193). Indeed, ruin, for Stoler is an active verb or a process, as well as a noun. The ruins are "what

people are 'left with': to what remains, to the aftershocks of empire, to the material and social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things" (Stoler 194). Ruin as a process, however, suggests how imperial formations continue to exert force "in ruined landscapes and through the social ruination of people's lives" (Stoler 194). Through the ruins of empire, Mansart ultimately concludes that the process of ruin holds possibilities for global emancipation.

As he encounters people around the globe who are living in the ruins of this history, Mansart grows in his consciousness of the world system of capitalism, seeing the links between people of different temporalities and geographies – the very connections that enable solidarity in spite of difference. Placing himself into this map of empire's detritus, he makes connections between the situations he uncovers and the struggles of African Americans in the United States. In the novel, African Americans become the legacies of a global conspiracy that gave rise to colonialism, slavery, and world capitalism, much like Indians conquered by the British, the peoples of the Caribbean who fueled the Sugar Empire, and even the white proletariat that enabled the Industrial Revolution. Thus, Mansart's growing sense of the possibilities of global solidarity is based on both the literal and figurative debris of empire.

Mansart's first introduction to the spoils of war and empire occurs in a conversation with Sir John Rivers, his host in London. Rivers is a British aristocrat whose family continues profiting from the colonial enterprise of a grandfather who pioneered in the Niger Delta. Mansart wonders why the Rivers family should continue benefitting from the spoils of colonialism when African laborers were paid once (if at all) and when the gold, pepper, and tin belong to Africa. Although Rivers defends his family, Mansart

responds that he would “like to see African labor and hear what it says” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 32). Through African labor and the ruined landscape of the Niger Delta, Mansart’s sense of injustice has grown. He has not quite made the connection between the experiences of African colonial laborers and African American labor, but this early conversation suggests his predisposition to the possibilities of these connections.

In France, Mansart’s guide Villiers challenges his perceptions of the French Revolution by highlighting the ruins of empire. For Mansart, as for many African American expatriates who made their homes in France, the French Revolution fostered the belief that France is a racial utopia.²¹ Villiers, however, undermines this fantasy about France, telling Mansart:

France is Europe: For five hundred years, all Europe has fattened on the entrails of Asia and Africa and built her glory on the blood and guts of “chinks” and “niggers.” What a brave and mighty folk we are, and how unrivalled in unprecedented in lying and murder. (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 40)

With these words, Villiers lays bare for Mansart the detritus of imperialism, its foundations built on the ruins of individuals in the world of color: entrails, blood, guts. Tellingly, Villiers statement appears just after Mansart has discussed race relations with a group of communists, including “a colored man from the West Indies” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 40) identified by the surname James – presumably C.L.R. James. This

²¹ For further discussion of African American expatriates in France, see James Baldwin’s “Equal in Paris” in *Notes of a Native Son* (1969), Ernest Dunbar’s *The Black Expatriates: A Study of American Negroes in Exile* (1968), Michael Fabre’s *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France* (1993), Herbert Lottman’s *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (1998), and Tyler Stovall’s *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (1996).

conversation irretrievably shapes Mansart's perception of a global color line. He reflects on his United States-centered definition of the color line as "principally a matter of admission to street cars, trains, schools, and restaurants" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 41). James, along with a Frenchman and a Russian, however, shows Mansart that these particularities of the color line lie in its more general principal: economic inequality. Further, the group of communists demonstrates faith in the Russian Revolution that Mansart cannot match. As the Russian tells him:

Don't you see the Russian Revolution now comes to fulfill the French and Haitian? We take the worker to the place where the French Revolution tried to lift him, and setting him side by side with the black and colored people, bring a world brotherhood of which the most progressive white world never dreamed. (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 41)

While Mansart does not assent to the Russian's prognostication and seems undecided on the utopian possibilities of the Bolshevik Revolution, this conversation lays the groundwork for the vision of global solidarity that Mansart eventually comes to embrace. He begins to understand the relationship between big business, religion, and colonial exploitation and begins to see the potential for global unity arising from the entrails of empire.

With his newfound understanding of France's role in the colonial domination of Africa and Asia, Mansart becomes confused by an encounter with an African American expatriate named John, who claims to be a Frenchman and plans to relocate to West Africa to become a colonial overlord and "be somebody" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 45). Mansart cannot understand how an African American could join the French Civil Service

and participate in a system of imperial domination. His frustration suggests Mansart's heightened sense of the linked fate of African Americans and Africans. He cannot fathom why an *African American* would want to rule *Africans*. That Mansart's first overture towards global solidarity would be pan-Africanist in orientation is unsurprising, given that Du Bois's own work demonstrates significant engagement with pan-Africanism. Despite the different histories of African Americans and Africans, Mansart identifies their shared origin and parallel histories of slavery and colonialism through a pan-Africanist lens. Listening to this conversation, Villiers recounts the scope of French colonialism in the language of ruined bodies, a "mess" of "fifty million in Africa, twenty-seven million in Asia and a half million in America" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 45-6). Mansart responds by questioning whether the world will ever "produce a power which will open the way for colonies really to become free" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 46). This observation, paired with the ongoing conversations in which Mansart has taken part, foreshadows the conclusion about global solidarity to which Mansart is swiftly coming in the novel.

In contrast to the imperial ruin Mansart learns about while traveling in Europe, his trip to China provides an image of solidity and strength: the Great Wall of China. He acknowledges that the wall:

Surpasses that mighty bastion at Constantinople which for so many centuries saved Mediterranean civilization from German barbarism. This is a wall of carefully cut stone, fitted and laid with clean matching and eternal mortar, from twenty to fifty feet high, and 2,500 miles long; built by a million men, castellated with perfect brick, and standing mute and

immutable for more than two thousand years. Such is China. (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 64)

Whole rather than in ruins, China becomes a cornerstone for Mansart's vision of a united world of color, though the deaths of laborers constructing the wall goes unremarked in the novel.

