The *Real* Negro

The Question of Authenticity in Twentieth-Century African American Literature

Shelly Eversley

LITERARY CRITICISM AND CULTURAL THEORY

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William E.Cain
Professor of English
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For Jaelin
(and Jimmy and Steve—nerds *are* cool)

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Introduction
The *Real* Negro

HERE IS THE PARADOX: LANGUAGE IS A SOCIAL EXCHANGE, IT DEPENDS ON a give and take between human beings. I can articulate how this paradox works through Frantz Fanon's description of the "Negro and Language" in which he argues that to grasp the morphology or syntax of any language "means above all to assume a culture," and that a person "who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language." If, in the context of this present study, the African American creative intellectual writes, she theoretically has possession of the world she inhabits, the world that her language implies. As Fanon argues, "[m]astery of language affords remarkable power."[1] That power would grant the writer the authority to name, to give meaning to things and ideas within her world. Her mastery of language—her art—would position her as an architect of the social world she inhabits; she would become the designer of, among other things, her position in that world since, after all, it is her language that implies that world. Her possession of language would position her as a major player in the making of the culture in which all who speak her language participate. But, before she can claim the power her mastery of language affords, the social world her language implies would have to acknowledge that she has possession. Thus the paradox: If no one acknowledges her art as her mastery of language, she will not possess the world she inhabits, the world that her language implies. She will be dispossessed.

Racial authenticity makes such a dispossession possible. Its imposition on black writers denies them their art, their claim of the mastery of language. Instead, it reveals a "matrix of power" that presumes the materiality of color and the constructedness of race as social opposites.[2] As categories of identity, "black" and "white" are untenable in American culture, but as they organize meaning in the world, language makes them discernable. In other words, in as much as language implies the epistemological organization of the social world, it also articulates a way of seeing the distinctions that make individuation intelligible. Any articulation of identity as "race" requires some version of authenticity since, without authenticity, "race" would not matter. "Race" would not be "real." Authenticity implies value; aesthetically it distinguishes the imitation from the actual, and socially, it offers the means to see and know human particularity. It supports the binarisms on which the social function of

language depends since it sanctions the line that distinguishes "us" from "them." This oppositional logic precedes and supercedes the emergence of "race" constructed as social opposites; however, authenticity renders its artificiality and its abstraction tangible in a way that suggests binaristic identities as always having been there. Authenticity's trick presents racial abstraction as concrete.

As Toni Morrison has explained, the preoccupation with discerning the salience of blackness exists throughout a broad range of American discourses.[3] Indeed, "race" has been an important metaphor in definitive places in American literature and in the production of an American national character. This American national character and identity is axiomatically conceived as a white one. In the nineteenth century, Emancipation and then Reconstruction had left the United States struggling to redefine itself; at this moment, former slaves were not only considered human, but they could also be elected to Congress. A transformed economy reorganized the accumulation of wealth and status in a manner that promised social mobility to more than a privileged few. Since "white" people could no longer distinguish themselves as slaveholders, as descendants of the first colonial families, or as "persons" exclusively protected by the Constitution, they were compelled to invent alternative new standards to protect the discrete category in which they imagined themselves. Their distinction became more than a question of color so that the significance of their difference would require other, ontological considerations. And, Jim Crow—a strategy of policing identity in terms of a discrete set of rules—would bring whiteness into focus by contrasting it against its antithesis, blackness. These new rules would establish racial difference as definite and "real" so that the question of the color-line—the problem of knowing who and what is authentically "black"—emerges at this crucial moment. And, as W.E.B.Du Bois has famously written, "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,"[4] the problem of "race," particularly, the issue of discerning the difference between "white" and "black," became an urgent demand by whites seeking self-definition after slavery. Most importantly, the modern emergence of interest in racial authenticity transforms the issue of what race a person or author belongs into a question of what it takes to belong to that race.

Authenticity, as a means of making race "real," promises benefits to two sets of people. For whites, it substantiates an otherwise tenuous identity; and, for blacks, it offers a double-edged opportunity for social recognition and cultural capital. My project begins with the question of what constitutes racial difference and concerns itself with the answers that supply the demand to know the "truth." And, although I argue the demand for the "real" Negro—even in the twentieth century—originates with whites, my chief critical concern lies with the desire for the racially "real" that slowly emerges from blacks. In what is understood as African American literature, the question of authenticity reaches as far back as its beginnings. Writings by Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Wilson and others were prefaced with verifications of their race and their status as former slaves. In each instance, these prefaces secured a special, racialized reading of

their work; and, despite content or narrative style, their essays, poems, and novels became representatively "Negro." In the twentieth century, social discernment increasingly became an issue of race, of black and white identity, rather than of servitude. African American authors confronted the representational interest in depicting the meaning and the significance of difference by producing a literature that would ultimately reinforce Jim Crow.

In the first half of the twentieth century black people were, at least in principle, easy to recognize. The Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) helped formally to organize a notion of race as visible and public; separate railroad cars as well as other distinctions in public space would define the color-line in terms all could see and know. In literature, the logic of segregation could also manifest itself in seemingly raceless words. First dialect, and then cultural performance marked by dialect, would make legible the difference between being ontologically "black" or "white." At this moment, black writing, like "real" black people, could be identified on sight. Then, the integrationist moment of the mid-century as articulated in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) helped to reorganize the idea of race. Desegregation meant that public space could no longer delineate racial difference, and blackness ceased to be understood predominantly as visual and cultural, and instead it was perceived as internal and psychological. The outward signs of a "Negro" identity became less crucial, and as the subtle characteristics of a racial ideal assumed prominence, psychology and narrative interiority helped to define black writing and black identity. My point in this characterization of American racial perceptions in the twentieth century is not to insist that black and white are the only categories in which race is imagined. And I am not arguing that dialect and culture cease to be important factors in the understanding of an African American writing after 1954, or that narrative interiority has no place in the conception of a distinctly black literature in the first half of the century. Rather, my objective is to historicize the evolving and prevailing characterizations of the racially "real" that have influenced the twentieth century American literary history of difference.

The question of authenticity, however, is not purely racial. It draws attention to issues concerning value, experience, and language that also inform the logic concerning the demand for the racially "real." Art historians, cultural critics, and social theorists employ notions of "the real" to conceptualize value in a variety of contexts. In art criticism and history for example, an "authentic" painting holds a particular value because it is an object produced by the person who claims to have made it. In this context, authenticity delineates the differ ence between the "real" and the "imitation." More generally, as in "non-racialized" social theory, the authentic acts as a differentiating mechanism. It distinguishes individual authority from a mass collectivity by making questions of identity and existence tangible. Theodor Adorno's "jargon of authenticity" for instance, suggests that individual subjectivity emerges as a response to the alienation linked to the political-economic framework of modern society. He identifies a set of terms that promise institutional power to the individual, subaltern voice.

His discursive authenticity "supplies men with patterns for being human" by offering a "mythology of being" that seeks to express autonomous individual experience independent of historical determination.[5] Like Adorno, but less critically, Lionel Trilling argues that authenticity offers humanity to the individual. Taking up the question through what he calls the "sentiment of being," he argues authenticity signals a preoccupation with establishing "true" self-definition for the artist and his art-object.[6] For Trilling, personal authenticity illustrates an individual's distinction from other people. He understands its authorial representation as instruction: it offers a moral lesson concerning the difference between authentic and inauthentic existence, and it draws attention to the centrality of modern efforts of individuation. But, in the context of race, this kind of social differentiation identifies and individuates a group rather than a person.[7]

In his book *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940,* Miles Orvell describes what he calls a "culture of authenticity" that emerges in the United States at the turn of the century. He perceptively argues that a tension between imitation and authenticity became a primary category in American civilization that helped to establish a modernist aesthetic. Imagined as a move to restore a lost sense of "the real thing," the culture of authenticity—as part of a consumerist culture—seeks to move beyond the verisimilitude of realism and produce an art that is itself an actual thing. He describes the emerging category as a response to an increasingly machine-made world in which the twentieth century fear was that the machine's powers of fabrication could destroy traditional values, make obsolete the artist and the designer, and transform raw materials into simulacra of foreign cultures rather than create an indigenous form of American expression. As modernist, the aesthetic of "making artwork real and making it new meant overhauling the language of description… it meant restoring what was thought to have been taken away—contact with reality."[8] *The Real Negro* explores the ways in which literary investments in the notion of authenticity makes an abstraction such as racial identity legible. The concept of an African American literary tradition is understood to produce an account of black racial experience that is somehow "true." The tradition participates in what Orvell calls a "culture of authenticity" in so far as it promises not verisimilitude but is itself understood as the race which produced it. In the custom of Jim Crow, "black" writing by African Americans functions to make racial difference visible; it pursues a certain modernism not in its ability to "rebuild ruined words" (242), but, rather in its seeming intimacy with building the reality of race. It also suggests that within the modernist context, the only significant contribution from African Americans was their blackness—an identity and a form indigenous to the United States.

Many African American critics have implicitly and explicitly confirmed the idea of racial authenticity as a measure of black literary and cultural achievement. In his discussion of music and Afro-American literature, Houston A. Baker, Jr., for example, describes the blues as a vernacular tradition that

distinguishes a "black" tradition from a "white" idea of America. It demonstrates "in Afro-America genuine reflections of the emotional referents and experiential categories of black life."[9] He claims, "The material conditions of slavery in the United States and rhythms of Afro-American blues combined and emerged… as an ancestral matrix that has produced a forceful and indigenous American creativity" (2). And, although, Baker's argument claims a poststructuralist justification for racial authenticity, his position is not new. Almost seventy years earlier, Langston Hughes writes, "we have an honest American Negro literature already with us," and noting a discrete originality, he adds, "the Negro artist can give his racial individuality, his heritage of rhythms, warmth, and his incongruous humor."[10] And, more recently, Robert Bone explains, "Afro-American writing is a variation on a theme. The theme is American; the variation black,"[11] a version of the well-documented history of black difference in American literature.

Despite the preponderance of criticism supporting a literal and literary racial distinction, some question the validity of such divisions in American literature. In his 1926 essay, "The Negro-Art Hokum," George S.Schuyler writes "aside from his color…your American Negro is just plain American. Negroes and whites from the same localities in this country talk, think, and act just about the same."[12] His words defy racial recognition in language and literature and demand a reconsideration of the effects of authenticity. Similarly, in his critique of its imposition on writing by black people, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes, "Race has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference,"[13] and he calls attention to the "curious dialectic between formal language use and the inscription of metaphorical racial differences" (6) to describe how authenticity's differentiating mechanisms inform reading practices.

In another essay, "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition," Gates outlines the position, "Literacy—the literacy of formal writing—was both a technology and commodity,"[14] in an effort to historicize the political imperative associated with early efforts in what has become known as an African American literature. At a moment when a black person's status as a slave or as a descendant of slaves threatened the recognition of her freedom and her humanity, writing became the means by which a black person could "prove" her personhood and perhaps even "trade" her written words for her freedom. Gates's conception of writing as a technology and as a commodity informs my notion of twentieth century racial authenticity, particularly as it demonstrates the enormous implications associat ed with a "Negro literature." And, although in the twentieth century, a person's race, more than her relation to servitude, helped to define her social standing, "black" writing remained an important commodity.

According to Karl Marx, a "commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another."[15] His definition helps to organize ways of reading notions of "the real Negro" precisely because as a thing produced, racial authenticity participates in an exchange system. It has a value; and, as Marx describes it, relations within an exchange determine its value. As part of the process that makes "race" real, black

authenticity depends on the larger racial marketplace. Orvell's explanation of authenticity is useful,

> [it] begins in any society when the possibility of fraud arises, and that fraud is possible whenever transactions—whether social, political, commercial, or aesthetic—routinely occur, especially when the society becomes so large that one usually deals with strangers (xvii).

In the twentieth century United States, black people—now "human"—could participate in human interaction. Their status as Americans, at least theoretically, secured their place in the national transactions previously limited to whites. In this way, both blacks and whites found themselves "dealing with strangers," thus necessitating the requirement for racial authenticity as a way of protecting interests and establishing social credibility. Authenticity offered a means to generate and perpetuate a racial marketplace; black and white "strangers" could exchange their "originality" within social, political, and aesthetic transactions.

The concept of black authenticity is important in the configuration of racial identity that extends well beyond a clear articulation of what it means to be "truly" black. And, whereas the authentic in art symmetrically distinguishes the "real" art from its "imitation," black authenticity enacts a more complex relation. In a racialized configuration, the crucial difference is not between the "real" black and its "imitation"; but, between the "real" black and the "imitation" white. In other words, the "fake" black is trying to be "white." "The *real* Negro" separates the black from the white by policing the terms of blackness. The articulation of black authenticity functions to defend a whiteness that is either securely embodied by whites or, ineffectively and inappropriately imitated by blacks. Thus any "imitation" of the racially authentic is not black and, more importantly, is never successfully white because the value of black authenticity lies in its ability to expose fraud—a fraud that is not an imitation of itself, but rather an imitation of the thing it is designed to protect: pure whiteness.

In "Black Man, Blackface: The Case of Paul Laurence Dunbar," I discuss Dunbar's use of negro dialect in relation to the rise of blackface minstrelsy and the landmark Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* to demonstrate the force and the direction in which the demand for "the real Negro" inaugurates racial discourse and racialized reading at the turn of the twentieth century. In sanctioning separate accommodations for black and white railroad passengers, the Supreme Court not only established the terms of racial segregation in the first half of the century, it also required whites to unmistakably apprehend blackness and black people on sight. If racial segregation was to achieve its purpose, "imitation whites" like Homer Plessy could no longer blur racial distinction. As Negroes, they had to live the "truth" of their racial existence, and white people were challenged with the responsibility of recognizing that "truth." At the same time, black men on the blackface minstrel stage achieved credibility over whites because their racial status made their performances "real." I offer a reading of

Dunbar's professional success and his critical reception within this context in order to show the ways in which authenticity produces race in language and in life. Written by a black man descended from slaves, Dunbar's "negro" dialect poems met the new criteria for racial authenticity in ways the work of his white predecessors could not. And, although his negro dialect poems were only a minor part of his *oeuvre,* critics like William Dean Howells privileged Dunbar's "negro" dialect writings because they satisfied a larger, more urgent, demand to see and know the "truth" about black life.

The chapter that follows, "Racial Hieroglyphics: Zora Neale Hurston and the Rise of the New Negro," develops the discussion of dialect, particularly its relationship to "the folk," as an important sign of black authenticity during the Harlem Renaissance. In her representation of "the Negro farthest down," she creates for herself a privileged space as interpreter of what she promotes as an impenetrable black reality and a recognizable "Negro" location, language, and culture. In her essays "The Characteristics of Negro Expression" and "Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals," both published in 1934, she deploys the terms of a racial authenticity through a particular literary form, the anthology, to illustrate what she perceives as the defining features of a racial group. Much of her writing, including "The Eatonville Anthology" (1926) and *Mules and Men* (1935) presents the folk as a community and a class that, while it names a racial particularity, also engages a larger, modernist vision of folkways as a new art. Hurston had written Langston Hughes, "Did I tell you about the new, *real* Negro theater I plan," and she articulated her commitment to drama as a crucially performative, anthological, and representative aspect of her race. In a reading of her plays *Color Struck* (1926) and *Mulebone* (1931), her collaboration with Hughes, I argue Hurston's commitment to a vernacular cultural performance continues an earlier logic of racial segregation as visible, public, and natural.

Moving into the second half of the century, ""Unspoken Words are Stronger": Narrative Interiority and Racial Visibility in Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha,*" frames the final half of this study. In the earlier part of the century, culture marked by speech acts was the privileged site of racial authenticity, but after litigation for *Brown v. Board of Education,* "real" blackness was relocated from the domain of public space and culture into the private space of indi vidual psychology. Brooks's novel demonstrates what I call a definitional transformation of "the *real* Negro." *Maud Martha* (1953) develops questions of experience in a manner that draws together concerns of the individual, as articulated by critics such as Trilling and Adorno, and the hitherto quite different concerns of "the race." Where earlier versions of black authenticity had focused on culture and group identity, Brooks produces a racial "truth" through the depiction of an individual and complex interiority. This new version of Negro identity emerges within the context of the *Brown* decision that, despite its claims for integration, promotes racial distinction by arguing that the critical difference between black and white is psychological. The relation between *Maud Martha* and *Brown v. Board* is more than a coincidence; both texts reveal a political

unconscious by engaging the evolving conceptions of race that were circulating throughout the nation during the 1950s. In this instance, the "truth" about race is felt, not performed, not seen.

In the late 1960s the self-consciously "Black Aesthetic" develops a version of psychologized authenticity previously articulated by the Supreme Court and other government institutions. Politicians and social scientists developed the notion of a distinctly "black" psychology and argued a feeling of inferiority had rendered African Americans—especially men—angry, violent, and impotent. According to such theories, their psychological "dysfunction" destroys cities and families. The quest for the meaning of blackness rested on black males, and as Daniel Patrick Moynihan's Report on black families and the Kerner Commission Report on urban violence describes, a black man's feelings, his internalization of racial difference, affected the larger, material world. In "Sex and Violence: The Poetics of Black Power," I explore the intersection between social science and literary practice. Ironically, in their effort to claim some degree of social authority, the African American poets and writers associated with the Black Arts movement established a "jargon of authenticity" that promises existential "truth" while it directly engages with theories of "black" pathology. Written against a backdrop of the violence of war, social unrest, and political assassinations, "authentic" black poems became "angry," decidedly masculine, violent, and sexualized. Female poets such as Nikki Giovanni were no exception. She answers Amiri Baraka's call for "a black poem. And a/Black World" by producing a version of authenticity as a new, powerful masculinity that overrides the possibility of another "black" gender and it confirms the period's nationalist notion that to be "black" and "conscious" is to be a man.