Stunned by the magnitude of China, both in territory and population, Mansart realizes that China must be accorded a place in his schema of the world and the solidarity between people in it. Its riches have been under threat from both American and Japanese imperialism, but Du Bois represents China as having resisted such threats. Accordingly, Mansart notes, "Any attempt to explain the world without giving China a place of extraordinary prominence is futile. Perhaps the riddle of the universe will be settled in China, and if not, in no part of the world which ignores China" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 64). When telling Chinese leaders about African American life, Mansart asks, "How far do you think Europe can continue to dominate the world; or how far do you envisage a world whose spiritual center is Asia and the colored races?" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 64-5). For Mansart, Asia serves as the geographical center of a global solidarity that is yet to come. China's prominence and strength, Mansart imagines, will serve as the locus for the colored races coming together. With much of the rest of the world in imperial ruin, China's comparative resistance to colonization provides a rallying point for imperialism's ruined bodies to come together. Du Bois's representation of China ignores the historical realities of Chinese history, particularly with the respect to the Opium Wars of the 19th century. While China was never formally colonized, it was nonetheless subject to forms of economic imperialism. Yet, Mansart puts great stock in the fact that China

has resisted the formal colonization to which the Caribbean, India, and countries of Africa were subjected. As such, global solidarity, born from ruin, from Mansart's perspective, could be shored up by China's position of power.

That Mansart arrives at the impetus for his movement towards global solidarity at the end of his life suggests that African American emancipation movements themselves must move towards a global scope to fulfill their goals. Indeed, at the outset of the novel, Mansart perceives that "Life seemed suddenly to raise warnings of its inevitable end and of things which much be done and plans which shrieked for final laying" (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 9). Aside from the literal "final laying" of Mansart in his grave, which occurs in the novel, Mansart's perceptions suggest that the legacy of his career – a progression of college education, teacher, and finally the president of the Colored College – is unfinished. Mansart has achieved the status of race leader – as Du Bois himself had – but he seems undecided about the direction of emancipation struggles for African Americans in the United States. Thus Mansart, who functions allegorically as a stand-in for not only Du Bois but also black freedom struggles writ large, becomes a student, seeking out that which he does not know, namely a personal sense of the next step: the future of African American emancipation and the Civil Rights Movement. That global solidarity is what Mansart explores as the next stage is revealing: the next direction for the movement towards African American freedom and equality requires looking out, rather than looking in.

Knowledge acquired abroad allows Mansart to return to the United States with a greater sense of the relationship between the struggles of African Americans and those of people of color around the world. His transnational perspective illuminates new contours

of his earlier national one. On his deathbed, Mansart has a nightmare that he voices to his children and grandchildren: “Moscow was a flame, London was ashes, Paris was a clot of blood, New York sank into the sea” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 348). Mansart, however, has a second vision, in which the worlds of color come together:

I saw China’s millions lifting the soil of the nation in their hands to dam the rivers which long had eaten their land. I saw the golden domes of Moscow shining on Russia’s millions, yesterday unlettered, now reading the wisdom of the world. I saw birds singing in Korea, Viet-Nam, Indonesia and Malaya. I saw India and Pakistan united, free; in Paris, Ho Chi Minh celebrated peace on earth; while in New York. (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 349)

Mansart’s visions seems to offers a response to Aimé Césaire’s statement about ruin in *Discourse on Colonialism* (1957), written just a few years earlier:

The Indians massacred, the Moslem world drained of itself, the Chinese world defiled and perverted for a good century; the Negro world disqualified; mighty voices stilled forever; all of this wreckage, all this waste, humanity reduced to a monologue, and you think that all this does not have its price? The truth is that this policy *cannot but bring about the ruin of Europe itself*, and that Europe, if it is not careful, will perish from the void it has created around itself... What else has bourgeois Europe done? It has undermined civilizations, destroyed communities, ruined nationalities, extirpated the ‘root of diversity.’ (57, 59)

Indeed, Césaire's prognostication comes to fruition in Mansart's vision. The great cities of the world are in ruin, perhaps the result of their imperial sins: London in rubble, Paris bloodied, New York disappearing altogether. That Moscow is on fire is significant in two respects. The red of fire gestures towards Russia's communism, while the fact that Moscow has not escaped the ruin of the other cities suggests that, for Mansart, communism is not an adequate answer for the oppressed of the world. Instead, it appears implicated in the world's problems.

Out of the debris of the colonized world, Mansart prophesizes the redemption of ruined people and landscapes: reclaiming the land, engaging in literacy, and possessing freedom. Nature, in the form of singing birds, appears in concert with the solidarity that emerges. Mansart's abrupt ending signals his death, leaving behind a vision for the world encompassing broad scope. Tellingly absent from the vision, however, is what Mansart imagines for New York and for African Americans. This omission emphasizes that true emancipation for African Americans necessarily relies on an emancipated world of color.

For Mansart, the color line has become part of a worldwide economic system, an insidious form of globalization itself, tied to the very development of modernity. The freedom he seeks for the colonies and, indeed, for African Americans, remains in doubt, for his vision does not provide an answer to the neocolonial situation of many postcolonial nations after independence. Indeed, Du Bois did not live long enough to see the outcome of decolonization in the long view. Nonetheless, Du Bois's engagement with ruin provides a framework for solidarity that is not temporally bound precisely because he engages with imperial debris. Thus, he concerns himself with life among ruin, in which people are living not with the legacies of colonization but its ongoing presence.

Though colonialism is temporally coming undone, its structures of domination continue living in the present and future. In recognizing this, Du Bois uncovers both the global system of oppression visible among the decay of colonialism and its antithesis: global solidarity.

In contrast to the novel's reception, I am suggesting that its political project and aesthetic qualities align through Du Bois's exploration of global solidarity. *Worlds of Color* has only recently returned to print, part of a complete set of Du Bois's published books. As such, the novel still remains inaccessible for general readership. Du Bois's contemporaries, along with critics today, hold Du Bois's novels, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), *Dark Princess* (1928), and *The Black Flame* trilogy comprised of *The Ordeal of Mansart* (1957), *Mansart Builds a School* (1959), and *Worlds of Color* (1961), in far lesser esteem than the non-fiction writing for which Du Bois is lauded.

Early critical reception for *The Black Flame* trilogy foreshadows its dismal publication history. Reviews from the African American and radical press tend to disparage the trilogy's literary merit while reiterating Du Bois's contributions to African American culture, history, and politics. The mainstream American press, however, simply ignores the novels. In general, positive aspects of reviews focus on the trilogy's historicity and scholarship, while deemphasizing its literary merit. For example, in his review of *Mansart Builds a School* for the *Journal of Negro History*, Charles Walker Thomas writes, "Deliberately putting ends above means, Dr. Du Bois flouted the demands of the novel as an art form and produced a not-satisfactory novel" (124). Similarly, the radical leftist newspaper *National Guardian* criticizes *The Ordeal of Mansart's* lack of literary style, specifically characterization (Nelson 78). Criticism of Du

Bois's aesthetics is often tempered by appreciation for his larger body of work.

Accordingly, Thomas notes, "Dr. Du Bois, an assured scholar with demonstrated competences in history, sociology, anthropology, and fiction—and race leader to boot—deserves a serious hearing regardless of the merit of any individual work" (123).

Thomas's evaluation is echoed in other reviews, such as Arthur P. Davis's blunt appraisal of *The Ordeal of Mansart* in *Phylon*: "As the commentary of a historian and a 'race leader' who himself played a vital role in the stirring events about which he writes, the work is illuminating and rewarding. But it is definitely not a good historical novel" (214).

For James Ivy, who reviewed *Worlds of Color* for *The Crisis*, the novel oversimplifies the issues it takes on (378). However, Alice Childress responded to *Worlds of Color* in a letter to Du Bois, complimenting the novel's beautiful writing and exciting characters (Horne 271). At the same time, lack of response from the mainstream press in the United States is not altogether surprising, considering Du Bois's difficulty finding a publisher for *The Black Flame*. Eventually, Mainstream Publishers, a leftist press, published the novels and despite a reprint in 1976, the trilogy has long been out of print. Confirming the unpopularity of the trilogy's final novel, *Worlds of Color*, neither *Journal of Negro History* nor *Phylon* reviewed the novel, and its only extant review is James Ivy's review from *The Crisis*, which cites its "dubious key to salvation" (378) – global solidarity. Why, however, is *Worlds of Color* the most marginal of the *Black Flame* trilogy? The answer, I am suggesting, is both aesthetic and political, since critics generally regard *Worlds of Color* as a clumsy work of fiction with dubious literary merit.

While *Worlds of Color* shares many thematic elements with Du Bois's novel *Dark Princess* (1928), the latter recently has been the subject of new scholarship, owing to its

usefulness for discourses of internationalism and transnationalism, as I discussed in my last chapter. If both are novels take seriously the possibility of global solidarity, as I suggest, why has *Worlds of Color* not received the same critical attention as *Dark Princess*. One simple explanation is that Claudia Tate's work to bring *Dark Princess* back to print has given scholars access to it. Another difference, however, is that *Dark Princess* is a novel of utopian fantasy, hinging on affective connections across racial boundaries and the dramatization of Matthew Towns's competing desires for Princess Kautilya's love, African American freedom, and global emancipation. *Worlds of Color* speaks to a different set of concerns, namely a larger scale, more disjointed group of oppressed people of color. *Dark Princess* is a novel possessed with great hope, symbolized by the birth of Kautilya and Matthew's son. On the other hand, *Worlds of Color* is more pessimistic, asking what is to be done when confronted with a long view of the history of modernity through the Second World War and the relationship of African Americans and other people of color to modernity. In fact, *Worlds of Color* is as utilitarian as *Dark Princess* is utopian. Further, if the black diaspora is both constitutive of and a counter-current to modernity, as scholars such as Bernard Magubane, Cedric Robinson, and Paul Gilroy have suggested, *Worlds of Color* asks what role African Americans can have in a global reconstruction, the rebuilding of a world smarting under the ruinous march of modernity that has left the world in imperial ruins.

More recent explanations for the resounding critical silence surrounding *The Black Flame* range from the aesthetic to the political. In his afterword to the Oxford edition of *The Black Flame*, Mark A. Sanders cites the confluence of "effects of literary criticism and magazine culture in shaping the literary taste of the 1950s; ... shifting

trends in African American literature ... the civil rights movement and its own discourse, and ... Du Bois's own artistic and political evolution" (232) as reason for the trilogy's obscurity. Politically, Du Bois continued embracing communism at a time when it was losing its currency. Aesthetically, Du Bois was writing the functional equivalent of protest novels at a time when African American *belle lettres* embraced the larger aesthetic of project of high modernism.

Nonetheless, in writing the trilogy, Du Bois seems to be trying to convey a historical and political message for readers who are less likely to read his non-fiction work. Accordingly, Sanders proposes the Black Flame trilogy be read as a sequel to *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), considering Du Bois's statement in *The Ordeal of Mansart*, "I am trying by method of historical fiction to complete the cycle of history which has for a half century engaged my thought, research and fiction" (qtd. in Sanders 230). Sanders proposes that the trilogy is Du Bois's "low-budget mass-media broadcast" (232) and indeed, Du Bois may well have intended for the novel to reach a wide audience. Du Bois himself lamented the small-scale distribution of the trilogy and believed the publishing industry was conspiring against him, "Keeping certain books from being published and certain authors from being read" (qtd. in Horne 271). Indeed, Du Bois reports that *The Ordeal of Mansart* only sold 1500 copies and was not reviewed "by any respectable publication" (qtd. in Horne 271), by which he means the mainstream press. Nonetheless, the manner in which Du Bois attempted to support and publicize the trilogy suggests that he had much loftier aims for his literary project. Gerald Horne describes Du Bois's speaking engagements in support of the trilogy as similar to his promotion of *In Battle for Peace: The Story of my 83rd Birthday* (1952) – frequent speaking engagements

with books on sale and display, as well as reaching out to political groups and unions for support of the trilogy (270).

Sanders's proposition is one way to take seriously the relationship between Du Bois's aesthetic and political projects, but Lilly W. Phillips suggests reading the novels as socialist realism to better understand the relationship between their form and function. Socialist realism, Phillips contends, offers Du Bois a way to reconcile his "increasing allegiance to communism and his long-standing commitment to fighting for the rights of African Americans.... his ideological allies and his ethnic compatriots" (258). Similarly, Horne argues that the trilogy "subtly attempted to link the fates of the Soviets and Afro-Americans in the early years of the NAACP, Blacks, and trade unions, socialism, and the Communist party" (270). Proposing another way of reading the novel, Keith Byerman suggests that the trajectory of the trilogy functions as a sort of interpretive history, ending in *Worlds of Color* with the color line breaking down and socialism rising (146). In general, scholarship on *Worlds of Color* suggests that the novel is primarily concerned with the global history of labor and the role of communism as a viable alternative to capitalism. As these critics are suggesting, Du Bois's politics and aesthetics are anachronistic at best. At worst, they flaunt Leftist politics to the African American political establishment at a time when the establishment is actively distancing itself from the Left.