The Real Negro: The Question of Authenticity in Twentieth-Century African American Literature brings to the forefront the persistent question of racial difference that organizes literary critical and historical approaches to writing by black people in the United States. By examining specific literary historical moments, this project exposes the fluid, yet consistent, inventions of racial meaning as they articulate difference as natural and as always and already present. My goal is to contribute to the developments in critical approaches to American literature and to expand ways of reading "black" literature. Within the critical field of African American literature, more work on "black" investments in racialisms still needs to be done. In a gesture toward my forthcoming project, this book historicizes individual instances of the literal functions of authenticity in the epistemological organization of American literature. I am particularly concerned with the implication that "authentic" African American literature offers racial "truth" as its art.

Chapter One
Black Man, Blackface
The Case of Paul Laurence Dunbar

THANK GOD, HE'S BLACK!"[1] EXCLAIMED DR. HENRY A.TOBEY UPON READING Paul Laurence Dunbar's poems written in "negro" dialect. Tobey understood the value and the significance of the intersection between Dunbar's race and his writing. And, although the negro dialect verses included in *Oak and Ivy* (1893), the poet's first self-published collection, were few, they became crucial to his professional success. These "negro" poems would supply the literary and cultural demand for black racial "authenticity." Moreover, they would provide tangible "proof "of the difference between black and white. Tobey and Charles A.Thatcher helped to arrange public readings and to secure critical endorsements for Dunbar; they also financed the publication of his second volume, *Majors and Minors* (1895). This new book, a private publication of Dunbar and his sponsors, was devised to include an unusual frontispiece portrait of the author which, as an unmistakable authenticator, visually declared to the reader the fact of the poet's race. Tobey encouraged Dunbar to deliver a copy of *Majors and Minors* to a well-known actor who, after enthusiastically reading this book by a black man, sent it to William Dean Howells. It was Howells's review of *Majors and Minors* in the June 27, 1896, issue of *Harper's Weekly* that introduced Dunbar's poetry to readers across the nation. Howells believed Dunbar's version of negro dialect was more than literature, and the portrait was the salient evidence. Dunbar's, writes Howells, "was the face of a young negro, with the race traits strangely accented: the black skin, the woolly hair, the thick outrolling lips, and the mild, soft eyes of the pure African type."[2]

Dunbar's looks—its "race traits strangely accented"—conceived both as proof of his racial purity and as credible indicators of the "truth" inherent in his representation of black life, calls attention to the critical notion of the "real" Negro—an idea that emerges as a central concern in early twentieth century American social and literary history when ideologies of race establish distinct, discursive categories of "white" and "black." Before Emancipation, the terms of social difference were primarily articulated in relation to slavery, but by the end of Reconstruction, social categories such as "slave" and "free" were no longer viable. By the turn of the century, the concept of an authentic black type suggested the existence of an ontologically "true" essence of black racial existence and it distinguished whiteness from the blurring potential of social and

intellectual "miscegenation." Accordingly, "real" Negroes by their essential definition, would never equal the similarly authenticated "white." Thus, Dunbar's success as America's "negro poet laureate"[3] answered the "negro question" in its resolution of the problem of authentication: the problem of knowing who is black, or more importantly, who is not white. Dunbar's achievement *illustrated* the difference.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, constitutional amendments and legislative acts[4] in favor of equalizing the social standing of former slaves and former slaveholders quickly lost credibility. Agricultural depression, national scandals, and the rise of industrial capitalism left many believing a diminishing supply of wealth required the institution of a social hierarchy organized in terms of racial difference. In 1883, for example, the Civil Rights Cases disabled the 1875 Civil Rights Bill by initiating the denial of equal rights to blacks in hotels, railroads, and other public places and by arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment forbade states, not individuals from discriminating. Other local government sanctions minimized or eliminated black participation in the election process and in a number of industries; and, in the 1880s and 1890s the violence of lynchings, murders, riots and the convict lease system institutionalized what was clearly understood as white supremacy.[5] By 1896 and the commercial publication of Dunbar's *Lyrics of Lowly Life,* the investment in maintaining racial difference revealed itself as a crucial part of the public and cultural production of American individuals. In the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, in the rise of black minstrel performers, and in Dunbar's professional success, the terms of black racial specificity emerge as crucially visible and public. And, in order for whites to confirm their difference, the separation of the races required blackness to be apprehended unmistakably on sight.

In their cultural production during the nineteenth century, "local-color" writers demonstrated a new regional awareness that implicitly served the segregationist imperative of the postwar era. They celebrated the working-class man and his cultural forms by valorizing folk culture in an attempt to identify the source of one's individuality as well as the collective diversity that was thought to distinguish American cultural forms from the rest of the world.[6] As part of literary realism, local-color fiction emphasized greater specificity of culture and physical setting; the distinguishing features of a region (landscapes, native characters and manners, as well as dialect), exemplified by writers such as Mark Twain, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Kate Chopin, suggested an accurate representation of a particular place. Dunbar's poems written in a variety of dialects (including Hoosier, German, and negro) were conceived as regional sketches that par ticipated in this movement. "The Ol' Tunes," first collected in *Oak and Ivy,* is one example:

I remember oft o' standin'
In my homespun pantaloons—

On my face the bronze an' freckles
O' the sons o' youthful Junes—
Thinkin' that no mortal minstrel
Ever chanted sich a lay
As the ol' tunes we was a singin'
In the ol'-fashioned way.7

Written in Hoosier dialect, the poem follows James Whitcomb Riley's commitment to nostalgia and regional specificity. In it the white speaker, a common man, recalls a moment in which his particular speech and cultural practice represent a particular site of American folk culture. The mid-western speaker's nostalgia for "the ol' tunes" sung in "the ol'—fashioned way," celebrates a particular class identity. His song reconciles northern and southern interests because it valorizes working-class culture and it consolidates the union by suggesting that individual or regional differences are ultimately universal.

But, while "The Ol' Tunes" was considered a mediocre attempt at local-color, Dunbar's negro dialect verses were viewed as superior. More than a realistic depiction of a specific place, they were imagined as the embodiment of the "reality" of a race. Thus, the black speaker's voice in "A Banjo Song," also collected in *Lyrics of Lowly Life,* becomes the "truth" of a people, particular not because of where they live, but because of who they are:

'Bout de time dat night is fallin'
An' my daily wu'k is done,
An' above de shady hilltops
I kin see de settin' sun;
When de quiet, restful shudders
Is beginnin' jes' to fall,—
Den I take de little banjo
F'om its place upon de wall. (ll. 11–18)

Dunbar's Hoosier and negro dialect verses are curiously similar. In both examples an individual speaker sentimentally remembers his physical setting and his particular folk ways. Yet, despite their commonalties, "A Banjo Song" seemingly defies representation and becomes "black." The speaker after all, is a slave; and, unlike white writers who had previously depicted slave life, Dunbar, "the pure African type," is understood to bring racial fact to life.

The realist project claims to objectively *represent* life,[8] a goal that, however debatable,[9] insists on the *art* of fiction. In his *Criticism and Fiction* (1893), Howells argues "when realism becomes false to itself, when it heaps up facts merely, and maps life instead of picturing it, realism will perish" (15). For him, the picture involves a composition the map does not allow. In Dunbar's case however, race alters the realist effect and the "picture" becomes a "map."

Howells writes in his 1896 introduction to *Lyrics of Lowly Life* the poet's "brilliant and unique achievement was to have studied the American negro objectively, and to have represented him as he found him to be, with humor, with sympathy, and yet with what the reader must instinctively feel to be the entire truthfulness." That "truthfulness" instinctively felt by the reader of Dunbar's dialect poems is the black racial authenticity imagined by a white audience and apparently affirmed by whom Howells calls, "the only man of pure African blood and of American civilization to feel the negro life aesthetically and express it lyrically." In other words, unlike his realist contemporaries whose work is understood as mimetic representation, Dunbar apparently expresses not merely what he *sees,* but what he *feels* to be objectively *true* about black life. He is "authentic." Howells's introduction not only brings Dunbar's poetry to national attention, his words help to establish Dunbar's position as *negro* poet and author.

Although Howells claimed, "if his black poems had been written by a white man, I should not have found them less admirable,"[10] he devotes himself to demonstrating the poet's racial identity. His introduction, like the prefaces to earlier nineteenth century slave narratives, verifies Dunbar's condition and his race to create an effect that draws readers into the subtext of racial ideology that inscribes difference in the writing produced by a black man.[11] Dunbar's parents, writes Howells, "were Negroes without admixture of white blood," they were slaves, he says, and the poet himself had been forced to work as an elevator boy. And, while Howells imagined himself as an advocate of the "essential unity of the human race," [12] he does not reject the imposition of the color-line in life or in literature, "There is a precious difference of temperament between the races which would be a great pity ever to lose," he writes, noting "this is best preserved and most charmingly suggested by Mr. Dunbar in those pieces of his where he studies the moods and traits of his race in its own accent of our English" ("Introduction" ix). For Howells, language makes race "real." Kenneth Warren argues the political imperative of the era required literary "progressives" such as Howells to concede to the central conservative argument that social discrimination was unavoidable. He writes, "[f]or the majority of white Americans, black and white racial difference appeared to be the most sensible way to bring order to an unruly social scene."[13] Thus, Dunbar's dialect poems, or more precisely, his *negro* dialect poems, written in *"its own accent of our English,"* bring to life the reality of race—of blackness and of whiteness—by inscribing difference in the literary imagination of the United States during the 1890s.

Howells's articulation of a black language distinguished from "our" (read "white"), language suggests his tremendous investment in maintaining difference. The point is not to insist on Howells's individual commitment to racial distinction, but rather to demonstrate how Dunbar's negro dialect received as a visible sign of blackness responds to the era's more general and urgent desire to recognize "black" against "white."[14] The now infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case offers important insight into the categorical distinction between

the races. Thisc Supreme Court decision not only insists on the separation of "white" from "black" (or better, "colored"), it, like the distinction "our language" and their "accent," forces "white" and "colored" persons to occupy an assigned social space. At issue in *Plessy* is the problem of recognition. Homer Plessy was seven-eighths Caucasian and "one-eighth African blood," his "colored blood" was not discernible and he subsequently claimed "every *recognition,* right, privilege and immunity secured to the citizens of the United States of the white race."

Plessy was only admitted to the "white" railroad car because he "declined or refused…to admit that he was in any sense or in any proportion a colored man." In other words, passengers could not *see* his blackness; and, as Plessy dared access the space of whiteness, he claimed not social or even racial equality, but legitimate recognition of the property and privilege associated with being white.[15] His presence as a "white black" man sitting in a railroad car reserved for "whites" became a dilemma best exemplified by the railroad officer whose job it was to assign passengers their "proper" space on the train—if the officer could not accurately apprehend the race of every railroad patron and assign him his appropriate seat, he was to be held liable for the same crime as the offender: "any officer of any railroad insisting on assigning a passenger to a coach or compartment other than the one set aside for the race to which said passenger belongs, shall be liable." Thus the white conductor bore the responsibility of discerning racial difference; his integrity and livelihood depended on the proper *recognition* of race.

Plessy v. Ferguson nationally sanctioned an established racial and social difference. Both sides of the argument understood the social value associated with whiteness. Consequently, the decision not only imposed a distinction between the races, it required persons like Homer Plessy to relinquish their claim to white privilege and to admit themselves into the social category defined by blackness. As a consequence, public space became the site on which race became clear and recognizable, "[t]he power to assign a particular coach obviously implies the power to determine to which race the passenger belongs…who, under the laws of the particular state is deemed white, and who a colored person." *Plessy* highlights the centrality of visibility in the creation of "raced" public space; moreover, it raises questions of mobility between and around those fixed social categories. By defining the terms of blackness, precisely at the moment of social integration, whiteness becomes an exclusive and recognizable social property.[16] As a "white" man Plessy could move around in the social world with the highest amount of freedom, as a "colored" he is not only limited to a separate car, he is a man without the "property" and privileges of reputation:

> If he be a white man, and assigned to a colored coach, he may have his action for damages against the company for being deprived of his so-called "property." Upon the other hand, if he be a colored man, and be so

> assigned, he has been deprived of no property, since he is not lawfully entitled to the reputation of being a white man.[17]

The argument of whiteness as property—salient to both sides of the Plessy case—calls attention to the tenuousness of racial constructions. The Court describes the white privilege of reputation as an ambiguous and subjective estimation of identity that exposes the tenuousness of a natural racial difference. Homer Plessy appeared white; his "deception" stood to diminish the value of an exclusive commodity, his "white" blood. In order to protect whiteness, in as much as it signifies a person's legal rights and a person's power within a social hierarchy, the Court needed to secure its boundaries against the threat of "impostors." As property, this public identity "includes the exclusive rights of possession, use and disposition. Its attributes are the right to transfer or alienability, the right to use and enjoyment, and the right to exclude others" (Harris, 281). The right to exclude, to legislate persons like Plessy as "not white" and therefore, "colored," justifies the Court's logic of distinction as well as its support for the state's police power.[18] And, as Michel Foucault has described "discipline," the racialized policing of persons and space creates fixed locations for both blackness and whiteness.[19] Thus, the Constitutional right to protect a fragile "property" in order to maintain social order, becomes the imperative to protect whiteness from the threat of miscegenation, and to confine the idea and space of blackness.

Just as *Plessy* distinguishes "white" and "colored" in public space, the case of Paul Laurence Dunbar draws attention to the imposition of racial ideology on literary and linguistic space. By 1896 and the commercial publication of *Lyrics of Lowly Life,* negro dialect became the domain of black writers. It had transcended local color to capture the contemporary structure of racial feeling.[20] It became the ultimate sign of difference, a response to the desire to recognize "colored" and distinguish it from "white." As Howells explains, dialect was *their* accent of *our* English. Dunbar's dialect poems such as "A Banjo Song," "An Antebellum Sermon," "The Deserted Plantation," "When De Co'n Pone's Hot," and "Accountability" for example, justified a preexisting negro "type" by making racial constructions "real."

White authors such as Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris had already produced dialect versions of negro life and culture that maintained literary and cultural currency. Their Uncle Remus, Brer Rabbit and Old Darky stories produced recognizable types whose particular speech and habits (e.g., banjo-playing, religious emotionalism, and chicken stealing) made notions of blackness readily visible. But as a black man descended from slaves, Dunbar's interaction with the tradition in negro dialect produced what his white prede cessors could not. It went beyond ideologies of racial difference to *embody* its meaning. Dunbar was "authentic"; his dialect poems were understood to relate the "truth" about blackness that, along with the social and historical fact of the poet's color and family history, lent his art a credibility that could not be rivaled

by whites. When Dunbar's slave speaker says, "Oh, dere's lots o' keer an' trouble/in dis world to swaller down//An' it 's when I tek at ebenin'/ My ol' banjo f'om de wall" ("A Banjo Song," ll. 1–2, 9–10), racial type becomes racial truth. Readers and hearers are not allowed to forget the poet is descended from slaves and that he is without one drop of white blood. Coupled with the blackness of the poet, the speaker's language and his habits were believed to offer immediate recognition of the distinction between "black" and "white."

In "The Deserted Plantation" the former slave who laments the disappearance of plantation life says, "[c]ould n't one o' dem dat see it in its glory/Stay to watch it in de hour of decay" (ll. 5–56), affirms the past and present social structure first by endorsing the organization of slave society, and then by articulating that endorsement in what has become an identifiable black voice.[21] In his negro dialect verses Dunbar apparently reports black sentiment and black life from the depths of his experience. Representing the "real" thing, he not only lends credibility to black "types" but also, as in "When Malindy Sings," he gently applauds their absolute difference. In celebrating Malindy's vocal skill, the dialect speaker offers a primitive version of blackness that satisfies a particular racial fantasy:

G'way an' quit dat noise, Miss Lucy—
Put dat music book away;
What's de use to keep on tryin'?
Ef you practise twell you're gray,
You cain't sta't no notes a-flyin'
Lak de ones dat rants and rings
F'om de kitchen to de big woods
When Malindy sings (ll.1–10).

Regardless of Miss Lucy's ability to read music, the speaker warns that her literate intelligence cannot equal Malindy's intuitive achievement. Unlike her white mistress who "ain't got de nachel o'gans/Fu' to make de soun' come right" (ll. 11– 12), Malindy possesses an innate instinct. Her temperament is "authentic":

Easy 'nough fu' folks to hollah,
Lookin' at de lines an' dots…
But fu' real melojous music,
Dat jes' strikes yo' hea't and
clings,
Jes' you stan' an' listen wif me
When Malindy sings (ll. 21–29).

According to the narrator this black woman's voice embodies unrivalled characteristics that cannot be copied. Upon hearing Malindy sing, even the

"mockin'-bird quit tryin' to whistle,/'Cause he jes' so shamed hisse'f" (ll. 44–45). Her voice is truth in nature; unlike the white mistress, Malindy requires no formal training. Dunbar utilizes existing assumptions concerning the qualities of a distinctly negro temperament to illustrate the depth of Malindy's skill. He manipulates stereotypes (black people naturally sing well) to produce an important aspect of local color realism that, despite its participation in a more general literary representational project, it nonetheless results in a heightened effect that renders the poem "black."

That "blackness" is even more forcefully rendered when it is placed in the context of blackface minstrelsy. The rise of negro minstrel performers occurred as *Plessy* was in litigation and as Paul Laurence Dunbar achieved national recognition. The minstrel show was the most popular form of entertainment in America during the nineteenth century;[22] and, initially in a move that parallels the regionalism of local-colorists, white actors performed their version of black life. This theatrical regionalism offered an American identity that criticized the pretension of aristocrats and ultimately celebrated the "common man" (Toll, 13) by revealing the hypocrisy and corruption of "civilized" society. But by the end of Reconstruction, black actors dominated minstrel depictions of Negroes. And, like their white predecessors, negro minstrels pretended the material relations of slavery were just and natural. Their shows performed across the nation helped secure a national consensus by accepting racial difference and by romanticizing the past. Black minstrels protected racial stratification because their rendering of the plantation tradition concealed the violence of slavery and thus eliminated the residue of moral judgment. Consequently, the black actor, like the black poet, offered justification for the racial status quo.

White audiences wanted to see and to know a particular version of negro life and negro feeling. In addition, they wanted to know their difference from it—this difference is what the authentic offers. More than white performers, black minstrels enforced the status of whiteness by authenticating the idea and space of blackness (Toll, 163). As the popular site for the staging of the negro question, minstrelsy is the visualization of Page and Harris's characterization of race; and, perhaps most significantly, it is the form on which Dunbar's experiment with negro dialect depends. Minstrelsy, like negro dialect, relies on notions of black proscription and white supremacy. Minstrel actors and dialect characters exist within the boundaries of recognizable racial stereotypes. The former slave who, in Dunbar's dialect poem laments the disappearance of plantation life, says "[c]ould n't one o' dem dat see it in/its glory/Stay to watch it in de hour of decay" (The Deserted Plantation," ll. 53–56), and he affirms the past and present social structure first by endorsing the organization of slave society and then by articulating that endorsement it what has become an identifiable and authentic black voice.

Minstrelsy brought racialized notions of thought and feeling to a mass audience. And, although it began by crossing racial boundaries, the emergence of "the authentic" made this kind of mobility less possible. Regarding white

minstrels, Eric Lott writes, "[t]he very form of blackface acts—an investiture in black bodies—seems a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of "blackness" and demonstrates the permeability of the color-line" (Lott, 6). But as the imposition of racial ideology on public space became more apparent, white actors no longer *portrayed* black types, negro minstrels *became* them. In other words, authenticity and the recognition it affords made it so that white imitators of blackness were no longer viable. The 1890s desire to reinforce the color-line eliminated opportunities to cross racial boundaries. Negroes were understood to be better suited to the representative space of blackness because their depiction was "true." The language of authenticity, employed by Howells about Dunbar, became the language on which minstrels thrived. One nineteenth century critic writes, "there is nothing like the natural thing…a negro can play a negro's peculiarities much more satisfactorily than the white 'artist' who with burnt cork is at best a base imitator." For white minstrel audiences, blackness performed by blacks was no imitation, "real nigs," or "the genuine fellows, who are naturally negro minstrels," enforced racial difference beyond the capability of whites. The success of negro minstrel troupes "goes to disprove the saying that the negro cannot act the nigger" (Quoted in Toll, 202). That the negro *can* "act the nigger" further discredits Plessy's claim to social mobility and privilege as it fixes racial categories.

But what does it mean to "act the nigger" *naturally?* A natural nigger, like the negro author, needs no mask because all of him is "pure." Unlike the white artist, he reports black sentiment and manners from the depths of his experience. He is the "real thing"; and, consequently, his work is not art since authenticity favors realism without representation, form without craft. In his illustrated *In Old Plantation Days* (1903), Dunbar introduces readers to characters whose type recur in the plantation tradition. In this collection of short stories, protagonists appear in other stories as minor characters and create the notion that, more than fictional characters, they are members of an actual and cohesive slave community. Each story recounts an incident to demonstrate negro feeling and negro sentiment; the protagonists's simplicity, emotionalism, and of course, their speech, reveal their difference from their white masters as well as their contentment with their status as slaves. The paintings and drawings that accompany the stories depict exceptionally dark black people with oversized lips and eyes whose image illustrates a dramatic moment in each story. And, since the stories occur on a plantation in Kentucky—where both the author's parents had been slaves—the "realism" attributed to the narratives become "natural," perhaps even "historical" recollections by the author's ancestors. Authenticity imposes autobiography on Dunbar's fiction.

In "Aunt Tempe's Triumph," the old mammy's stubborn ignorance simultaneously demonstrates her love and loyalty toward the status quo and toward her proprietors's intellectual superiority. As the story goes, Aunt Tempe's young mistress, Miss Eliza is preparing to marry. Aunt Tempe hears from Maid Doshy (who also appears in "The Deserted Plantation") a description

of the "white" tradition of the father's 'giving away the bride.' A disturbed Aunt Tempe seeks a consultation with her master, Stuart Mordaunt:

> 'Now, we all's gwinter gin huh a big weddin', des' lak my baby oughter have.'
>
> 'Of course, what else do you expect? You don't suppose I'm going to have her 'jump over the broom' with him, do you?'
>
> 'Now, you listen to me: we's gwinter have all de doin's dat go 'long wid a weddin', ain't we?'
>
> Stuart Mordaunt struck his fist on the arm of his chair and said:
>
> 'We're going to have all the greatness of the occasion demands when a Mordaunt marries.'
>
> 'Da's right, da's right. She gwinter have de o'ange wreaf an' de ring?'
>
> 'That's part of it…'
>
> 'Now, whut I wanter know, who gwinter gin huh erway?…'
>
> "Why, I'm going to give my daughter away, of course…'
>
> '…You gin huh erway! You gin huh erway! Da's my chile, Mas' Stua't Mo'de'nt, an' ef anybody gin huh erway at de weddin', d' ain't nobody gwine do it but ol' Tempe huhself. You hyeah me?'

Tempe believes herself a part of her owner's family, her ignorance about their institutionally sanctioned wedding ceremonies, show readers their difference. At her master's outraged indignation, Tempe is reminded of her place, and with tears and a trembling voice, she admits "Hit all right, hit all right. I 'longs to you, but Miss 'Liza, she my chile."[23] Even as Tempe acknowledges her status as Mordaunt's slave, she continues to understand her position—as mammy—as the actual mother of the bride. Later, while a shocked and bemused Mordaunt converses with the rector, Aunt Tempe goes into the house to share her troubles with a sympathetic Miss Eliza who promises Tempe she will be situated in a position in which no other slave is allowed.

It would appear as if Tempe has achieved some social mobility; her filial relation to the bride as well as the bride's acknowledgement might suggest that she is more than a slave. Seemingly satisfied with her special position at the wedding, Tempe seeks more information about the wedding ceremony and visits "Brother Parker, who used to know a servant in a preacher's family," and, upon leaving him, Maid Doshy derisively calls out,

> 'Look hyeah, Aunt Tempe, whut you an' ol' Brothah Pahkah codgin' erbout so long? 'spec' fus' thing we knows we be gittin' slippahs an' wreafs fu you, an' you'll be follerin' Miss Liza's 'zample!' (9)

The slave's misunderstanding of social custom is portrayed most obviously by Tempe's speech. Her words vividly contrast Mordaunt's standard English as they illustrate the distinction between "their" language and "ours." Because her words

reveal her poor understanding of "white" customs—an intellect outrageous to an aristocratic "white" like Mordaunt—the crucial difference between black and white seems unnegotiable. And, even as Tempe seeks to learn more about wedding customs, readers come to understand that, despite Doshy's predictions, Tempe cannot imitate Miss Liza's example; Tempe is a negro slave and Miss Liza is a white aristocrat.

The narrator describes the wedding day, with "[a]ll the elite of the surrounding country present," and Mammy "allowed to put the last touches, insignificant as they were, to the bride's costume." And just before the ceremony, Miss Eliza fulfills her promise and positions her mammy in a place no other slave is allowed: hidden behind the portieres. With Tempe out of sight, the ceremony proceeds; just as Stuart Mordaunt steps forward upon hearing the words "Who giveth this woman," Aunt Tempe bursts from her hiding place and exclaims, "I does! Dat's who! I gins my baby erway!" Silence quiets the moment. Tempe's love and loyalty is only rivaled by her ignorance, "some of the older ladies wiped tears from their eyes," and the ceremony is finished without further interruption. Because of the "benevolence" of her master's plantation, Mammy is never reproached, as "no one doubted that her giving away and her blessing were as effectual and fervent as those of the nearest relative could have been." In her triumph, Aunt Tempe goes her way, chuckling, "I showed 'em. I showed 'em" (10–11).

"Aunt Tempe's Triumph" shows the color-line. As a long-standing house servant, the Mammy observes the caste rules of the Mordaunt family. She understands the significance of Miss 'Liza's social standing and she comprehends the proud tradition from which Eliza's wedding will occur; as an intimate servant she shares the family's pride. But, Tempe's simple mind does not grasp the fact she is not one of them. The story's denouement illustrates the difference—her outburst sharply contrasts the white narrator's formal language, and more to the point, her actions are incompatible with Mordaunt and the other "ladies" in attendance. The emotionalism that fuels Tempe's performance sentimentally touches the elite attendees while it demonstrates for the reader a minstrelsy, unconscious, yet apparently natural, to the black protagonist. Most importantly, the incident becomes an important part of the Mordaunt family's history: the story of their simple and faithful slave now reveals the authenticity of their "white" reputation, their property, and their social standing.

In *Old Plantation Days,* Tempe's triumph is only one of many incidents that introduces readers to the "real" Negro. In another story Brother Parker, the slave preacher, who readers meet in "Aunt Tempe's Triumph," hurries one rainy Sunday to attend the sick bed of a congregation member. While on his way, Brother Parker slips and falls in the mud; and, despite his muddy, soaking trousers he proceeds on his ministerial mission. His moral determination apparently contradicts his "nature," the narrator tells readers:

> It has been maintained, with some degree of authority to enforce the statement, that the Americanized African is distinctly averse to cold water. If this is true, Parker was giving a glowing illustration of the warmth of his religion or the strength of his endurance. ("The Trousers," 52)

While Parker's appearance—dirty clothes and clumsy movement—invokes a common minstrel type, the narrator's commentary in standard English emphasizes the picture of black racial sensibility the story is meant to detail. Fortunately for Brother Parker, Ike, a man of his flock, lends him a dry pair of trousers. When Parker reaches his 'church,' he preaches a sermon meant to deliver sinners from damnation to glory. Within this context of racial types, Negroes are as "distinctly averse" to glory as they are "averse to cold water." Amidst the expected shouting and hand-clapping, the congregation cries "Amen! Amen!… Keep in de stream, Pahkah; keep in de stream!" (57). Encouraged by what he believes is his congregation's sincerity, the preacher reaches into his pocket for a handkerchief and continues his sermon. When a deck of cards flies from his pants, the shocked crowd orders the removal of their sinner-preacher. Of course, the cards belong to Ike, and as Ike shamefully explains the confusion, the preacher sorrowfully gazes at the one remaining card in his hand. After the service, several angry parishioners wait for Ike in what initially appears as another indictment. But, without the need of narrative commentary, Ike reveals his now racial disposition: he explains, "couldn't he'p it boys… I couldn't stop him, an' den w'en he dropped all the res' he held on to de king." Another man admonishes him, "don' you nevah put dat deck in yo' pocket no mo' an' len' yo' pants. Come on, de game's been waitin' a houah, put' nigh" (59). The "church" is a farce; the gambling parishioners only pretend Christian morality. Indeed, the story confirms the "truth" of "Americanized Africans." "The Trousers" builds on readers' expectations to reinforce notions of what it means to be black—the parishioners' manners and morals, consistent with the minstrel form, apparently demonstrate negro nature.

Some of Dunbar's dialect sketches, however, resist the impulse to make black types "real." If, in their lack of morals or their "ignorant" submission to a white supremacist status quo, stereotypical negro characters embody and validate a hierarchical difference between "black" and "white," then many of Dunbar's types perform versions of blackness designed to emphasize precisely the way those versions are performances. In these instances, his negro dialect especially demonstrates a rhetorical cunning that rejects the desire to stand in for the real thing. In "An Antebellum Sermon," for example, a seemingly ignorant slave preacher manipulates what Marcellus Blount calls a "black" rhetorical form to invalidate hierarchical notions of difference.[24] He performs an expected role and, like Huck Finn, he simultaneously exposes the hypocrisy present in "white" standards of "civilization." In his rendering of an Old Testament story, the preacher allegorizes his contemporary social structure:

Now ole Pher'oh, down in Egypt,
    Was de wuss man evah bo'n,
An' he had de Hebrew chillun
    Down dah wukin' in his co'n;
'T well de Lawd got tiahed o' his foolin',
    An' sez he: "I'll let him know—
Look hyeah, Moses, go tell Pher'oh
    Fu' to let dem chillun go." (ll. 14–24)

He describes Moses's mission to Pharaoh as one that, despite the preacher's disclaimer ("I will pause right hyeah to say,/Dat I'm still a-preachin' ancient,/I ain't talkin' 'bout to-day," (ll. 50–52)), parallels the problem of slavery in the United States. The speaker's glaringly insistent message of social indictment, and perhaps even insurrection, is most clearly articulated in his disclaimer in a manner in which the story of Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt becomes an undeniable metaphor for emancipation:

So you see de Lawd's intention,
    Evah sence de worl' began,
Was dat His almighty freedom
    Should belong to evah man. (ll. 83–86)

The preacher in "An Antebellum Sermon" deploys assumptions concerning "black" humility, religious emotionalism, and interpretive inaccuracies to humorously satirize and critique institutional slavery and racism.

If the dialect voice in "An Antebellum Sermon" narratologically questions the legitimacy of white privilege, "Accountability," initially read as a genuine articulation of the "truth" concerning racial difference, becomes a critique of the color-line's imposition on literature. In the poem a slave literally and figuratively confirms an ideology of difference:

We is all constructed diff'ent
    d' ain't no two of us de same;
We cain't he'p ouah likes an' dis-
    likes, ef we'se bad we ain't to
blame. (ll. 14–18)

He informs his audience of the fact of individual identities and suggests personal distinction is beyond our control. Our disposition, he says, is fixed. Narratively, the speaker never mentions his essential difference is racial, but dialect makes the distinction clear. "Folks ain't got not right to cen/suah othah folks about dey habits" (ll. 1–2), he says in an apparently "black" language. His grammar calls to mind the difference, Howells notes, is their "own accent of our English."

Similarly, words like "censure" and "our" are spelled phonetically to visually emphasize the relevant difference race makes. Because of dialect, the speaker's individual difference becomes collective; the phonetic spelling of words heightens the effect of illiteracy to distinguish the mental capacity of "whites" from "blacks" (Nettels, 75). As he continues his soliloquy, the speaker offers the "truth" about his character and condition by acknowledging the "natural" order, "[w]e gits into su'ttain channels dat/we jes' cain't he'p pu' suin'" (ll. 21–22). According to the speaker, the space of every individual has been preordained, "Him dat made de streets an' drive-/ways wasn't shamed to make/de alleys" (ll. 11–13). As a passive and content slave, the speaker "reveals" his negro type. The poem's narrative of difference written and spoken in dialect naturalizes "black" behavior. The final lines summarize the effect:

> Don't keer whut you does, you has
> to, an' hit sholy beats de
> dickens,—
> Viney, go put on de kittle, I got
> one o' mastah's chickens. (ll. 38–42)

Naturally, this "authentic" black speaker does what is expected: he employs a standard plantation alibi, he steals a chicken. This revelation at the end doubly enforces a racialized explanation for differences in human temperament and behavior as it visually brings to life "the precious difference…between the races."

By producing a recognizable version of what it means to be black, it appears as if the speaker has justified racial distinction and segregation. But, at the moment the slave speaker asserts the "truth" about his particular racial identity, Dunbar calls it into question by violating the dialect with lines of standard English:

> When you come to think about it,
> how its all planned out it 's
> splendid (ll. 35–37).

"White" standard English enters the "black" rhetorical form and draws attention to the "flaw" in the speaker's apparent purity. It is as if, in an affront to the logic of whiteness as property, a "negro" patron—without the conductor's knowledge—travels in a car not assigned him. And, because "real" negroes talk "black"; the intrusion of "white" speech emerges as what Gates calls a revelation of consciousness that demonstrates the artifice inherent in poetic representation.[25] Moreover, it draws critical attention to the literary aesthetic demand for a "black" voice. The speaker in "Accountability" is only acting; his direct address spoken in standard English necessitates a brief, but conscious, recognition of the artfulness inherent in emblematizing race in language. And, while one could read

this brief integration of standard English as a gesture toward a third, hybrid, category that is simultaneously "black" and "white," this revelatory moment altogether denies racialization by refusing any answer to the question of authenticity.