The literary reception of *Worlds of Color*, I am suggesting, stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of Du Bois's project. If we take seriously Du Bois's exploration of global solidarity and the relationship between his aesthetic project and political concerns, there is perhaps another way to read the novel. The novel's political

project also reflects a larger movement from a national to global vision in Du Bois's other writing, a movement that fundamentally changed Du Bois's relationship to African American leadership, including the NAACP and leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. These forces conspire to suppress *Worlds of Color* and, indeed, the work of African American thinkers like Du Bois who sought the importance of the global for black freedom struggles. Returning to Sanders's contention that the trilogy is Du Bois's version of a low-budget mass-media broadcast, I am suggesting that the very criticisms made of *Worlds of Color*'s aesthetics by reviewers, namely its lack of coherence and flat characterization, shore up its vital political message of global solidarity through fragments. *Worlds of Color* is, in essence, a story of the entire Mansart family, and everyone who comes to be part of the Mansart family. It is a story told in fragments, a story in piecemeal – and out of these pieces, a larger narrative comes into view.

Criticism of the novel's aesthetic merits generally refers to the fragmentary nature of the narrative and to the poorly developed characters. The novel is, in some regards, episodic, with some chapters arranged by Mansart's geographical movement. Additional chapters, however, abandon Mansart's narrative altogether, focusing on the travels of other characters, including Mansart's assistant Jean Du Bignon, and his relatives, such as his grandson, Revels Mansart Jr., and son-in-law Bishop Wilson. If we were to read *Worlds of Color* as a *roman à clef*, we would have to interpret nearly every character as an incarnation of Du Bois over the course of his life. For example, Mansart's travels mimic Du Bois's, profoundly shaping his perceptions of the color line. Like Du Bois, Jean Du Bignon, is brought up on charges for failing to register as a foreign agent. Both Revels and Bishop Wilson also gain greater understanding of European and American

imperialism through travel. To some degree, Du Bois's characters could be more fully developed, but as they appear in the novel, they are fragments of Du Bois that, when taken together, dramatize Du Bois's intellectual development towards a global viewpoint.

Mansart's grandson Adelbert takes up residence in the world of color most actively, and he is the only major character in the novel that is not a clear stand-in for Du Bois. In France, he meets Dao Thu, a Vietnamese woman who was involved with the French Resistance before being betrayed. Meeting with representatives of French Africa, Adelbert learns that Dao Thu is needed in Africa. Adelbert sees strength in these Africans uniting and envisions the entire continent doing the same. Thus, Adelbert renounces his United States citizenship, becomes a French foreign official, and marries Dao Thu, enabling her entry to Africa. Consequently, Adelbert directly aids with the struggle that could eventually bring Mansart's vision to fruition. While not Du Bois, it might be more accurate to say that Adelbert functions as Du Bois's wish-fulfillment fantasy. He is perhaps the character who Du Bois wishes he could be were he not in his declining years. In the space of the novel, he serves as Mansart's double, carrying on the project of global solidarity that is yet to be completed.

In one regard, Du Bois's fragmentary narrative anticipates the work on fragments taken up by subaltern studies in the writing of critical historiography. In "Chandra's Death," Ranajit Guha takes up the nature of historical evidence through fragments of testimony which he suggests serve as "residuum of a dismembered past" (141). Through the work of the historian, reading such fragments as archives would "dignify them as the textual site for a struggle to reclaim for history an experience buried in a forgotten crevice of our past" (Guha 142). So too is Du Bois's novel a site of textual struggle over

the emancipation of African Americans and others in the worlds of color. Gyanendra Pandey takes up the fragment as well, complicating its potential as an analytical category. For Pandey, fragments are, in part, the bits of society existing in opposition to a mainstream, and their “fragmentary point of view” challenges hegemonic narratives of cultural homogeneity (“In Defense of the Fragment” 28). The literary fragment, too, comes under the auspices of Pandey’s fragment, and he is careful to note that even a dominant account is itself a fragment of history (“In Defense of the Fragment” 50). As a historian, Pandey remains primarily concerned with the problem the fragment poses for historiography and the representation of cultural space, complicating claims to wholeness within historical accounts.

By invoking the fragment as it appears in subaltern studies, I am not equating the fragmentary narratives in *Worlds of Color* or *Small Island*, which I take up next, with history, nor am I reading them as such. Instead, I am appealing to the sense of parts and wholes for narrative invoked by Pandey. Indeed, his fragment is “a disturbance, a rupture” that “cannot be assimilated into the narrative and its claims to wholeness,” and as such, signifies “what *cannot* be written of the whole” (Pandey, *Routine Violence* 66). Recourse to the fragment, he suggests, is a gesture towards interrogating totalities, their contradictions, and the possibilities they both seem to fulfill and suppress” (Pandey, *Routine Violence* 67). Indeed, *Worlds of Color* is constructed through fragments of travel, fleeting yet memorable interactions among people, a weak frame story overshadowed by an amalgamation of small encounters, all of which gesture towards the political possibilities of global solidarity.

Along these lines, I am suggesting, the fragmented textual site of *Worlds of Color*

breeds discomfort precisely because Du Bois challenges much of what scholars have taken for granted for African American civil rights: that it poses a national problem with a national solution. Indeed, as Pandey writes of historians:

We are uncomfortable with the truncated narratives and undisciplined fragments of subaltern history. We seek to appropriate and unify them in fully connected, neatly fashioned historical accounts, without any jagged edges if possible. In the monopolizing authority we claim for these accounts, however, we only perpetuate the standpoint and privilege of those in power. (*Routine Violence* 67)

Accordingly, I am suggesting, black political establishment's disavowal of Du Bois the general disavowal of Du Bois in the 1950s and 1960s stems from the resistance of Du Bois's later work to appropriation for the neat narratives favored by the likes of the NAACP. Indeed, the novel form itself, like global solidarity, is a tenuous connection of associations forged through travel, affective connections, a fragile and piecemeal glimmer of connections.