The frontispiece portrait in *Major and Minors,* however, insists on Dunbar's unequivocal blackness. It refuses the criticism deployed by the author himself. The portrait insists on the poet's race and it claims the poem as simultaneously more and less than art. In Dunbar's case, his art is reclassified as life and his attempt at a particular version of local color is transformed into a statement concerning the whole truth of black life. Hence Dunbar's reputation as *a black* poet. Once *black,* it becomes difficult to escape the specificity that makes artistic mobility impossible. In 1895 Dunbar writes that his project is to "be able to interpret my own people through song and story, and to prove to many that afterall we are more human than African" (*Life and Works,* 47). He had hoped to create a poetry that would appeal to a more general human experience rather than to embody a more specific racial condition. But as Dr. Tobey intimates, "Thank God, he's black!," Dunbar cannot escape the constant racialization of his achievement. Thus, the reception of his standard English poems as "more human than African" became difficult. One of his earliest poems, "Ere Sleep Comes Down to Soothe the Weary Eyes" seeks a human universal:

Ere sleep comes down to soothe
the weary eyes,
Which all the day with cease-
less care have
sought
The magic gold from the
seeker flies;
Ere dreams put on the gown
and cap of thought,
And make the waking
world a world of lies,—
Of lies most papable, uncouth,
forlorn,
That say life's full of aches and
tears and sighs,—
Oh, how with more than dreams
he soul is torn,
Ere sleep comes down to soothe the
weary eyes. (ll. 1–18)

This description of "the waking/world a world of lies" that only sleep can relieve, seeks to appeal to a general human experience, "tears and sighs." The poem's standard Victorian poetic language invokes a "high" European tradition, that, for

poets like Tennyson and Keats, permits "universal" reference. For Dunbar, also the *black* poet, standard English implies access to the "universal"; but, like Homer Plessy, it becomes the "white blood" patrons and critics refuse to attribute to him. Moreover, the possibility of its presence paradoxically endangers the authenticity of his race since it problematizes the authenticity of his "black" poems.

If "real" negroes talk black, then only whites write in standard English. Thus, Dunbar's use of "our English" threatens the distinction of "their" English. Dunbar's challenge was to make "their" language "his," to offer his experience in a universally accepted medium. His theory of art resists the imposition of a racially specified form and it seeks the limitless possibility of an "unraced" artist. When asked about the difference between poems written by blacks and by whites, he says "[w]e must write like white men. I do not mean to imitate them; but our life is now the same."[26] Dunbar's claim is not that black and white are identical; rather, he imagines black lives and white lives as having equal stake in an American context. Thus, he believes writing by blacks should enjoy the same creative options in American literature and in American discourse. It would thus be a mistake to interpret Dunbar's position as a desire to be caucasian, rather he is challenging the preeminence of racial authenticity, especially its influence and limitations on African American writers.

Of himself he says, "[m]y position is most unfortunate. I am a black white man" (*Life and Works* 81). Dunbar's words not only illustrate the tension of his ambivalent persona, they suggest also an interpretative coherence to his work as well as a powerful critique of the supply and demand for an authentic black voice. As a "black white man" it may be that in referring to himself as "white," Dunbar is claiming a humanity understood as beyond race.[27] "Black" as a descriptor becomes a recognition of the limitations race imposes. If, in Dunbar's logic, to be "white" is to be "human," and to be human is to maintain a status free from social and aesthetic restrictions, one way of reading his standard English poems is to read them as "white," as "universal," or better, as "human." To prove that black people are "more human than African," Dunbar would have to prove they are beyond the specificity of race.

In his "major" poems Dunbar employs the formal language of English verse to elevate his people to a new status. The first poem in *Oak and Ivy,* "Ode to Ethiopia" pays tribute to black humanity:

O Mother Race! to thee I
    bring
This pledge of faith unwavering,
    This tribute to thy glory.
I know the pangs which thou
    didst feel,
When slavery crushed thee with

its heel,
With thy deer blood all gory…
Be proud, my Race, in mind and
soul;
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll
In characters of fire.
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's
bright sky
Thy banner's blazoned folds now
fly,
And truth shall lift them
higher. (ll. 37–46)

Dunbar's ode utilizes the *rimé couee* to deliver the black American experience into another class. As heroic, his "race" can claim a more universal recognition and therefore become "more human than African." One critic explains, Dunbar's "choice of form asserts a claim that the race and its sufferings and achievements merit the language usually accorded to heroic events in the nation's history" (Revell, 65). Thus for Dunbar, standard English grants humanity mobility in literature, and it provides a new way of seeing the complexity of this particular poet's voice.

"The Colored Soldiers," a Tennysonian battle poem describing African American participation in the Civil War, employs "white" language and poetics in an effort to translate "black" into "human" accomplishment:

If the muse were mine to tempt it
And my feeble voice were
strong,
If my tongue were trained to
measures,
I would sing a stirring song.
I would sing a song heroic
Of those noble sons of Ham,
Of the gallant colored soldiers
who fought for Uncle Sam! (ll. 1–10)

The essential object of the poem seeks to demonstrate black men's right to full citizenship—a status universally known to whites. And, like "Ode to Ethiopia," Victorian language and poetic form are meant to elevate the subject in a "song heroic." But, the speaker suggests that the freedom to make such claims is not quite within his reach, "If the muse *were* mine," he says, "I *would* sing a stirring song" (emphasis added). The muse that enables this kind of poetry is not Dunbar's; it is *theirs,* the "white" language, now *property,* in which an access associated with

"universal" humanity is possible. Consequently, "The Colored Soldiers" must dare to enter the literal space of whiteness in order to establish a legitimate and equal place in the life of the nation. Despite this recognition of his limitations, the speaker endeavors to produce a heroic ballad and thus substantiate his claim to a status and identity beyond racial specificity.

For Dunbar, however, blackness is inescapable; race always specifies the art of a *black* poet. As a "black white man," color informs his existential possibilities. Hence the dilemma: black white poems cannot claim universal humanity because such a claim relies on an unqualified status "black" does not allow. At the turn of the century, "black" negates the possibility of "white," and poems in standard English and in negro dialect written by a black poet are equally colored and equally specified. Dunbar's accomplishment can thus be read as literal evidence of the imposition of racial distinction on writing by African Americans. It produces a tension vividly evident in both languages. "We Wear the Mask":

> We wear the mask that grins and
> lies,
> It hides our cheeks and shades our
> eyes—
> This debt we pay to human guile;
> With torn and bleeding hearts we
> smile
> And mouth with myriad subtleties. (ll. 1–9)

Here, the poet uses standard language to articulate the predicament that characterizes all of his verse. The demand for the authentic black supersedes other criteria, as the "mask that grins and lies" becomes the black-whiteness that insists on shaping Dunbar's public persona as well as the critical reception of his poetry. As simultaneously black and white, the poem cannot claim truth or general reference, "it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes"; and, rather, in a "mouth with myriad subtleties" the poet articulates the gambit of racial authenticity.

Chapter Two
Racial Hieroglyphics
Zora Neale Hurston and the Rise of the New Negro

FOR ZORA NEALE HURSTON, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLACKS AND whites is vivid. In her view, the color-line policed by the Jim Crow of law and literature only gratuitously reproduces a standard she believes is already there. "Everything is illustrated," she writes, noting the crucially defining factors of two races. "[T]he white man thinks in a written language and the Negro thinks in hieroglyphics."[1] Thus, the evidence is on the wall; not only is "Negro" expression visibly distinguishable from "white" expression, the thought processes of the two races demonstrate that difference. And, as the New Negro movement of the 1920s and 1930s gains momentum, Hurston's answer to the question of what it means to be black reinforces earlier assertions that the most salient aspects of racial difference can be seen. Her position develops the notion of a racial behavior that simultaneously reinforces the demand for the literal and the literary space of the authentic, and it contributes to the larger project of literary modernism. It was Hurston who had written to Langston Hughes, "Did I tell you about the new, *real* Negro theater I plan? Well, I shall, or rather we shall act out the folk tales, however short, with the abrupt angularity and naiveté of the primitive 'bama Nigger," and she articulated their shared commitment to dialect and cultural behavior as the source of a distinctly black art.[2] Like Negro hieroglyphics, their "real" Negro theater would illustrate the features of a discrete blackness produced as a function of culture.

As Hurston describes it, "black" words demonstrate "black" behavior. "His very words are action words. His interpretation of the English language is in terms of pictures." Here, "Negro" words offer more than realism's engagement with representation; they show, literally, what they mean. Because "action came before speech," the "primitive" language of the Negro depends on metaphor and simile and it consequently allows an immediate relationship between the word and its meaning. Words, however, do not merely represent meaning, they become them.[3] According to Hurston, Negroes have redeveloped the "detached words" associated with "white" standard English and supplemented them with action. The result: "chop-axe," "sitting-chair," and "cook-pot." She explains, they are the *pictures* that *perform* meaning, "[e]verything is acted out. Unconsciously for the most part of course." As drama, Negro expression brings to life what William Dean Howells had called "the precious difference between

the races,"[4] and, according to Hurston, "that expression "is not so much a thing in itself as evidence of something that permeates his entire self" (CNE 49). But, the drama of Negro expression is not limited to words, it includes behavior. Actions tell stories for Hurston. She describes "a robust young Negro chap posing upon a street corner" and a Negro girl who "strolls past the corner lounger" and she concludes that his pose and her movement are not only drama but also language, "[t]hese little plays by strolling players are acted out daily in a dozen streets in a thousand cities, and no one ever mistakes the meaning" (CNE 49– 50).

"Characteristics of Negro Expression" explains Hurston's commitment to an African American linguistics and ethnology. She argues that a recognizable logic produces negro dialect; but, contrary to earlier arguments that characterize it as a sign of inferior intellect, she presents "Negro expression" not as inferior, nor as a lack of culture, but as evidence of a discrete and alternative culture and as a different thought process. As an anthropologist trained under Franz Boas, her approach to African American culture depends on an examination of what she imagines as African American language.[5] In his introduction to *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (1911), Hurston's teacher explains the crucial relationship between language and cultural study that became perhaps the most influential approach to cultural anthropology.[6] Boas writes, "the conciseness and clearness of thought of a people depend to a great extent on their language," and "the form of the language will be molded by the state of the culture."[7] Consequently, Hurston's explanation of "real Negro" language, "the Negro thinks in hieroglyphics," describes an intellectual process. And, according to her teacher's logic, language—negro expression for Hurston—is evidence of a specific culture.

For Boas, "primitive" Indians develop language specific to their cultural needs. For instance, he argues the Eskimo maintained a system of numbers that did not exceed ten because their social organization did not require the notion of counting beyond ten. But, contact with other cultures forced the Eskimo to conceive and adopt higher numerals. Similarly in Hurston's description of the "primitive" American Negro, association with "civilized" whites necessitated adjustments in "Negro expression." And, forced to engage civilized "words for detached ideas," the primitive Negro adds action in order to transform the "detached idea" to one more "close fitting." "Chair," a word "not evolved in him but transplanted on his tongue by contact" (CNE 49), now part of Negro culture, perforce becomes "sitting-chair." This insistence on action and the immediacy of meaning becomes ultimately more than a description of black speech; it offers evidence of cultural specificity. For Hurston, the anthropologist whose exposition lists and explains the mechanics of Negro expression, "sitting-chair," "cook-pot" and "chop-axe" also shows how a collective black people think, and more importantly, how a collective black culture works.

Rather than conceptualize Negro expression as an extension of "white" language, Hurston presents it as having its own logic and its own form. "[T]he

American Negro has done wonders to the English language," she writes, calling attention to the logic and originality involved with black speech. Having an established culture, the Negro meets "white" culture and improves it, "he has made over a great part of the tongue to his liking and has his revision accepted by the ruling class…he has made new force words out of old feeble elements" (CNE 51). The notion of black folk logic as stronger than its white alternative inverts the racial hierarchy that imagines whiteness and "white" intellect as superior, "the Negro must be considered the greater artist" (CNE 56). Thus, what is perceived as merely negro dialect becomes, for Hurston, a form of self-invention and the repudiation of "white" aesthetic standards. Moreover, that form, dialect as art, becomes the literary standard of racial authenticity required by Hurston, a Negro. And, unlike the demand for a discrete "black" language that had originated with whites during Paul Laurence Dunbar's era, Hurston's Negro expression imagines literal racial distinction without the need for artificial enforcement. Thus, institutional segregation—the intervention of the state—is unnecessary, "the average Negro glories in his ways" (CNE 59); and, the Negro prefers his separate space.

"Characteristics of Negro Expression" first appeared in Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology* (1934), which, as its title suggests, represents a collection of essays, art, poetry, and ethnography designed to depict various aspects of "the Negro" at the height of modernism. As Michael North explains, *Negro* raises important issues concerning "the status of dialect and the relation of literature and ethnology,"[8] but, before any of these considerations, the originary distinction of "the folk," Hurston's Negro "farthest down" (CNE 59), deserves critical attention.[9] Her idea of "the folk" is less concerned with notions of the rural and more interested in representations of the racial; they generate "Negro expression," their way of thinking, according to Hurston, characterizes and determines what counts as black speech, black behavior, and black culture. Hurston's ethnographic depiction in *Negro* calls attention to the folk as the form from which modern blackness emerges and from which it can be recognized.[10] That "the folk" apparently have evolved from racist nineteenth century minstrel depictions to racialist twentieth century enunciations of art, culture, and modernity reveals the cultural and historical question of authenticity as a question of formal literary production.[11]

In W.E.B.Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a version of the rural, Southern Negro helps to define a modern and collective racial life, "the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the twentieth century."[12] And, while Du Bois seeks to explain the social, psychological, and intellectual tensions of racial identity, he relies on the visible and performative results "the folk" offers. Houston A.Baker, Jr. argues that Du Bois's consistent use of Negro spirituals represents a mastery of form crucially dependent on cultural performance. In *Souls,* southern black culture, particularly Negro spirituals and their musical scores, visually introduce each chapter as if the lines could actually sing the meaning and the significance of race. In addition, Baker comments, "[o]

utside its intensely regional cast, *Souls* is virtually unclassifiable;[13] the text assumes no recognizable form—it is not clearly an autobiography, a novel, or a coherent essay. But, as something like an anthology, *Souls* claims inclusive diversity while it consistently employs the folk to make a coherent meaning of race not only real, but also and tangible.[14] Du Bois's statement approaches anthology as form in as much as it relies on a diversity of genres (e.g., musical performance, autobiographical essay, philosophical treatise) to collectively produce its objective: a picture of what it means to be black. In this regard, "the folk" in the title can be seen as a literal and figurative characterization of a collective black life.

In her book *Constituting Americans,* Priscilla Wald writes, "*The Souls of Black Folk* challenges the formal boundaries of genres and disciplines," and she argues "it stresses different ways of looking at the representation of black America(ns)."[15] She describes Du Bois's project as one that implies a coherent organization while it questions principles of narrativity that govern historical stories. Her critique draws attention to the question of formal representation as it illuminates this present critique concerning anthology as a means of articulating a collective racial identity. Wald contends Du Bois's unconventional form allows him the mobility to narrate and to claim an American subjectivity, a subjectivity previously denied him because of America's white supremacist history. For her, Du Bois's experiment offers "recurrent illusions and cross-references" to build an "incremental rather than progressive narrative and call attention to an author's constructing" (192). In her argument, Du Bois's objective demands perforce an alternate narrative form; and, like an anthology, an incremental narrative relies on its parts to make a whole. But, unlike anthology, the incremental narrative suggests a temporal organization. Wald's reading of *Souls* shows Du Bois's intentional revision as a necessary process of his authoring a history and an American identity. Similarly, this chapter argues the means by which Hurston's articulation of a modern blackness also requires new standards of narration and narrative form.[16]

Anthology becomes an ideal form for racial representation precisely because of its condition as a collective, and therefore representative project. In its compilation of forms, *Souls* approaches the anthological ideal. And, despite its having been written by one author, the work claims to represent the multiple personalities that constitute the race imagined as a group. Du Bois's objective was to illustrate the salient characteristics of life behind the Veil; it offered a description of Negro identity—an identity not readily visible to those on the other side of the color-line. His project suggests a racial realism and it helped to establish the terms of black subjectivity in the twentieth century. Du Bois's contention that black and white worlds were not only discrete but also meaningfully divergent helped to solidify the notion of racial identity as a group identity. He writes, "The history of the world is the history not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations but of races."[17] Thus, as a group, "the folk" provide definition for the race as well as its collective contribution to world history. And,

rather than biology, folk ways—folk culture—explain and demonstrate what Du Bois describes as "the deeper differences…spiritual, psychical differences" of race that, however abstract, require a tangible form. Thus for Du Bois, a self-determined presentation of a group identity would make the modern racial ideal credible and authentic:

> the full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not yet been given to the world…the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity" (CR 77–79).

And, better than legislated segregation, Du Bois's vision of a collective Negro message urges the group, "bound and welded together," to share its "complete message." This collective identity manifests itself in a notion of racial "genius" made apparent in art and literature. In his view, a black writing would thus make visible the identity of a people.

One clear indication of what Du Bois had hoped would be a transformative moment for the masses of black people, was their migration from southern states to cities in the mid-west and northeast. The terrorism of lynching, race riots, a declining southern economy brought on by draught, rain and the boll weevil, as well as the increasing demand for labor in northern industries brought rural blacks to cities.[18] Also, the 1919 race riots in East St. Louis, IL, Houston, Chester, PA, Philadelphia, Charleston, SC, Longview, TX, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Elaine, AK had significantly helped to forge a new mood of social dignity and even political defiance within the national Negro population. As a group, black people had rejected Booker T.Washington's social gospel of industry, humility, and patience and replaced it with a new vision. One Harlem newspaper announced, "The Old Negro goes, his abject crawling and pleading have availed the Cause nothing," and the Kansas City *Call* proclaimed, "The NEW NEGRO," had arrived to herald a new era for the race, one that "does not fear the face of day."[19] Consequently, as the race began to envisage itself as "New Negroes," it began also to formulate a new identity and "the great message" it held for the rest of humanity.