Ruin and Solidarity Come Home to Roost in Andrea Levy's Small Island

Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) picks up on the theme solidarity in ruin developed by Du Bois in *Worlds of Color*. The novel's settings range from Jamaica to the United States to India to Burma as well as London, where imperial ruin has infiltrated post-World War II England. In this regard, *Small Island* is reminiscent of a small anecdote in *Worlds of Color*, which complicates the notion of the color line. When Mansart visits London's East End, he reflects, "White men and women in a civilized

country and in the twentieth century could suffer its degradation, helplessness, and crime quite as much as any Negroes whom he knew in America....as much as any Negroes and Asians suffered overseas” (Du Bois, *Worlds of Color* 37). A story told in fragments, the novel’s time frame ranges from “Before” and “1948,” the year that the MV *Windrush* Empire arrived in port at Tilbury, England on June 22nd, with nearly 500 passengers from Jamaica. The ship’s arrival marked the first large-scale wave of West Indian immigration to England, fundamentally changing England’s racial landscape. With a narrative focalized through multiple voices – the British Queenie Bligh, Jamaican immigrants Gilbert and Hortense Joseph, and Queenie’s long-lost husband Bernard – the novel provides competing perspectives on postwar England and the post-World War II world more generally. With these narratives, *Small Island* examines the ruin of colonialism coming home to roost in London and the global solidarity that emerges from fragments of narrative.

The motif of ruin in the novel appears in the rubble of postwar London, perhaps the very same “ashes” that Du Bois’s Mansart sees in his deathbed vision. While immigrants Gilbert and Hortense imagine that England will hold great promise for their futures, they are confronted with a city in ruins and decay. Gilbert’s initial perception of England, when he arrives “Before” as one of the West Indian colony troops in World War II, is colored by its ruin. Drawing on the metaphoric construction of a “mother country,” he describes coming to England as having spent his whole life developing fond feelings for his estranged mother, then meeting her only to discover that she is a “filthy tramp” (Levy 116). Indeed, all of the West Indian troops are shocked to see the squalid conditions of wartime London: “The wreckage of this bombed and ruined place stumbled

along streets like a devil's windfall" (Levy 116). Even the inhabitants shock the troops, from the dirty British street urchins to the coarse English spoken by the working class, which is quite unlike the Queen's English they were taught in the West Indies.

When Hortense arrives in London in 1948 to take up residence with Gilbert as a boarder in Queenie's home, her first impression is that the house has gone to ruin. She calls it "shabby" (Levy 12), but this shabbiness belies the house's past grandeur. With pillars and stained glass, the house appears to have once been the kind a wealthy professional would have occupied, but Hortense notes that the windows are broken and boarded up and attributes the house's decay to "Mr. Hitler's bombs" (Levy 10). While the house is one of the many casualties of the Blitz, the house's lost grandeur gestures towards the larger motif of ruin in the novel: the lost grandeur of the British Empire. Imperial debris does not simply characterize the colonies but the metropole as well. Indeed, the room that Gilbert and Hortense rent is befouled by the same shabbiness that marks the outside of the house: "Dark brown walls. A broken chair that rested one uneven leg on the Holy Bible. A window with a torn curtain... a sink the corner, a rusty tap... two chairs – one with its back broken" (Levy 16-7). Hortense asks Gilbert in frustration, "Just this? You bring me all this way for this?" (Levy 17). Hortense's illusions of grandeur and her fantasy of life in the metropole are shattered by the house and her accommodations. Gilbert's response, filled with exasperation, attempts to enlighten Hortense on the conditions of post-war England: "There has been a war. Houses bombed. I know plenty people live worse than this.... Everyone live like this" (Levy 17). "Is this the way the English live?" becomes a common refrain for Hortense throughout the novel, and she is not even satisfied with his response that "Many English

live worse than this” (Levy 18). Indeed, the novel shows this to be true, even in the tony neighborhood of Earls Court, where Queenie’s house is located.

Hortense’s unsatisfactory introduction to London is symbolized by the white-glove test she administers to the room’s surface. Her white glove comes away blackened, symbolizing her disenchantment. The country she imagines would have been infinitely more elegant and refined than her native Jamaica is sullied by the dirt and ruin of imperial debris. The accommodations stand in stark contrast to Hortense’s vision of life in England, which suggests Hortense’s heavy investment in colonial mimicry:

A dining-table in a dining room set with four chairs. A starched tablecloth embroidered with bows. Armchairs in the sitting room placed around a small wood fire. The house is modest – nothing fancy, no show – the kitchen is small but with everything I need to prepare meals. We eat rice and peas on Sunday with chicken and corn, but in my English kitchen roast meat with two vegetables and even fish and chips bubble on the stove. My husband fixes the window that sticks and the creaky board on the veranda. I sip hot tea by an open window and look on my neighbors in the adjacent and opposite dwelling. I walk to the shop where I am greeted with manners, “Good day,” politeness, “A fine day today,” and refinement, “I trust you are well?” A red bus, a cold morning and daffodils blooming with all the colours of the rainbow. (Levy 83)

In England, Hortense imagines she will be able to rise above the people she knows in Jamaica, a sentiment that renders her, at times, an unlikeable character. But Hortense arouses sympathy when faced with the London she comes to know, a city that completely

shatters her dreams of a better life outside of the colonies. The debris the characters encounter is literally the debris of war, but the war itself stands in for broader global conflict resulting from clashes of empire.

Indeed, the Londoners themselves are disappointing to Hortense and other immigrants. Whereas Hortense once imagined the conversations she would have with the British people she meets, she is dismayed to learn that they appear to not understand a word she says. Her own spoken English reflects a grandeur she fails to find in London, with phrases like, “This is perchance where he is aboding?” (Levy 11). Even Queenie, one of the most open-minded of the British characters in the novel, has difficulty with Hortense’s English. Hortense’s language poses a strong contrast to the English spoken by London’s working class as well. At school in Jamaica, her English skills had been lauded, but she cannot make herself understandable to a London taxi driver. He finally asks her to write down her destination’s address and later speaks to her in slow, exaggerated tones. Ironically, this makes Hortense wonder, “Perhaps white men who worked were made to work because they were fools” (Levy 14). The West Indian troops are similarly surprised by the apparent ignorance of British people who seemed to not know where Jamaica is, guessing Africa. The disparity of knowledge shocks them, as their own colonial education has given them extensive knowledge of British history.

British ignorance portends an alternative notion of imperial ruin in the novel. Queenie’s neighbors object strenuously to her immigrant boarders, seeing them as the embodiment of imperial ruin. When Queenie’s neighbor Mr. Todd helps her clean up the house after the Blitz – boarding up the windows, repairing electrical wires, and shooing away the pigeons – he tells her, “Stop it deteriorating any further, Mrs. Bligh” (Levy 95).