When in 1925 Alain Locke wrote, "the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the spirit is awake in the masses,"[20] he formalized Du Bois's earlier call for group solidarity. Locke's words had introduced a new anthology, *The New Negro,* which would articulate the collective potential of the race. "By shedding the old chrysalis of the negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation," he wrote, noting the "new dynamic phase" in which the race was entering. But, more than an additional pronouncement of the black population's new attitude and freedom, *The New Negro* served as a literary and cultural debut for "the great message" Negroes held. The anthology actually named individuals and offered diverse examples of

a "new mentality for the American Negro" (NN 10). In addition, it offered a location toward which witnesses and participants could focus their attention, "In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination." In Locke's words, New York held "not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life" (NN 7–8). Harlem—an anthology in itself—would become the race's capital. In its articulation of a new racial consciousness, *The New Negro* would not only inaugurate a movement, but it would also name the place in which anyone could seek the meaning and the significance of blackness.

In *The New Negro* over thirty contributors offer art, poetry, fiction, music, history, cultural and political commentary, and literary criticism to express an emerging group identity.[21] In his forward to the anthology, Locke declares, "This volume aims to document the New Negro culturally and socially,—to register the inner and outer life of the Negro in America" (NN ix). Its form also embodies what Locke calls the "new democracy in American culture" (NN 9) in which no individual or privileged class claims representational authority over another. Thus, Locke's question, "are we after all only reading into the stirrings of a sleeping giant the dreams of an agitator?" meets with the response, "the answer is in the migrating peasant," and he concludes the impetus for the New Negro originates with "the man farthest down," who, like Hurston's "Negro farthest down," bears the originality which characterizes the race. "The folk" inspire an identity, "the new Negro," and they also inspire a revision of formal representation whereby the anthology, not merely a collection of stories and not unlike an incremental narrative, emerges to spatially organize the race.[22] *The New Negro,* moreover, is not an isolated event: Charles Johnson's *Ebony and Topaz* (1927), and single issue journals such as the *Survey Graphic* special issue *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* (1925) and *Fire!! "A Journal Devoted to Younger Negro Artists"* (1926), collect and locate "African American" art and intellect.[23]

Harlem, like "black" anthologies, presents itself as a collective space. It welcomes diversity yet claims a coherent community for the race; the moment, then known as the New Negro Renaissance, flourished during the 1920s and continued less forcefully into the 1930s. Primarily an intellectual movement, a group of writers including Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, and Jean Toomer,[24] constituted America's first black literary constellation. As mentors and editors Alain Locke, Charles S.Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and W.E.B.Du Bois worked to inspire and promote that collection of intellectuals. Of course, white intellectuals and patrons also helped foster the New Negro Renaissance; Carl Van Vechten, Charlotte Osgood Mason, and Joel and Amy Springarn were among them. The writers considered part of the Renaissance did not subscribe to a consistent aesthetic and their work did not reflect one particular "New Negro" style; rather, their work offered traditionally crafted sonnets, modernist verse, jazz aesthetics and documentary folklore.[25] In their diversified approach to literature, these writers shared a broad commitment

to anthology, now inseparable from race propaganda and "pure" art. As a group they incorporated "high" and "low" cultures to forge individual identities as writers and, together, they constituted a movement and a location for a self-conscious production of a "Negro" literature.

Hurston's commitment to group expression as a version of black racial authenticity requires the anthological form for its representation. In her logic, "the folk" produce racial meaning, and their natural mode of behavior incorporates individual personalities into a larger project. Like the Renaissance itself, Hurston's vision of Negro art imagines a collective authenticity based on diversity. And in her essay, "Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals," also published in Cunard's *Negro* anthology, she explains the difference between "real" Negro spirituals and inauthentic ones: "The real spirituals are not really just songs. They are unceasing variations around a theme."[26] Built on an organizing thematic, Hurston's authentic racial art requires an anthological diversity. Like the individual authors who contributed to The New Negro, the "variations" in Hurston's reading of spirituals contribute separately to the collective presentation of an original, "real Negro" culture.

As inauthentic, neo-spirituals merely imitate the originality of spirituals. Moreover, these black cultural impostors reflect an educational apparatus—whiteness—that denies the crucial folk spirit:

> These neo-spirituals are the outgrowth of glee clubs…. They have spread their interpretation over America and Europe…there has not been one genuine spiritual presented. To begin with, Negro spirituals are not solo or quartet material. The jagged harmony is what makes it, and ceases to be what was when this is absent. Neither can any group be trained to reproduce it. Its truth dies under training like flowers under hot water (SNS 80).

As Hurston explains it, "jagged harmony" distinguishes "real Negro" spirituals from neo-spirituals; and, for her, the essential difference depends on instinct: an unlearned, natural behavior particular to the race. Thus, "Glee clubs and concert singers…get the pitch and burst into magnificent song—but not *Negro* song." Rather, the "real Negro singer cares nothing about pitch," his contribution lies in his primitive expression joined with that of other individuals in his community, "and the rest of the church join in—fired by the same inner urge. Every man trying to express himself through song. Every man for himself." This apparent contradiction between the notion of "every man for himself" and a collectivity denies the value of glee club harmony and it demonstrates the "unceasing variations around a theme" in which individual contributors produce the group project. Thus, Hurston's emphasis, *"Negro songs to be heard truly must he sung by a group"* (SNS 80 original emphasis) invokes the notion of anthology as an ideal racial and literary form, so that, more than organized harmony, distinct, multiple voices illustrate negroness. And, despite the discord and individuation

associated with an "every man for himself" sensibility, the authentic group remains unified by an unteachable, racial instinct.

Negro spirituals conceived as an explanation for a "Negro" art form illustrate the logic of Hurston's various literary projects, and they mirror Harlem Renaissance objectives. The "jagged harmony" in which multiple voices, however discordant, produce the race in racial art parallels the larger claims of representative diversity in Negro anthologies. Discord thus advocates group identity—a feature crucial to the early twentieth century conception of blackness — while its insistence on "the same inner urge" seeks to answer Du Bois's call for "the great message" delivered by "negroes bound and welded together." And, while Hurston's novels, short stories, autobiography, plays, essays, and folklore collections initially appear disconnected, they reflect in their very disconnection a coherent vision of "the real Negro." In her writing, recurring characters and overlapping stories portray a folk assortment that, like the Negro singing group, depict (via their cultural performance) a "jagged harmony" that literally and figuratively illustrates what it takes to be "black."

The story and title of Hurston's "The Eatonville Anthology" (1926) also engages an American anthological tradition while it performs the racial hieroglyphics detailed in "Characteristics of Negro Expression." Like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology* (1915, 1916), *The Eatonville Anthology* can be read as a regionalist depiction of a particular place and social class. As collectivities, each incorporates individual characters and stories to detail the characteristics of a small town. About his anthology, Anderson wrote "The stories belonged together," and he articulated a commitment shared by Masters and also by Hurston, "There were individual tales but all about lives in some way connected."[27] In each anthology, seemingly singular narratives come together to configure a location. In Eatonville folktales about Joe Clarke's porch and the townspeople whose lives revolve around it create an image of the community; and, in *Spoon River,* the two hundred and forty-four poems that represent the villagers' perspectives provide a picture of the small town. But, in addition to a portrait of a particular place, these modern anthologies claim something more. Anderson and Masters understood their projects as exposing the lost innocence of American small town life in the face of industrial advancements.[28] In this way, *Spoon River* and *Winesburg* represent the idea of a mid-western town, "Winesburg of course was no particular town. It was a mythical town" (Anderson 14), and according to Masters, *Spoon River* "came from me as my summation of what I had seen and lived,"[29] it ultimately reflected "a mythic view of America."[30] Eatonville, however, represents a mythic view of a race as well as of a "real" place. It does not share *Spoon River* and *Winesburg*'s ethnic anonymity. Rather, it racializes a place; Eatonville becomes particular and representative precisely because its inhabitants are black.

"The Eatonville Anthology" pictures a particular culture, and it practically demonstrates Hurston's theoretical explanation for categorical racial difference.

The story, itself divided into fourteen parts, offers a compilation of character sketches, folklore, song, and dance to ultimately offer a portrait of a race. As anthology, the particular town and the various stories enact the "jagged harmony" essential to making its racial anthology "real." The folk's behavior defines their blackness, so that in one of the few, unnamed sections, readers meet a woman, and in two short paragraphs they learn a great deal about her and her place in the community:

> Becky Moore has eleven children of assorted colors and sizes. She has never been married, but that's not her fault. She has never stopped any of the fathers of her children from proposing, so if she has no father for her children it's not her fault. The men round about are entirely to blame. The other mothers of the town are afraid that it is catching. They won't let their children play with hers (EA 178).

Becky Moore's description suggests a character with a limitless sexuality, a behavior Hurston insists pervades black communities ("love-making is a biological necessity the world over and an art among Negroes" (CNE 61)). And, as "action came before speech," Becky need not explain her thoughts, her behavior—sexuality now understood as art—speaks for itself. Similarly, Becky's reception, one by the men, another by the women, depicts the group discord. Even Becky's children, "of assorted sizes and colors" offers a hieroglyphic of the diversity, or "jagged harmony," Hurston presents as "real Negro" culture.

In its brief, insinuating narrative, the story of Becky Moore in Eatonville offers a sharp contrast to the next vignette concerning Tippy, the Jones family dog. The narrator/editor tells us, Tippy, like the rest of the family, loves bones; but, unlike the other Joneses who prefer the "bones" critical to gambling, Tippy enjoys the kind generally associated with dogs. But, Tippy, perhaps also like his family, likes to steal; punishment, even poisoning—cannot stop him, and the dog remains friendly despite the numerous attempts on his life. As it follows the Becky Moore description, "Tippy" initially appears as a *non sequitur,* but a closer examination of his actions (he steals), and of the Joneses themselves, "Sykes Jones' family all shoot craps" (EA 178), makes visible to the reader the behavior that helps to color the town. The seeming discontinuity of the sections recalls Du Bois's formal experiment with racial representation. But, rather than characterize an alternative history, "The Eatonville Anthology" divided into its several discordant parts, embodies a discrete spatial community. It connects anthology and race; and, unlike the historical narrative, Hurston's collection does not rely on ancestral continuity to make a racial community.

Although Eatonville experiences its moments of conflict, it equally enjoys instances of harmony. Becky, Tippy, and the Joneses may appear as contrasts, but as participants in an all-black town they share important commonalties. In "Double-Shuffle," another section of "The Eatonville Anthology," the entire

population comes together for a dance; and, despite variations in age and moral convictions, the folk find themselves acting the same way:

> People fall back against the walls, and let the soloist have it, shouting as they clap the old, old double shuffle songs.
>
> 'Me an' mah honey got two mo' days
> Two mo' days tuh do de buck'
>
> Sweating bodies, laughing mouths, grotesque faces, feet drumming fiercely. Deacons clapping as hard as the rest.
>
> 'Great big nigger, black as tar
> Trying tuh git tuh hebben on uh 'lectric car' (EA 182).

Together the group enjoys the "primitive" authenticity Hurston deploys to characterize their collective identity. As a result, the differences between Becky and other mothers, or between the Deacon and folks like the Joneses, disappear to become unified action. The "people" shout collectively. As a group, their clapping transforms them into "bodies," "mouths," "faces" and "feet" experiencing together a primal moment, and their behavior indisputably pictures their color. And, in a display of "Characteristics of Negro Expression," their song, in dialect, signals the hieroglyphics of race.

In "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928), Hurston explains this relation between music and "the primitive fury" she believes is inherent in the black unconscious:

> my color comes… I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop: I shake my assegai above my head…. I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way…. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum.

In this instance Hurston's "color" appears most vividly within the contrast of interracial contexts. "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background," she explains and continues, "sometimes its the other way around. A white person is set in our midst, but the contrast is just as sharp for me." Thus, in black/white spaces "color" becomes a self-conscious indication of the "the ocean and continent"[31] that, in her logic, separates the races. But, because their community is already black, the folk in Eatonville have no need to describe their color—"sweating bodies, laughing mouths and grotesque faces" personify who and what they are. The folk are merely being themselves, their behavior becomes the hieroglyphics of a racial distinction that in interracial contexts requires another kind of representation. In "Double-Shuffle" the "jungle way" prevails, it unifies the people in order to supersede other moments of individual discord, and it demonstrates the culture that makes them black. So, when Hurston writes, "At certain times I have no race, I am *me,*" she is not seeking, as Barbara Johnson has argued, to erase difference.[32] Rather, "[w]hen I set my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City," natural and

incorporated "Negro characteristics," her "angularity" and her poise already show her race, a representational freedom visible and available in separate Negro spaces such as in Harlem and in Eatonville.

"The Eatonville Anthology" realizes Hurston's racial and literary theories; as North writes, it "is an anthology of performances in the sense defined in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," each section with its own rhythm, the whole with a kind of jagged harmony" (187). He calls attention to the story's description of the town:

> The *town* was collected at the store-post office as is customary on Saturday nights. The *town* had its bath and with its weeks pay in pocket fares forth to be merry. The men tell stories and treat the ladies to soda-water, peanuts and peppermint candy" (EA 184 original emphasis).

North cogently makes a formal connection between an individual townsperson and the story told about him or her. He argues each person actually *becomes* his or her story, thus rendering "the town into anecdote until the anthology and the town are coextensive and synonymous" (North 188). He correctly calls attention to Hurston's investment in verbal performance. For him storytelling, narration, and vernacular speech effect the symmetry between person and place; however, he fails to acknowledge the importance of Hurston's formal choice as it literally maps blackness. The town not only becomes the story, but the town also becomes the form of the story. Both are a collectivity. For North, Hurston's achievement lies in her ability to show how the collection of townspeople literally embody Eatonville. In contrast, my point is that the people as a collectivity must become the place because anthology and the folk must necessarily come together for the race to be "real." For Hurston, anthology is the only way for readers to visualize the salient characteristics of the race and for them to see exactly its location.

Hurston's anthology declares racial boundaries as it delineates a separate space in an effort to protect the primacy and the purity of "the real Negro." As an "editor" of a racially representative collection, she claims a privileged position as a participant and as an observer of authentic black communities. She imagines herself as part of the Negro anthology, while at the same time she also envi sions herself objectively beyond the parameters of her representations. And, from that position she claims the authority to discern the "real" from the "fake." In *Mules and Men* (1935), one of Hurston's folklore collections, Franz Boas, Hurston's teacher and white authenticator explains her status: "she entered the homely life of the southern Negro as one of them…[t]hus she has been able to penetrate through that affected demeanor by which the Negro excludes the white observer from effectively participating in his true inner life." As a black herself, Hurston can enter all-black communities and they can remain "pure"; thus, only she can allow the folk to continue naturally and unconsciously racial.

Hurston's unique position as a participant and as an observer presents her use of the anthological form as more than representation. As part of the racial community she seeks to observe, Hurston's seemingly objective report concerning Negro folklore enjoys a status within and beyond the Veil. And, unlike Nancy Cunard, whose *Negro* anthology depended on contributions by Negroes to make it legitimate, Hurston's *Mules and Men* is Negro simply because she says so. Her potential as both an insider and an outsider does not actually reflect the ability to get to the "truth" more than any other insider (like Du Bois) or outsider (like Cunard); rather, it provides a level of credibility based on her status as one of the folk, and it thus reveals a great deal about the representative power Hurston claims for herself. It claims a realism beyond representation. As Barbara Johnson has also argued, the dynamic tension of inside/outside creates for Hurston a project full of possibilities.

In her introduction to *Mules and Men* Hurston writes, "I was glad when somebody told me, you may go and collect Negro folk-lore," and she immediately establishes her position. The "somebody" who charges her with the task of collecting stories from black people is white; and, as black, her mission into black space is non-threatening, "In a way it would not be a new experience for me. When I pitched head foremost into the world I landed in the crib of negroism," she explains. But, even as a part of what she calls "negroism," she acknowledges her view from "the spy-glass of Anthropology," and she claims another kind of representational position. As a black, Hurston can claim to see and know the "truth" naturally, and as a trained anthropologist she can claim to narrate it. In this way she imagines herself ideal; she can know and see black authenticity in a manner others cannot. And, like the "color" that comes in interracial contexts and disappears in purely racial ones, Hurston claims the amazing ability to become part of the Negro population, and at other times, distance herself from the group. Thus, the negroism, "it was fitting me like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it," becomes decipherable through her education, "only when I was off in college, away from my native surroundings, that I could see myself like somebody else and stand off and look at my garment" (MM 3). Hurston sees herself and her narrative voice as special: somehow, her view does not distort the art in the way education destroys real Negro spirituals.

Hurston imagines herself as one who can travel across the color-line, and as such, she envisions herself as its gate keeper. Her introduction to *Mules and Men* most clearly details this perspective. In her plans to escort readers into Eatonville, the Negro community where she grew up, Hurston calls attention to the line that divides the races. She also conceives a version of black authenticity that denies white people access; her role is to figuratively take her white audiences up to the Veil, leave them on their side, and after she accomplishes her mission, return to the color-line and reveal to them the "truth" only she can discover. The introduction to *Mules and Men* represents the first part of her journey; readers on both sides of the racial divide may travel with her—up to a point. Her words

demonstrate her special position: on the one hand, Hurston speaks the standard language of the academy, and on the other, she offers a folktale in her native vernacular. But, as her readers may initially believe they may follow her into the all-black town, Hurston reminds them that, if they are white, they may not enter the space of pure negroism.