Coupled with his known disgust for Queenie's black boarders, his words suggest that the very presence of blacks in Queenie's home, the neighborhood, and the entire city and country is a deteriorating influence. Another neighbor echoes this sentiment, telling Queenie that her boarders make her veteran husband feel like "this country no longer feels like his own" (Levy 98). To some degree, both neighbors are right: imperial ruin has infiltrated England. Except, this ruin has not arrived because of black immigrants; rather, it results from British imperialism itself.

By demonstrating that imperial debris exists in London, *Small Island* destabilizes binaries of center and periphery. Representing England's lost grandeur – or, perhaps, a fantasy of grandeur that never quite existed – the novel suggests that England's very investment in the colonial project has brought decay home. Therefore, the novel seems to engage in a project Pandey would term "writing in the margins" because, as he suggests, "Writing *from* the margins becomes a possibility...only when the margins can lay claim to the (or *a*) center (*Routine Violence* 67). By confounding the immigrant characters' expectations of London, Levy challenges the binary of colony and metropole through the frame of ruin. Indeed, the ruin permeates throughout the imperial project, across geographies and small islands.

Moreover, the British characters' gazes are largely imperial and piecemeal. They see the world that is not-England in ruins and fragments, bits and pieces of people and cultures assimilated into the totality of the British Empire but, at the same time, very far removed from England itself. This piecemeal gaze is first introduced at the outset, as the novel recounts Queenie's trip to a British Empire Exhibition as a young girl in the aftermath of World War I. "I went to Africa when it came to Wembley," she tells her

teacher, who informs her this is impossible because “Africa was a country” (Levy 1). The exhibition, in the words of England’s king, displays “the whole Empire in little” (Levy 2). The absurdity of this exhibition follows a trend of world exhibitions, which seemed to promise a world in miniature, pieces of world experience assembled for consumption of the masses, often with “natives” on display. The exhibition represents colonies in essentialist fashion – the sheep of New Zealand, the fabrics of India, and the tea of Ceylon – and spectators could choose which colonies they visited. Indeed, the young Queenie perceives the exhibition reveals “practically the whole world there to be looked at” (Levy 3). The act of spectatorship provided by the exhibition allows visitors to extend an imperial gaze over the empire in miniature – a fact emphasized by a farmhand, who surveys the scene and remarks, “Makes you proud” (Levy 3).

With pieces of the colonies on view in London, the exhibition recalls Walter Benjamin’s observations about the arcades in 19th century France, “crammed with the relics of civilizations and religions, deities, royalties, masterpieces of art, the products of debauchery, reason and unreason – to a mirror of many facets, each one representing a whole world” (*Arcades Project* 487). The empire appears in all its glory as a source of new goods, each of which serves as a curio and a synecdoche of whole cultures. These items represent trash and treasure, the former suggesting the longstanding appearance of empire’s debris in the metropole. Therefore, the decay of empire appears in the metropole in the guise of the spoils of colonialism.

Young Queenie’s attitude towards the exhibition sets her apart from spectators around her, foreshadowing her later openness to racial difference as an adult and her role as an agent of solidarity in the novel. Unlike her family members, Queenie wants to see

as many countries as she can, displaying an openness and curiosity that marks her as different. Although Queenie generally finds the displays – and the individuals in them – uninteresting, an African man piques her interest. Those with her notice her fascination with the man, and reject his humanity, urging her to kiss him as a joke. Confounding them all, he offers Queenie his hand and tells her, in perfect English, “Perhaps we could shake hands instead?” (Levy 6). And, in fact, Queenie shakes his hand, amid the merciless mocking of the others in the group. Her encounter with the African man – who very well could have been British, since the text is unclear about that fact – sets Queenie apart from the rest of her group, and foreshadows a willingness to cross racial divides that, as an adult, sets Queenie apart from the other white British people around her. The encounter is not unencumbered by the racist rhetoric of her time – indeed, her description of the African man’s “wooly hair” and “nostrils as big as train tunnels” (Levy 6) attest to the fact that she is very much a product of George V’s England – but she displays an openness to difference that shapes the events of her adult life and predisposes her towards solidarity.

The double entendre “small island” suggests the doubling of England and Jamaica and colony and metropole incipient in the characters’ disappointment. By doubling the two islands, Levy reinforces the idea that the metropole lives with the repercussions of colonial formations and that imperial ruin in the metropole should be an expected consequence. Gilbert takes up the epistemology of “small islanders” when describing his confusion about the inequalities of African American life and Caribbean black military volunteers in Virginia. Despite the relatively small size of Jamaica, Gilbert stipulates that Jamaicans aren’t “small islanders,” rather “sophisticated men of the world” (Levy 110).

Conversely, the small islanders from elsewhere in the Caribbean are hemmed in by a “universe [that] only runs a few miles in either direction before it falls into the sea” (Levy 110). Returning to Jamaica after the war, Gilbert quickly comes to the conclusion that Jamaicans are small islanders too. Once he has seen a larger world – the United States and Britain – Jamaica seems to hold little for him. Returning to Jamaica, Gilbert possess a more global view of the world, thinking of a brother in Chicago, tempestuous winds hurrying to Cuba, and local plants with Panama disease. England proves itself to be a small island as well, for the British largely appear narrow and insular, incapable of reimagining the boundaries of the nation and its racial demographics. As such, England’s smallness contradicts the very expansiveness of the British Empire.

Another form of doubling – the doubling of characters – gestures towards the solidarity that can be formed out of ruin in the novel. The pairing of Gilbert and Jamaican Michael Roberts pushes the novel’s geography, which is mostly of Jamaica and England, into the larger world. Both Hortense and Queenie pine after Michael, who is Hortense’s cousin and was briefly Queenie’s lover as an RAF officer in London. Indeed, Hortense mistakes Gilbert for Michael when she first meets him in Jamaica, and Queenie takes Gilbert in because he reminds her of Michael as well. Michael serves as a foil for Gilbert, who is rough where Michael is smooth and who is confined to the small islands of Jamaica and England, whereas Michael moves to Toronto, quite the opposite of the small islands, with “open skies” and “endless vistas” (Levy 410) – a broader horizon, literally and figuratively. Indeed, when Queenie discovers she is pregnant with Michael’s baby – a child conceived in the imperial ruin of postwar England – she imagines going to Canada, not to find Michael but because it holds the promise of being a place where a

white woman could get by with a black baby. The baby itself becomes a central figure in the Gilbert/Michael pairing, for Queenie's husband Bernard remains convinced that the child is Gilbert's. Bernard tells Gilbert, "It's everything to do with you. You and your kind" (Levy 403), relegating blame to the mere presence of blacks in London, regardless of the baby's paternity. Gilbert is frustrated because it seems everyone is looking to him: "Am I the only black man in this world?" (Levy 404). Gilbert's lament is telling because he stands in as a representation of all black men in Britain for Bernard.