Eatonville, "the city of five lakes, three croquet courts, three hundred brown skins, three hundred good swimmers, plenty guavas, two schools, and no jailhouse" is special precisely because no whites live within its boundaries. Hurston characterizes the town by its residents, their behavior, and their institutions. The peculiarities define the place, and white people alter its meaning. Hurston understands these terms and leaves whites outside the city limits, and on the other side of the color-line, "Before I enter the township," she writes in her introduction, "I wish to make my acknowledgments to Mrs. R.Osgood Mason" (MM 6), because Mrs. Mason, a white, may not follow her across the racial divide. Once past the introduction and into the world of negroism, she reinforces her notion of the town's originality by contrasting it with another town, Woodbridge:

> It is a Negro community joining Maitland on the north as Eatonville does on the west, but no enterprising souls have ever organized it. They have no schoolhouse, no post office, no mayor. It is lacking in Eatonville's feeling of unity. In fact, a white woman lives there (MM 15).

The white woman who lives in Woodbridge helps to define the place, her presence changes its demographics; and, while the place may still be considered "Negro," it lacks what it crucially needs in order claim authenticity. Woodbridge is not "pure," it lacks the "feeling of unity," or organization, that group identity so crucial to Hurston's racial ideal.

The white woman in Woodbridge creates an organizational and spatial conflict that overrides the possibility of group harmony. Unlike the discord essential to the "jagged harmony" of real blackness, her presence as a white produces the kind of contrast that, as Hurston has describes interracial contexts, creates racial self-consciousness. According to her theory the white woman in Woodbridge must cause the Negroes to feel their "color come" in a way that ultimately inhibits their freedom to be themselves. Their actions lose the unconsciousness that Hurston argues characterizes the natural originality of her people. In Eatonville however, the people ultimately share one identity. The three hundred brown skins, the mayor, the post office and the schoolhouse in Eatonville establish a collectivity; moreover, no whites live within its boundaries. In this town, the Negroes enjoy what Hurston calls a feeling of unity, a condition that enables each individual citizen to participate in unconsciously "black" behavior.

"Black" behavior, like the Negro town, and the racial anthology, depends on individual components organized into a whole. In Hurston's theory of racial

authenticity, culture organizes the group and it defines racial identity. Each member shares the same cultural identity; and, a white woman, like Mrs. Mason or like the woman in Woodbridge, naturally belongs to a different cultural group. In Eatonville, the townspeople all speak a certain vernacular—a vernacular Hurston argues demonstrates their collective culture and thought processes, and it ultimately offers proof of their race. In her discussion of dialect, for example, she describes an important distinction. Whites may say "I" when referring to themselves, but Negroes say "Ah," a difference she contends, is determined by the black speaker's full lips. This pronunciation represents her conceptualization of a distinctly African American speaker; and, in written form, it indicates visibly the black person's cultural difference from whites. In what would otherwise be considered regional difference, the spoken word delineates the racial community, and as each member speaks with the same full lips, each contributes to the final determination of what makes a person or a town truly "black."

The cultural organization of "the folk" depends on individual participation. Each person's actions make the culture (and thus, the race) "real." The contributory aspect of this configuration of culture and race again calls attention to the anthological form so crucial to Hurston's New Negro depictions of blackness. Moreover, it explains the logic of cultural performance: all witnesses literally contribute to the event. Thus, in "Characteristics of Negro Expression" dancing, like the speech described earlier, requires interaction from the spectator so that "[h]e is participating in the performance—he is carrying out the suggestions of the performer" (CNE 56). This notion of performance also includes storytelling. In Hurston's description of Daddy Mention, for instance, the people in the town participate in the story that quickly becomes fact:

> Just when or where Daddy Mention came into being will require some research: none of the guests at the Blue-Jay seem to know. Only one thing is certain about the wonder-working gentleman: he must have existed, since so many people claim to have known him (CNE 42).

Hurston writes, "so many people claim to have known him" when, actually, the people only know him through their stories. Indeed, the folks who "know" Daddy Mention, offer anecdotal contributions to the many stories that collectively call his individual persona into existence.

Group participation organizes the folklore collection in *Mules and Men*. Hurston describes the community coming together to relate the stories she has come to collect,

> The gregarious part of the town's population gathered on the store porch.
>
> All the Florida-flip players, all the eleven-card layers…
>
> 'Zora,' George Thomas informed me, you come to the right place if lies is what you want. Ah'm gointer lie up a nation.'

> Charlie Jones said, 'Yeah, man. Me and my sworn buddy Gene Brazzle is here. Big Moose done come down from de mountain' (MM 21).

The folk assemblage, each identified by name, not only characterizes the participation crucial to "Negro" folklore and cultural performance, it also brings to life North's notion of the town as anthology and the present argument concerning anthology as the formal organization for Hurston's theory of authentic racial representation. Notably, the actual people named in Hurston's fieldwork, appear in her fiction. Their stories about themselves and the culture they represent, create a sense of narrative continuity and racial enclosure that makes no distinction between art and reality.

George Thomas's words, "Ah'm gointer lie up a nation," produce its desired effect. His stories, or, as he calls them, his "lies," effect an image of a culture and produce the boundaries that circumscribe the terms of blackness. And, as an individual part of the assemblage of men, he participates in the anthological function. Each person on the store porch offers a contribution to the collection that becomes *Mules and Men,* and more importantly, each becomes the evidence of "the true inner life of the Negro." That evidence, performed on the porch stage, translated by Hurston, and authenticated by a white anthropologist, above all claims to offer a three dimensional model of what it means to be black. In a collective portrait of racial existence, the Eatonville folk become the national representatives of blackness in Hurston's America. As a group, the folk conform to what I have argued is an urgent twentieth century desire to locate and to contain blackness as part of a larger nationalist project.

The most meaningful way Hurston deploys her version of a tangible blackness is in her use of drama as a performative anthology. Her words to Langston Hughes, "Did I tell you about the new, *real* Negro theater I plan," not only demonstrates a commitment to culture and racial authenticity, it shows also her allegiance to theater. For Hurston, cultural performance, drama, and the "the real Negro" are synonymous; "the folk" enact the "hieroglyphics" of their racial meaning through their culturally determined actions and interactions. Their cultural performance reproduces the structure of anthology as the form for which Negroness becomes representable; performance portrays the ways in which the anthology as a collection of folk behavior can become more than words on a page. As "Characteristics of Negro Expression" explains, words only substitute for actual meaning. Theater, another, more direct medium to display Negro "hieroglyphics," incorporates the anthological function while it privileges the drama Hurston alleges characterizes the folk. Critics have overlooked this crucial aspect of her writing and have focused on her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), and her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1942). But, Hurston's essays on race, her folklore collections (including *Tell My Horse* (1938)), and her plays say more about her position concerning authenticity, culture, and racial representation. The plays and folklore collections ritualize

behavior and give substance to the notion of language as pictures and language as actions.

Hurston had made several, consistent attempts to launch a career as a playwright, and most importantly, as a producer of "*real* Negro theater." After receiving a second place award for *Color Struck,* her first play, in 1926 she published it in *Fire!!* Another play, *Spears*[33] (1925) appeared as she launched her career as a New Negro writer, and in 1927 she published *The First One* in Johnson's anthology *Ebony and Topaz*. In 1931 she wrote drama sketches for *Fast and Furious,* and *Jungle Scandals,* black musical reviews; and, her musical *The Great Day* (1931–32) was presented at the John Golden Theater in New York.[34] *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life in Three Acts* (1931) represents her best-known dramatic publication. She and Langston Hughes collaborated on the production that, because of a disagreement, was not performed during their lives.[35] Taken together, Hurston's plays constitute a major part of her literary production during the height of the Harlem Renaissance and should not be overlooked. Notably, in her youth Hurston first left Eatonville with a Gilbert and Sullivan traveling musical theater (1915), and she worked as a drama instructor at Bethune-Cookman College (1933–34), as a staff writer at Paramount Studios (1941), and again as drama instructor at North Carolina College for Negroes (1948). Her consistent and longstanding drama writing and theater employment reinforce her reliance on cultural performance evident in her other works; and, more than any other genre, the plays show the ways in which her notion of "the *real* Negro" requires a performance that must be seen.

In *Color Struck,* Hurston literally enacts a racial circumscription. It opens at the turn of the century in a Jim Crow railroad car. And, if the crisis of that era was to "see" and "know" racial difference, the setting of the play performs unmistakably the visibility of that difference. Even before the first distinguishable utterance, the stage direction offers a poignant illustration:

> [T]here is the sound of a locomotive whispering and a stopping engine, loud laughter, many people speaking at once, good natured shrieks, strumming of stringed instruments, etc. The ascending curtain discovers a happy lot of Negroes boarding the train dressed in the gaudy, tawdry best of 1900 (Fire!! 7).

The people's behavior tells the audience they are black; moreover, their "color comes" even before they physically arrive on stage. The laughter, the multiple and discordant voices, and the music offer a picture of the culture which immediately performs an identity. By themselves, the group's actions detail a recognizable culture; but, coupled with the imposition of the segregated railroad coach, "black" and "white" become absolute categories in a fixed location. By 1900 the "Negroes only" train symbolized the national, and institutionalized construction of racial difference. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision, perhaps one of the best-known Supreme Court rulings, had sanctioned the public

organization of racial categories and racialized space. Hurston's theatrical deployment of the Jim Crow system vividly explains her convictions concerning the meaning of difference. For her race difference is natural and performative; actions, speech, and even space reveal the evidence.

Hurston's version of "*real* Negro theater" requires a Jim Crow setting; in *Color Struck,* the segregated railroad car performs the distinction, and in *Mule Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life* (1931), Eatonville, the Negroes-only town, demonstrates the place from which the "authentic" drama will be enacted. In both instances Hurston depends on the public organization of space and behavior to show audiences her version of racial authenticity. In *Mule Bone,* the drama begins:

> Saturday afternoon and the villagers are gathered around the store. Several men are sitting on boxes at the edge of the porch chewing sugar cane, spitting tobacco juice, arguing, some whittling, some eating peanuts… People buying groceries, kids playing in the street, ect. General noise of conversation, laughter, and children shouting (MB 48).

As she explains in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," "actions came before speech" (CNE 49); and, as "true" Negro expression, the people's behavior on the porch shows the meaning of their race. Hurston does not have to announce the people's color—their behavior acts as its hieroglyphics. Again, the "jagged harmony" of multiple voices invokes the anthology, and laughter as well as a community assembled in a distinctly marked location tell the crucial story even before the drama's narrative officially begins.

As "speakerly" texts both plays emulate structures of actual speech in order to yield the illusion of oral narratives associated with "real" black culture.[36] Both ritualize oral performance, and as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes, speech "signif[ies] the sheer play of black language" (194). In *Mulebone,* talk on the storefront porch, public arguments and overheard conversations, however tangential to the plot, appear, as if only to show audiences examples of black culture. And, although the drama's plot depends on a quarrel between two men, Jim Weston and Dave Carter, whose friendship was inseparable before they began to compete for the affections of Daisy Taylor, the other men situated on Joe Clarke's porch produce the anthological effect and offer their unrelated, discordant stories for the hearer's consumption. In this way, the plot becomes subordinate to behavior. Walter, Lige, and Hambo, for example, exchange tales about chicken eating and Baptists. Lige describes a greedy preacher and his son, and the men respond:

HAMBO: Boy, you kin lie just like de cross-ties from Jacksonville to Key West. De presidin' elder must come round on his circuit teaching y'all how to tell 'em, cause you couldn't lie dat good just natural.

WALTER: Can't nobody beat Baptist folks lying…and I ain't never found out how come you think youse so important (MB 61).

Because Lige is a Methodist, the men refuse to believe his storytelling skills are authentic. Their disbelief reflects the class conflict of the sub-plot, a contest between the town's Baptist and Methodist congregations. This story about the preacher and his son, situated within another story (the tension between two religious denominations), is part of the larger story concerning Jim and Dave's rivalry. This story within a story reflects the "plays of language that seem to be present essentially to reveal the complexity of black oral forms of narration" (Gates 195). By the time the *Mulebone* plot returns to Jim and Dave, the audience experiences various aspects of Negro expression as if each individual speech performance is as crucial to the play as the collective plot itself.

The ritualizing of oral expression requires the kind of performance crucial to the dramatic genre. In *Mulebone* characters become audience as each individual acts out folk tales, sings, and tells the "lies" that are compounded into the play as theater, the play as the town, and the play as Negro life. As they tell stories, Lige, Walter, and Moseley are participants in the drama Hurston characterizes as "*real* Negro theater," but as they witness Dave and Jim's behavior and argument, the men become observers—part of the audience that crucially participates in "real" Negro actions. Similarly, in *Color Struck,* Emma, the protagonist, observes black culture. In the Dance Hall scene, for example, few words propel the plot. The stage direction describes the action:

> Emma springs to her feet and flings the curtain wide open. She stands staring at the gay scene for a moment defiantly then she creeps to a seat along the wall and shrinks into the Spanish Moss, motionless (CS 11).

The scene in view—also the one the external audience sees—portrays a Southern cakewalk. Emma, once a favored competitor, watches her lover, John, "prance" with a mulatto woman, Effie. And, while the main plot depends on Emma's unfounded jealousy, the scene represents an extended display of black culture: the discord of "jagged harmony." The stage direction describes a seven to nine minute depiction of the cake, the music, the dance movements as well as the spectators' participation.

Like *Mulebone*'s oral digressions, the cakewalk show in *Color Struck* ritualizes cultural performance to illustrate racial meaning. And, as both dramas portray its characters as participants and also as observers of Negro expression, they recall Gates's perceptive description of free indirect discourse in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In his argument, Hurston introduces free indirect discourse into African American narration as the rhetorical analogue to the metaphors of inside and outside in *Their Eyes*. He contends her innovation resolves the tension between standard English and dialect to explore the expressive possibilities of black oral forms and the articulation of a racial self. Gates's position concerning narrative form and voice in *Their Eyes* informs the critical possibilities not only for *Mules and Men* where the representative folk tales are at once dynamically told and dynamically heard, but also for the plays. A kind of free indirect discourse

produces the “hieroglyphics” for what Hurston believes is racial authenticity. In each instance, actors observe, overhear, and participate in a multifaceted storytelling in which the stories compound into a culture, and consequently, they become the racial anthology that is both Eatonville and Harlem.

Chapter Three
"Unspoken Words Are Stronger"
Narrative Interiority and Racial Visibility in Gwendolyn Brooks's Maud Martha

TRYING TO LOOK NONCHALANT, SHE SAT." AT THE ANNUAL FOXY CATS Dawn Ball, a pregnant Maud Martha watches her husband Paul dance "with someone red-haired and curved, and white as a white…[h]er gold spangled bosom was pressed—was pressed against that maleness—." As she silently observes her man with another woman, "white as a white," Maud Martha "sat, trying not to show the inferiority she did not feel" (85). It is precisely the *feeling of inferiority* that the decisive footnote number 11 to the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) made crucial to its new, integrationist account of "Negroness." What Maud Martha feels—and how or whether she shows what she feels—is in this sense essential to the question of whether she is "black." Indeed, this description of Maud Martha in Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha* (1953), could be read as both an endorsement and a critique of the Court's identification of "Negroness" with feeling and with inferiority: the feeling is essential, the inferiority is denied. At the same time, however, some readers may find inferiority in Maud Martha's compulsion to deny it. The other woman, defined here not as black but not exactly as white, makes Maud feel *something*. The woman is "white as a white." It is as if the choice—Paul's choice—is defined here as the choice between two forms of racial identity: a blackness (Maud Martha's) that is identified by the primacy of psychology and a certain inferiority, and, not a whiteness, but an "imitation" whiteness, that is identified not with feelings but with looks: the woman's red hair, her white skin, her bosom. Indeed, Paul's choice is Maud's problem—to be like the woman is to be not white, but inauthentically black; to be who she is, sitting on a bench by the wall, is to be black, but only by virtue of her battle with the feeling of inferiority. The problem, then, is how to imagine a racial identity that is neither inferior nor inauthentic. Maud Martha's insistence on concealment—not on *what* she feels but on trying not to show *that* she feels—suggests what would become a new site of an interiorized racial distinction: the home. It is the pri vate, and above all, the gendered space of the home that will become for Maud Martha the new place of race and a new location for the literal domestication of racial difference.

Like the other woman, and as his desire for her is meant to show, Paul is "imitation" white. He wants to be "white," and like Homer Plessy he seeks the space and the mobility associated with white skin and white ancestors. His

excitement and his attendance at the Foxy Cats Dawn Ball demonstrates his desire,

> came the invitation that Paul recognized as an honor of the first water, and as a sufficient indication that he was, at last, a social somebody. The invitation was from the Foxy Cats Club…. Twenty men were in the Foxy Cats Club. All were good looking. All wore clothes that were rich and suave. All "handled money" (79–80).

In his effort to become a "social somebody," Paul wants what the Foxy Cats have, which, in addition to good looks (i.e., light skin), rich clothes, and jobs that "handle money," is to "have" women who, as the chapter title suggests, were "light and have long hair." His dance with Gold Spangles (the name Maud uses to refer to the other woman), demonstrates his effort to be closer to "white." To possess a woman, "white as a white," a woman whose breasts and cheeks press against his "maleness," is to cross, at least symbolically, the racial divide: the "white" woman is within his reach.