Queenie and Hortense are doubles in the novel as well, representing the possibilities for solidarity across racial lines. The similarities between them do not reflect the doubling of colonial mimicry, rather possibilities of affective connections forged through loci of identification. Indeed, their shared love for the absent Michael is one locus of similarity. Their duality is reinforced in the fate of Queenie's child. Queenie initially imagines that England has changed enough that a single mother with a biracial child would be a bit unusual but still acceptable. This possibility is expressed in terms of geography: "Now it [the war] was over; the whole lot was coming back down to land. But it was all settling in different places" (Levy 412). Although Queenie seems to be referring to the general revision of British life resulting from World War II, her comment befits the changing racial landscape of England from 1948 onwards.

Indeed, when the doctor visits Queenie and the new baby, asking after her husband, Bernard replies that it is he, and the doctor mutters "something he thought comforting about the war" (Levy 421). Bernard reflects, "Why not? The War. It had been over for three years. But, yes, maybe the threads of that fraying cloth were still in a tangle" (Levy 421). It seems that the war has birthed a complicated situation of its own: what to

do with colony troops who engaged in battle, how to hold onto colonial holdings when Germany had been forced to give up its own at the end of the last world war, how to keep hold of India – a firsthand experience of Bernard’s in the army– when it has slipped out of the Empire’s grasp.

Although Queenie is the baby’s biological mother, she asks Hortense to take her son and raise him as her own. Hortense and Gilbert are themselves among the first of the Windrush generation, but Queenie’s son is the literal generation of England’s changing racial landscape. The symbolism of the baby is central to the novel because Bernard and Queenie were never able to conceive after years of trying, but Queenie and Michael conceived within a three-night span. The future, then, it seems is not in Britain’s old racial landscape, but a new one to come. Thus, both Queenie and Hortense become mothers of this new version of England emerging from the ruins of empire. Global solidarity in *Small Island*, like *Worlds of Color*, entails flashes of sympathy and potential for affective connections forged over difference.

Although I am not suggesting that the baby is a metaphor for England, Queenie’s decision to give up the baby seems to reflect her openness to the changes coming to England’s racial and cultural map. At the same time, it suggests a sense of closure and boundedness, the limits of racial identification and white, British middle-class respectability. Through the baby, we see Queenie’s trust that Hortense and Gilbert will raise the baby better than she and Bernard can – that the future is essentially entrusted to Jamaican immigrants rather than the native British. Bernard wrestles with his own attitudes towards England’s racial landscape, insisting that he and Queenie raise the baby themselves, though his motive is that he does not trust Hortense and Gilbert with the baby.

Nonetheless, he reveals the depth of his racism when he asks Gilbert why Queenie would entrust “that poor little half-caste child” (Levy 432) to Jamaicans. Gilbert responds by telling Bernard that his attitude is preposterous:

We both just finish fighting a war – a bloody war – for the better world we wan’ see... You and me, fighting for empire, fighting for peace. But still, after all that we suffer together, you wan’ tell me I am worthless and you are not. Am I to be the servant and you are the master for all time?” (Levy 444)

The baby’s birth, therefore, becomes the locus of anxieties for a world in imperial ruin and on the brink of confronting a new future. Indeed, Bernard, whose last name “Bligh” recalls “Dear Old Blighty,” a slang term for England, struggles to reconcile the England he sees changing around him, desperately trying to hold on to the past. Conversely, Queenie, whose last name is also “Bligh,” represents England moving forward to a new racial future, one built on trust and solidarity. Moreover, the term “Blighty” originates in the Hindi word for “foreign” (Sedgwick 23) and thus is itself a ruin from the colonies at home in England. However, the baby will be raised with the last name “Joseph,” carrying on Gilbert and Hortense’s name and Jamaican heritage in the changing nation space of England.

The outcome for the emergent solidarity in the novel is left open ended, much in the same way as in *Worlds of Color*. Gilbert and Hortense move to a new home to raise their child, a home that Hortense surprisingly finds suitable. Gilbert’s speech to Bernard about the war has led Hortense to recognize that her husband is a noble man, not a fool. For, Gilbert has unveiled one of the ironies of war. While war may be a putative site of

solidarity for subjects of the British Empire, comradeship that crosses racial lines is dubious. Thus, war could never serve as a locus of solidarity. The hope for solidarity in the novel, however, lies in the formation of affective connections, such as the one between Gilbert, Hortense, Queenie, and even Bernard by their shared investment in the fate of Queenie's baby.

What I have sketched out in my discussions of *Worlds of Color* and *Small Island*, however provisionally, is the novels' exploration of the productive possibilities of imperial debris. The ruins of empire reflect both the ruined bodies and landscapes of colonialism, challenging structures of dominance from imperial formations that persist across temporality. Indeed, these structures persist not only across temporality but also geography. Because ruin as a site of analysis provides a way to think across temporality and geography, I am suggesting that it also gestures towards connections between people – in this case, oppressed people of the world – who could be the response to imperial domination on a global scale.

In reading Du Bois as a postcolonial progenitor, I am proposing that as early as the late 1950s, when he writes *Worlds of Color*, Du Bois identifies the debris of the colonial world and examines the possibility of a response to it. In dialectical fashion, for Du Bois, the ruins of empire serve as the antithesis to the system of imperialism that has brought the world to crisis. Therefore, imperial debris gives rise to global solidarity, the union of oppressed people across race and nation that issues powerful threat to imperialism. Andrea Levy picks up this thread to imagine how the ruins of empire are not simply located in the colonies but in the metropole as well. In this way, the distinctions between center and periphery break down as immigrants from the colonies arrive in

London, challenging claims to cultural or racial purity. As such, possibilities for solidarity emerge at the confluence of ruin, migration, and empire, as Queenie's baby becomes an emblem of the solidarity that emerges.