Within the logic of racial authenticity, Paul cannot become "white," his desire to acquire the trappings of whiteness reveal his inauthenticity as "black." Maud, however, is "truly" black. Unlike Paul, she has no desire to imitate the behavior, characteristics, or possessions associated with the Foxy Cats' hierarchy of skin privilege; she is the real thing and her status cannot be determined by "tangible" factors. For Maud, color does not access the critical feature of identity, "[w]hat I am inside, what is really me, he likes okay. But he keeps looking at my color, which is like a wall" (87). Paul sees color that, like behavior or clothes, he understands to determine social significance, "he was thinking that on the strength of his appearance and sophisticated behavior at this Ball might depend his future admission (for why not dream?) to *membership,* actually, in the Foxy Cats Club!" (82).

Maud's presence at the Ball, or more precisely, her *emotional position,* produces the distinction between her racial legitimacy and Paul's lack of it. In watching him dance with the woman—who, "white as a white" suggests the possibility of an other "authentic"—Maud understands the difference:

> 'I could,' considered Maud Martha, 'go over there and scratch her upsweep down. I could spit on her back. I could scream. "Listen," I could scream, "I'm making a baby for this man and I mean to do it in peace."'

But her consciousness intercepts her action, "if the root is sour what business did she have up there hacking up the leaf?" (88). For Maud Martha, an intellectual, Paul's perspective is part of a larger, social problem. Gold-Spangles and what she might represent, suggests the ambivalent relations between color and culture — a problem of the connection between the color that is on the outside and the racial reality that is on the inside. This discrepancy between Maud and Paul's

perception of race immediately troubles their private relationship. What kind of life can Maud lead when, even within her apparently black world, her status as a "real" black distinguishes her from the "fakes"? Her response requires that she turn inward, as Georg Lukacs describes, toward a private space within herself and her memory, that, in an effort to balance the tension associated with her marital incompatibility, lends her the "peace" she cannot enjoy with Paul.

For Maud Martha "home" and notions of home, conceived as a private retreat, emerge to illustrate and to contain the particularity that alienates her from her surroundings. Before Paul leaves Maud to dance with Gold-Spangles, Maud perceives the Ball as a place beyond her values,

> The Ball made toys of her emotions, stirred her variously. But she was anxious to have it end, she was anxious to be home again, with the door closed behind herself and her husband (84).

On the surface, the Ball arouses Maud, it "stirred her variously." But on a deeper level, it merely teases, it "made toys of her emotions," and she prefers to divorce herself from it. Initially she thinks "home" could incorporate her notion of marriage and domestic happiness, but as Paul's dance with Gold-Spangles illustrates, her husband belongs to a place outside "home." In him Maud imagines, "that extraordinary quality of maleness. Hiding in that body that was not *too* yellow, waiting to spring out at her, surround her (she liked to think)—that maleness" (83), is a kind of interior that she hopes she can feel. But as the Foxy Cats experience demonstrates, she and her husband are not of the same place. And, rather than sit on that bench by the wall, showing an inferiority she does feel, Maud denies the inferiority by concealing her feelings within the privacy of her memory and her recollections of "home":

> Maud Martha thought of her parents' back yard. Fresh. Clean. Smokeless. In her childhood, a snowball bush had shone there, big above the dandelions. The snowballs had been big, healthy. Once she and her sister and brother had waited in the backyard for their parents to finish readying themselves for a trip to Milwaukee. The snowballs had been so beautiful, so fat and startlingly white in the sunlight, that she had suddenly loved home a thousand times more than ever before, and had not wanted to go to Milwaukee (86–87).

An idealized house and family become her safe, separate sphere, one which she has no desire to leave—one in which she would prefer that she and her husband could remain—and also one from which "precious private identities" can develop and would later allow her to "donate to the world a good Maud Martha… the bit of art, that could not come from any other" (21–22).

Unlike Paul Laurence Dunbar's celebrated "black" poems and the racial ethnography crucial to Zora Neale Hurston's literary representations of "the

negro farthest down," *Maud Martha* rejects an earlier literary and cultural insistence on the tangibility of racial difference. A recognizable vernacular speech or cultural performance offer no insight into the "color" of Brooks's protagonist whose thinking becomes the "truth" that reader's are required to trust. Unseen and unspoken feeling define the terms of the protagonist's race, and it offers an alternative version of what makes this text "black." Brooks's novel represents an emerging era—an era that required the crucial difference between "black" and "white" to turn inward. By mid-century increasing demands for integration required a reconfiguration of racial ideology, and rather than a question of recognition, the "Negro problem" became one of integration and feeling. More precisely, it became less an issue of visibility and culture and more an issue of psychology. If, with desegregation, blacks and whites were to share the same public space, then the material conditions that separated their racial identity would be no longer viable. *Brown v. Board of Education* represents this major historical and institutional change in the *perception* of race and it defines a new status for the Negro in American politics and culture. Whereas in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) the doctrine of segregation insists on a visible and public organization of racial difference, the *Brown* decision's support for integrated public education dismantled the emphasis on the external and visible aspects of race in favor of what the Court called "intangible considerations." It required black and white to be legally undifferentiable by offering to dismantle separately raced curricula and facilities. In its response to the material realities of racial difference, the Supreme Court was compelled to reconsider the logic of physical distinction, "[o]ur decision…cannot turn on merely a comparison of these tangible factors."[1] The integrationist dismissal of the material and public manifestations of race in favor of a consideration of the "intangible" characteristics of black and white social identity moves away from discourses of public to private, from the realm of the cultural community enacted and depicted by writers like Hurston, to the psychology of the individual, a psychology both constituted and represented by writers like Gwendolyn Brooks.

Brooks's novel stands at the cusp of the reconfiguration of racial difference in that blackness once marked by culture, oral performance, and public space, has become understood not as a question of separate but "equal," but as a question of feeling and a distinct psychology. Barbara Christian writes, "*Maud Martha* is a work that both expresses the mores of a time passing and prefigures the preoccupations to come."[2] She situates *Maud Martha* within the historical context of the novels written by African Americans whose approach to new subjects and settings characterize a departure from the "protest" novels of the 1930s and 1940s.[3] Unlike Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and *Black Boy* (1945), as well as Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), novels such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Petry's *The Narrows* (1953) and Wright's *The Outsider* (1953) reject depictions of protagonists who, victimized by negative social forces, become agents of the author's social fight with words. The Cold War integrationist moment in American culture coincided with a representational

commitment to individual experience within a racially specific community. But, beyond the claim of a racially specific individuality, its representation required interiority. Brooks's protagonist characterizes the contradiction between speech and silence, between the "tangible" and the invisible factors of racial difference and between public persona and private identity. She represents the emergence of a new black protagonist and she does so by demonstrating how she feels inside.

Litigation for the *Brown* decision occurred at the close of World War II, a moment when the tenets of democracy carried particular weight in domestic and international public opinion. In response to the mounting crisis of the Cold War, the U.S. Attorney General and the Secretary of State registered their concern regarding segregation, it "furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills and it raises doubt even among the friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith."[4] As Gunnar Myrdal explains in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), his influential study of American life and politics, the war compelled the nation to "stand before the whole world in favor of racial tolerance, cooperation and of racial equality. It had to proclaim universal brotherhood and the inalienable freedoms."[5] Consequently, the moral and political implications of the war necessitated a reconsideration of the Negro question, "there is bound to be a redefinition of the Negro's status in America as a result of this war," writes Myrdal, who like sociologist E.Franklin Frazier, notes the emergence of the Negro as an "organized" racial minority, having its own institutions.[6] For both Myrdal and Frazier, "Negroes are beginning to form a self-conscious 'nation within the nation,' defining ever more clearly their fundamental grievances against white America" (Myrdal 1004).

This understanding of a separate, and internal, black nationality within the borders of the United States draws attention to the emergence of the *African American* whose limited interaction in the larger national community became a moral issue that challenged the "American Creed." It created a new dilemma, "a problem at the heart of every American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on" (Myrdal 4). As a revised articulation of the Negro problem, this crisis, "at the heart of every American," signals a new domestic issue, one that threatens the very credibility of American democracy. It marks a departure from the logical effects of *Plessy* by rejecting the notion of racial difference as visible and material and it inaugurates the emerging interest in the "intangible considerations" that become the necessary focus of any inquiry into the new Negro problem and its implications concerning, "the actual life of the Negro and of America" (Frazier vii).

For the Supreme Court this new version of the Negro problem now depended on factors that could not be seen. The unanimous decision to desegregate public schools despite the claim of "separate but equal" facilities and curriculum was grounded in notions of an internalized racial identity:

> To separate [black children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way likely ever to be undone.

Black children's feeling a "sense of inferiority" becomes the intangible, yet decisive, "evidence" that convinces the Court that "separate but equal" is unconstitutional. This sentiment relocates the defining characteristics of racial difference in public space. Presumably, black and white children attending the same schools share the same culture and institutions; their physical differences no longer distinguish their status, and; consequently, the only potentially differentiating characteristics are the feelings that mark their hearts and minds and also characterize their race.

Justification for this approach to the psychological contours of blackness came from a host of social scientists listed in the now famous footnote 11 of the Supreme Court's decision. The footnote lists research by Myrdal and Frazier, but cites most explicitly the findings of black psychologists Kenneth B.Clark and Mamie P.Clark. Their well-known "Dolls Test" gave meaning to the invisible marks of racial difference that were to redefine racial ideology and the terms of authenticity for many years to come. Using the projective techniques of social psychology, the Clarks sought to analyze the "genesis of development of racial awareness in Negro children." They presented 250 Negro children with four dolls, "identical in every way save skin color."[7] The children were asked several questions designed to reveal their racial identification and their racial preference. The study found that the majority of the black and white children from both segregated and integrated environments in the North and the South understood and reacted to concepts of "colored" and "white" (604), and "attendance at public schools facilitates the development of this verbalization of the race concept" (605). They also found "Negro children prefer the *white* doll and reject the colored doll," thus implying "a concomitant negative attitude toward the brown doll." For the Clarks and their colleagues in social psychology, the discovery of racial preference in Negro children revealed important implications concerning their *"racial mental hygiene"* (608, original emphasis). Black children had internalized the racial hierarchy that rendered their color inferior. Moreover, their feeling of racial inferiority would disrupt their psychological development and \ threaten their potential as individuals and as productive American citizens.[8] As a result, discourses around "black" psychology and its "intangible considerations" secured the status of racial authenticity and racial difference despite integrated cultures, institutions, and public space.

The idea that segregation may negatively affect "the hearts and minds" of black children effects a new emphasis on the psychology of blackness, as it rewrites what Hurston thought of as "true" Negro culture with a pathological stereotype. It evacuates Hurston's understanding of the benefits of black racial and cultural distinction by reinforcing a hierarchy of identity that Hurston denied:

"I am not tragically colored… I do not mind at all."[9] As if in direct repudiation of Hurston's celebration of black culture and performance as well as of her disregard for psychology as racial distinction, Gwendolyn Brooks produces a novel in which internal thought processes become crucial. Like the *Brown* decision, *Maud Martha* privileges individual psychology over collective culture, and in its narrative description of the protagonist's psychic interior, the novel represents a literary historical transformation of the "real" Negro. It introduces readers to a person whose race is above all in her mind. Formally, this will involve a rejection of the "speakerly text" and its replacement by interior monologue. Thematically, this means that Maud Martha "was going to keep herself to herself." For Hurston "It is thrilling to think—to know that for any act of mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or weep" ("How It Feels" 152). But for Brooks, performance and the attention it generates is neither a necessary nor a desirable requirement for establishing a notable identity, Maud Martha "had never understood how people could parade themselves on a stage like that, exhibit their precious private identities… She did not want fame. She did not want to be a star" (22). Rather, the "truth" about Maud's racial status and her individual identity would be made visible by an imagistic interpretation of her thoughts and feelings.

Maud Martha, Brooks's only novel, like the decision in *Brown,* participates in a formal reconfiguration of what it means to be "black." The color-line and its attendant "Negro question" takes on new characteristics as *Brown* is in litigation and as *Maud Martha* is written and published. Blackness begins to be felt, instead of performed; it is understood as internal rather than as visually identifiable. Its marks are inscribed in the "hearts and minds" of blacks who, with integration, will be imagined to share one outwardly indistinguishable culture with whites. Consequently, the commitment to visual recognition in *Plessy* that corresponds to Hurston's uses of culture and performance has been redescribed as psychological difference in *Brown* and narratological interiority in *Maud Martha*. In other words, the Negro whose reality was once a function of public performance has, with integration, taken on a new, subtle presence marked by psychology.

Integration and its theoretical promise of legal equality created a literary moment in which "universality" would equalize individuals so that the particulars of race would make no difference in outward human reality. In "The Negro in Literature," a special issue of the journal, *Phylon,* founded by W.E.B.Du Bois, black critics and writers were asked, "Would you agree with those who feel that the Negro writer, the Negro as subject, and the Negro critic and scholar are moving toward an "unlabeled" future in which they will be measured without regard to racial origin and conditioning?"[10] The question was meant to highlight the integrationist moment as well as the "universalist" trend in African American literature. In her answer Brooks writes:

> Every poet has 'something to say.' Simply because he is a Negro; he cannot escape having important things to say…. But no real artist is going to be content offering raw materials. The Negro poet's most urgent duty, at present, is to polish his technique, his way of presenting his truths and beauties, that these may be more insinuating, and, therefore, overwhelming (*Phylon* 312).

Her commitment to formal, even modernist craft, exemplified in her Pulitzer Prize winning poetry collection, *Annie Allen* (1949), and later in *Maud Martha,* won her a reputation as "the exemplar of a new wave of emancipated black writers with great interest in form and craft, universalism—whether devoted to blacks or not—elimination of propaganda or its subordination to artistic concerns, exploration of non-racial themes, and global thinking."[11] Thus, Brooks's skill as a poet and later as a novelist was understood to allow her to "transcend" the limits of "black" writing and access the literary space of the "universal." Like the black children integrating white schools, her writing had seemingly overcome the external factors of difference. In what she recalls as "the review that initiated my Reputation," critic Paul Engle characterizes her poetry collection, *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945), as "*an event of national importance,* for Miss Brooks is the first Negro poet to write wholly out of a deep and imaginative talent, without relying on the fact of color to draw sympathy and interest…. This is a remarkable thing which must be praised" (quoted in Kent 74, emphasis added.). Like the inauguration of Paul Laurence Dunbar's career more than a half-century earlier, Gwendolyn Brooks emerges as a new symbol for black writing. But unlike Dunbar's negro dialect poems, the significance of Brooks's achievement lies not in its ability to *embody* a racial ideal but rather in its ability to *appear* raceless and universal.

Brooks's literary "racelessness," however, is only superficial. Despite reviews that praised her "universality," readers and critics insisted on recalling her race. White critics like Engle, noting her achievement as an exceptional black who has shed the cultural isolation of "race defense, protest, and glorification," nevertheless found traces of a blackness that would otherwise be invisible: *Maud Martha* "reveals, almost incidentally, those non-essential, traumatic conflicts no white American knows anything about" (quoted in Kent 112). Black critics were also invested in racial exceptionalism, but for them Brooks's formal ability to produce something "so deeply and movingly human" meant that she had the special gift of what Alain Locke called "universalized particularity." For him, black creative writers offered a more articulate double-consciousness, to "Give us Negro life and experience in all the arts but with a third dimension of universalized common-denominator humanity" (*Phylon* 393), and in this way, as Brooks herself contends, be "more objective and less racialistic—in the limiting sense of chauvinism—but withal even more racial in the better sense of being more deeply felt and projected" (quoted in Kent 98, 99). In both instances the perception of black writers generally, and Gwendolyn Brooks in particular,

remained deeply embedded in Jim Crow aesthetics—race required distinction, albeit in alternative terms. Like the *Brown* decision, "tangible factors" could no longer delineate justifiable difference. Language and form became "universal" and "equally" accessible; but, as black children were thought to feel the reality of race in their hearts and minds, black writers purportedly felt and projected the "truth" and complexity of their own identities.

Maud Martha thus opens not with description of her physical characteristics, but of her desires, "What she wanted was candy buttons, and books, and painted music…and dandelions" (1). The narrative privileges the "intangible" factors that define Maud: her desires, colors, sounds, smells, shapes and tastes. Only after these abstract features of her identity are established can the reader "see" the materiality of her race. Maud Martha Brown is black, with dark skin and thick hair. In contrast to her light-skinned sister, Maud was "poor, and Helen was still the ranking queen" (35). This color discrepancy between the sisters brings the tension of racial hierarchy and difference "home," into the private life of the protagonist. It draws attention to the inward turn of racial recognition not only between "black" and "white," but also similar relations within and between "black" and "black." An early chapter, shrewdly titled "Helen," describes a childhood memory in which Maud and her sister are walking home from school when a boy with a wagon approaches them and asks, "how about a ride?" Maud takes a chance and greets him, "hi, handsome," she exclaims, and the boy replies with "his dark face darkening… I don't mean you, you old black gal… I mean Helen" (33– 34). This moment, when Maud—not her light-skinned sister—is identified as an "old black gal," characterizes the driving force of the novel: racial authenticity at its innermost moment, within the community and within the individual. "To be cherished was the dearest wish of the heart of Maud Martha Brown" (2). But, even within her family, Maud's status is less than her sister's, "the basic situation had never changed. Helen was still the one they wanted in the wagon," and "the memory hurt" (34).