Conclusion: Towards Oceanic Readings

Throughout his life, W.E.B. Du Bois proved himself to be a staunch advocate for the rights of both African Americans and oppressed people of color around the world. The body of his writings demonstrates a commitment to anti-imperialist thought, class critique, and an ever-expanding notion of the color line in all its implications on a global scale. As I have been demonstrating throughout this study, Du Bois presciently anticipated the task that postcolonial scholars have taken up during the past 25 years, and he may aptly be read as a progenitor for postcolonial studies. Yet, his work also gestures towards liberatory reading practices that allow us to better understand the relationship between postcolonial studies and African American studies.

Our contemporary models for reading across boundaries, borders, and oceans are often derived from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1995), a staggering approach to oceanic connections within the African diaspora. Gilroy follows in a tradition of widening spatial analyses, foregrounded by Edward Soja, whose 1989 book *Post Modern Geographies* makes the case for revisiting space in critical theory. Soja announces his intention to "tamper with the familiar modalities of time, to shake up the normal flow of the linear text to allow other, more 'lateral' connections to be made" (1). Without such an approach, emphasis on linearity breeds historical thinking, foregrounding temporal logic over spatial logic (Soja 1). Therefore, Soja argues, space is a critical analytical category for Marxist analysis because it reveals how deeply geography has been implicated in the rise of both capitalism and imperialism (Soja 159). Indeed, Gilroy focuses on the

relationship between capitalism and the rise of modernity through the chronotype of the slave ship, which provides continuity for the African Diaspora across space and time.

Yet, as the shape of our contemporary world suggests, ongoing crossings by sea and by air have restructured global population distribution. As this has happened, foundational concepts like the “nation,” “race,” and “ethnicity” have been called into question. These crossings are themselves fraught with histories of inequality and oppression, whether the forced migrations of slavery or indentured servitude, imperiled movements of refugees, or migrant workers striving to eke out a precarious existence away from home. Understanding and theorizing these conditions and evaluating their impact on social experience and on the possibilities for solidarity at our present moment requires a broader frame of analysis: an oceanic reading.

By virtue of his dedication to the global connections among people of color around the world and oppressed subjects of capital, Du Bois foregrounded the significance of an oceanic approach through his embrace of the interconnectedness of human populations. For oceanographers, the notion of a “World Ocean” is central to understanding the earth. In spite of nomenclature that identifies the Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, and Southern Oceans by regional geography, each flows into the others, part of the same body of water that covers approximately 71% of the globe. The names of each provide divisions of convenience, yet these oceans are open and fluid, flowing into each other. Together, they constitute a natural system, as well as a model of interaction and exchange; they embody interconnectedness through their fluidity.²²

²² See William A. Anikouchine and Richard W. Sternberg’s *The World Ocean* (1981).

Given this model of oceanic exchange, what better a metaphor for global migrations than the churning oceans flowing into one another? Indeed, globalization itself is uniquely tied to the act of humans crossing oceans, engaging in movement that sets into motion new encounters. The relationship between what Arjun Appadurai terms “global cultural flows” (296) and the nascent moments of trans-oceanic travel suggests we might be wise to think “oceanically” about issues of capitalism, imperialism, and race that transcend national borders.

The oceanic stands to offer a mode of analysis that cosmopolitanism has yet to accomplish. For example, Martha Nussbaum’s Kantian universalist cosmopolitanism imagines a world comprised of humans of equal value and entails “allegiance...to the worldwide community of human beings” (4). However, Nussbaum’s idea is abstract and verges on neo-imperialism because it does not explicitly recognize the inherent privileges of cosmopolitanism. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “rooted cosmopolitanism” (*Cosmopolitanism* 89) acknowledges loci of human identification, such as nation-states, but his formulation implies that one can only be a citizen of the world insofar as one is a citizen of some other place, both spatially and historically. Given the real histories of dislocation and exclusion, Appiah’s model has its limitations. Homi Bhabha offers another perspective: “vernacular cosmopolitanism.” Ostensibly focusing on margins and peripheries, Bhabha develops vernacular cosmopolitanism from Fanon’s investment in anti-colonial revolutionary struggle on local and global scales (“Democracy De-realized” 42). The value of Bhabha’s vernacular cosmopolitanism lies in his acknowledgment that some have no choice but to be a citizen of the world, for want of a home, though his formulation does not foreground materialist realities enough. Indeed, in its very recourse

to “citizenship” as a category, cosmopolitanism has limitations for conceiving of human connections across geographies.

By its very nature, the ocean provides a fitting metaphor for understanding how people, ideas, theories, and cultural travel. Indeed, they move like the oceans of the world: seemingly separate entities that nonetheless constitute a whole. On a literal level, migrants and ideas must cross oceans as they circumnavigate the globe. In turn, we might revisit disciplinary spatiality through an oceanic frame – bringing together diverse fields like postcolonial studies, African American studies, Latin American studies, and so forth – to better understand shared oppressions of the Global South, the racialization of these oppressions, and the possibilities for resistance afforded by an oceanic frame.

To embrace an oceanic perspective is not to repudiate the work that has taken place within the sundered fields among which I am calling for dialogue. Indeed, Gilroy has argued for utopian vision through a pragmatic planetary humanism that foregrounds the fundamental equality of human beings by virtue of their status as humans (*Against Race* 2). Yet, in embracing utopian visions, we must attend to the inequalities that have structured political, economic, and social life through racist discourse. Additionally, Gayatri Spivak has insisted on the need for “transnational literacy,” a basis for global movements towards “ecological, environmental, and reproductive justice” (391). For Spivak, “transnational literacy” implies the capacity for understanding difference in spite of categories that presuppose a kind of homogeneity. Building on the work of Gilroy and Spivak, among others, we are well equipped to develop an oceanic model of analysis. In doing so, we may be better positioned to understand global processes, including the relationship between the color line and class and the creation of color by capital.

Indeed, these modes of analysis are the true gifts we have received from Du Bois, whose provocative writings position him among the forerunners of both postcolonial and African American studies. Through his writing, Du Bois offers a rich look at what he terms the “far-off ideal of a world of justice to people yellow, black, and brown” (*Dark Princess* 267). To fully appreciate Du Bois’s legacies, however, we must take up the challenges of global analysis, bringing together postcolonial and African American studies to address questions of race, class, and imperialism beyond the color line.

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