Maud's recollection of rejection draws attention to the "intangible considerations" that make this story "authentic." It characterizes a dilemma not available to the public eye: even in her most private moments Maud bears the burden of her color. The logic according to which Negro children's hearts and minds carry a "feeling" of inferiority becomes the grammar by which American culture literalizes race in the private lives of individuals, in seemingly raceless words, and in desegregated contexts. *Maud Martha* is racially marked not simply because its main characters are black, but precisely because its story depends on the "intangible considerations" that organize the protagonist's experience. As it raises the specter of racial history, Maud's memory is at once particular and representative. It illustrates her individual experience while it survives as a more general record of the social rituals of racial distinction. In what Pierre Nora calls a "site of memory," the story of Maud, Helen and the boy with the wagon "deliberately creates archives" that "mark the rituals of society without ritual," and "offer signs of distinction and of group membership."[12]

Although Maud's story suggests a historical continuity and group identity, it does so by way of an individual psychology. Her *memory* "hurt," and, as such, it defines her status within her family as well as within her specifically African American community. Moreover, it calls her individuality into being precisely because it characterizes her particular interiority. The boy's preference for the light-skinned Helen parallels the Clarks's findings concerning their doll studies in which African American children expressed a clear and consistent preference for white dolls over brown ones. The Clarks's research was meant to make intelligible the psychological effects of racial hierarchy on black children. Their approach was designed to "induce the individual to reveal his way of organizing experience…so that the personality can project upon the plastic field his way of seeing life, his meanings, significances, patterns, and especially his feelings."[13] *Maud Martha* does exactly that. It illustrates Maud Martha's experience, an experience that defines her particularly raced and gendered status. It parallels the Clarks' findings concerning the psychological effects of race by making Maud's feelings "real" and tangible. It produces images of otherwise abstract concepts that correspond to Brooks's literary aesthetic in which the writer "is constrained to do something with words so that they will "mean something," will *be* something that a reader may touch."[14]

Viewing Brooks's translation of the "intangible" into "something a reader may touch," readers come to understand that Maud Martha's racial feeling *becomes* the salient evidence of her blackness. Maud lives in an environment in which her race does not deny her access to any public space; but, despite, or rather because of the outward performance of desegregation, Maud carries the burden of the color-line inside herself. In the chapter "we're the only colored people here" Maud and her husband Paul attend a film at a predominantly white movie house. As they approach the theater, readers learn that Maud is apprehensive and Paul is afraid. Will the white people be mean to them, will they be denied access? Neither happens, but as Maud and Paul encounter whites, they feel their racial difference and they interpret that feeling as one also seen and felt by whites:

> The people in the lobby tried to avoid looking curiously at two shy Negroes wanting desperately not to seem shy. The white women looked at the Negro woman in her outfit with which no special fault could be found, but with which made them think, somehow of close rooms, and wee, close lives…. The white men tried not to look at the Negro man in the blue work shirt, the Negro man without a tie. (76).

Maud and Paul have not exchanged words with the white people at the movies so they can only imagine their perceptions. Maud, however, thinks she knows the meaning behind the white women's looks, she believes she understands the significance of the white men's actions. Indeed, given that the integrated public space of the movie theater does not itself articulate racial distinction, it is only the way Maud and Paul feel that makes racial distinction real. The "truth" of

their race is not designated by the separate seating of Jim Crow, nor is it reflected in the characteristic behavior invoked by Hurston's racial ethnography. Brooks imagines Maud and Paul sitting with white people and behaving in a way indistinguishable from the way whites behave—this is the whole point of her having them go to the "World Playhouse" instead of to the "Tivoli," "where many colored people went every night" (77). Now public deracialization that makes private racialization possible; under integration, private racial feeling takes the place of outward racial appearance and bebavior. As "the only colored people here," Maud and Paul have internalized the significances of racial difference to the extent that its public expression is no longer necessary or even relevant.

Like memory, racial feeling invents continuity. In the chapter "trees leaves leaving trees," Maud takes her daughter Paulette to a department store to visit Santa Claus. Even as their holiday trip is a custom common to both blacks and whites, mother and child cannot escape feeling the prejudice that produces the relevance of their race. The white Santa Claus, who merrily attends the numerous white children, seems disinterested in the black child Paulette, and noticing this, Maud tries to protect her daughter from the "hurt" of his rejection. "Hey Mister, my little girl is talking to you," she says in an unusual demonstration of the spoken word. "Santa Claus's neck turned with a hard slowness, carrying his unwilling face with it" (173), and performing the function of his role, he listens to Paulette's Christmas wish list. The child feels his preference for the white children, and when the two leave the store, Paulette asks, "Why didn't Santa Claus like me?" And knowing her daughter has experienced the rejection that she herself can recall as a child, Maud replies, "Baby, of course he liked you." Despite Maud's words of assurance, the child knows the truth, "He didn't like me…. He liked the other children. He smiled at them and shook their hands" (174). At this very instant the child becomes "Negro"; the intangible memory becomes its tangible result, and Maud, unable to save her daughter from feeling her race and experiencing its effects, "wanted to cry" (176).

It is this moment at the department store that contemporary critics consider revealing. The narrative describes Maud's thoughts:

> There were scraps of baffled hate in her, hate with no eyes, no smile and—this she especially regretted, called her hungriest lack—not much voice. (176)

In her groundbreaking essays on the novel Mary Helen Washington interprets this instance as an example of the racist and sexist imposition on a black woman's ability to speak.[15] It is "evidence of a woman denied expression of powerful feelings" ("Taming" 251). Calling for a reading of *Maud Martha* that reflects the collective historical and political realities of black women in the 1940s, Washington writes, "no one seemed prepared to call *Maud Martha* a novel about bitterness, rage, self-hatred and silence that results from suppressed

anger…what reviewers saw as exquisite lyricism was actually the truncated stutterings of a woman whose rage makes her literally unable to speak" ("Taming" 249). Similarly, Phillip Brian Harper argues the Santa Claus scene indicates Maud's specifically raced and gendered subjectivities which, when appropriately historicized, "illuminate[s] the effects of an increasingly totalized capitalist system upon the subjects whom that system touches."[16] While both critics identify Maud's direct address to Santa as a moment in which she asserts her agency, they also perceive her utterance as an ineffective act of resistance. Both Harper and Washington view the historical realities of race and gender as forceful limits to Maud's ability to express herself.

Indeed, race and gender particularly inform Maud's subjectivity, but as feeling replaces culture and performed speech, Maud does not have to speak in order for Brooks to communicate effectively her racial complexities. Brooks presents Maud Martha as an intellectual whose thinking exceeds the possibilities of her social world. The interior narrative that advises readers of "her hungriest lack—not much voice" vividly *articulates* the specificities of her experience. Maud's "silent speech" represents not the problem of a black woman having no voice, but rather her narratological preference for interiority. Because Maud believes she is "much smarter" than people around her, her silence thus represents her choice to privilege the mind, "It was not their fault. She understood. They could not help it. They were enslaved, were fascinated" (35). The question of identity informed by race and gender refuses simple answers. For Maud the "truth" about her experience is too complex to be spoken or obvious; Maud's interiority allows Brooks to explore what she herself celebrates, "unspoken words are stronger."[17] Because they are "nuanceful" (*Report* 190), the images Maud creates from her feelings offer a variation of tone, color, and meaning in a manner that is perhaps more immediate than speech.

In "self solace" Maud witnesses a conversation between a white woman and her hair dresser, a black woman named Sonia Johnson. She thinks she hears Miss Ingram, the white woman, say the word "nigger,"

> Maud Martha's head shot up. She did not look at Miss Ingram. She stared intently at Sonia Johnson. Sonia Johnson's…smile remained. Her eyes turned, as if magnetized, toward Maud Martha; but she forced her smile to stay on.

But since Mrs. Johnson does not verbally respond, Maud is satisfied the word was not spoken and she muses, "I'm glad, though, that she didn't say it… I would feel that it was my duty to help Mrs. Johnson get it settled… Sometimes fighting is interesting. Today, it would have been just plain old ugly duty." She then considers her own response to Miss Ingram if the word had been said, "I wouldn't curse. I wouldn't holler. I would be gentle in a cold way. I would give her, not a return insult—directly, at any rate!—but information." When the white woman leaves, Maud learns that the woman did indeed utter the word, and Mrs.

Johnson explains why she did not rebuke her, "Why go getting all hot and bothered all the time?" Recognizing Mrs. Johnson's apparent apathy, Maud has the chance to speak and *chooses* to keep her words to herself. Her choice in this instance represents an important discursive shift that, in contrast to Hurston's privileging of words and actions, interiorizes the significance of race: "Maud Martha stared steadily into Sonia Johnson's irises. She said nothing, she kept on staring into Sonia Johnson's irises" (142).

Unlike Hurston's dismissal of racial interiority ("there is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes"), Brooks's Maud Martha looks for intent inside Sonia, behind her eyes. Notably, this is the second time Maud's eyes meet Sonia's; when Miss Ingram initially utters the slur the two black women exchange a meaningful look—drawn together "as if magnetized,"—that not only indicates mutual recognition but also significance. Whether or not Maud discovers meaning behind Mrs. Johnson's eyes, her desire to locate it there reveals Maud's commitment to interiority as the site of meaning. She seeks to discover Sonia's feelings in an attempt to make sense of her actions, or rather, her inaction. And, unlike Santa Claus, whose "evading eye" (175) eliminates the possibility of recognition, Maud and Sonia's exchange suggests possibility that, however uncertain, is not as Harper argues, ineffective resistance, but rather, is what Georg Lukacs describes as *the* problematic associated with the discovery of meaning.[18] "Truth"—not resistance—is Maud's objective, and at this literary historical moment, racial "truth" is psychological rather than cultural, individual rather than collective. In order for Maud to uncover a continuity in Sonia's authenticity, she has to witness her psyche; she must discover the unarticulated and intangible evidence of the "hurt" associated with the word "nigger." But, since Sonia acts as Maud Martha would—"I wouldn't curse. I wouldn't holler."—neither willingly disclose the feeling that privately marks them in a publically deracialized environment. The force of Sonia's inaction successfully conceals what lies behind her eyes. Is she "truly" black, or does her lack of response betray her inauthenticity? Indeed, Sonia's silence first draws attention to the question of *whether* she feels, and then Maud's equally silent inquiry suggests that Sonia does feel as it asks *what* she feels. In this way Sonia mirrors Maud, and, as I demonstrate, Maud's thinking betrays the answer.

Authenticity, that "bit of art, that [Maud Martha understands] could not come from any other" depends on an alternative, private, and interior feeling. Hortense Spillers identifies the novel's insistence on this interiority as "symptoms of a program that [is] "feminine," and [that] is embedded in the work's insistence on *self-involvement*."[19] Of course the space in which Maud is selfinvolved is also gendered female; Spillers argues, "[t]hat the distaff is, from the point of view of the narrative world surrounding it, the particular custodial property of the female is not a conclusion. It is a beginning." She believes "the customary woman's place" provides—whether we like it or not—Maud Martha with the "imaginative integrity that keeps her alive and well" (Spillers 251). And, although Spillers and I both exercise caution concerning a "feminine writing" as theory or practice, her

description of Maud Martha's character originating from a particularly *gendered* place, informs an emerging site for the containment of a racial ideal.

Maud's longing for "home" depends on a feminine, domestic vision that quickly becomes a racial one. In the novel readers discern her difference as crucially part of what is understood as "private" space. At school she is unlike her peers, "[T]hey spoke shrilly of ways to fix curls and pompadours, of Joe Louis, of ice cream, of bicycles, of baseball, of teachers, of examinations, of Duke Ellington, of Bette Davis. They spoke—or at least Maud Martha spoke—of the sweet potato pie that would be served at home" (5). At school both Gwendolyn Brooks and her autobiographical protagonist Maud Martha were known, to their despair, as "Ol' Black Gal," and consequently, home represents a pleasurable alternative. Brooks writes in her memoir that unlike "the world of School…. Home, however, always warmly awaited me. Welcoming, enveloping."[20] Maud's talk of sweet potato pie not only defines her individual distinction, it offers a personal refuge from the more public "School" and its imposition on the outward markings of culture (e.g., "curls," "pompadours," "Joe Louis"). In the household she and her husband share, her version of domesticity contrasts her actual experience and it denotes the difference between her and Paul. At Christmas, Paul wants his wife to serve his friends beer and pretzels; as she serves them, Maud remembers the holiday "At Home…black walnut candy and steaming cups of cocoa with whipped cream, and plain shortbread. And every thing peaceful, sweet!" (104–5). The tension between Maud's actual home and her ideal "Home" experience first draws attention to her discontent within her expected "woman's place," and then it suggests what Claudia Tate describes as a domestic allegory of political desire in which Maud's ideal and internal characterization of "Home" becomes one of racial discourse. Tate views turn-of-the-century narratives of "ideal black domesticity as the site of [racial] improvement," which, like Brooks's novel, offers an empowered version of identity and community from a politics of family formation.[21] Tate's critique offers a correspondence between gendered space and racial discourse that is as crucial to *Maud Martha* as it is to the novels about marriage and family formation written by African American women during the 1890s. And, in as much as Brooks denies the question of racial feeling as inferiority, her protagonist's sentimental idealization of "Home" encloses and incorporates the specificities of blackness as private property.

By the 1950s the effects of the war had "encouraged women to dream of marriage and families, something made difficult first by the Depression, second by the war's separation of the sexes, and third by the disruption of domestic existence."[22] Domesticity, imagined as distinct from the "public" sphere of men and politics, was celebrated as a critical feature of the revised "American Dream." Since men had "victoriously" returned from the war, women were expected to "return" to their places at home where—in the midst of Cold War anxieties— they could "offer a psychological fortress" in the face of internal and international "threats against principles of American democracy."[23] Besides acting as signifies for larger political interests,[24] a gender-specific

characterization of "home" produces spatial difference.[25] Women and men apparently belonged to separate "worlds." Similarly, feminist historians have described the emergence of a "private" domesticity since the early nineteenth century in Europe and North America, they view it as part of the cultural project of an emerging middle class that enabled them to distinguish themselves from other social groups.[26] And, although the configuration of a bourgeois family life generally informs constructions of a gendered whiteness, its conceptualization as a gendered space separate from public life offers an insight into another kind of segregation, namely, the privatization and the respatialization of racial difference.[27]

As "the Negro question" became a critical domestic issue during the 1950s, racial inequality came to be seen as a threat to the American democracy and a challenge to U.S. legitimacy as an international power. "The continuation of racial discrimination in the United States remains a source of constant embarrassment to this government in the day-to-day conduct of its foreign relations; and it jeopardizes the effective maintenance of our moral leadership of the free and democratic nations of the world."[28] Now a personal and a moral issue, ("a problem at the heart of every American"), racial distinction required the reorganization of public space as a recuperation of American democracy. If the United States was to claim international moral leadership, the world could no longer "see" segregation in America. Understood as a domestic political issue, desegregation revised the "public" racial practices of the nation and redefined them as internal, and therefore hidden. And, just as the place of women, in the service of the "American Dream," was "removed" from "public" view, racial difference, now a *domestic* issue, became "private."

The intersection between "privacy," "domesticity," and racial distinction in *Maud Martha* transfers the question of "trying not to show the inferiority she did not feel," to Maud Martha's actual and metaphorical home. In order not to show her feelings, Maud must remove them from public observation. Her strategy of concealment circumscribes the defining features of blackness—her feelings—by relocating them to what she imagines as the privacy of domesticity. It is the household that contains what really counts; Maud's ideal domestic narrative revises the expectation, for example Paul's expectation, that racial meaning is outward and public. Moreover, the gendering of her feeling denies its inferiority. Rather than show inferiority, the domestic narrative proposes a different set of racial values. In contrast to Paul's, Maud's version is meant to instruct readers as it sets a course for a new direction in racial thinking. The final chapter, "back from the wars!," which was originally the first chapter of the novel, opens with Maud Martha, excited about her brother's safe return from the war, looking forward to new possibilities. "[I]t was such a beautiful day!," she exclaims to herself. This is the chapter in which she whispers to herself, "What, *what,* am I to do with all of this life?" (178), an utterance that Washington argues represents her gender and her racial disempowerment. But Maud Martha's thoughts, "And exactly what was one to do with it all? At a moment like this one was ready for

anything, was not afraid of anything" (178) suggests the optimism and revaluation of race that occurs in the 1950s. Maud Martha is pregnant again; and, as the novel closes, motherhood will take her into a new journey: "The weather was bidding her bon voyage" (177–80). Her pregnancy promises future opportunity.

This final chapter of *Maud Martha* notably makes no mention of Paul, and, indeed, in the surviving first chapter of *The Rise of Maud Martha,* Brooks's never completed sequel to the novel, readers learn that Paul dies in a fire, and the chapter opens with Maud at his funeral. The fragment describes him "burned with a more 'dreadful' blackness than that which he had ever known and despised." Paul's public dream of a woman "white as a white" has not only returned Maud Martha to the home, it has also removed Paul from it. Indeed, in the logic of the novel, it has killed him. In this radical and racialized version of domestic allegory, domesticity is made possible only by the exclusion of the husband; the door Maud had once imagined closing "behind herself and her husband" will close instead behind herself and her children. And, even more to the point, racial authenticity will be made possible only by the exclusion of an inauthentic husband. The "blackness" that Brooks's woman and her children find in the home, Paul finds only in death. And that death is represented by Brooks as, for Maud, a kind of liberation. If Paul and *Brown v. Board* have collaborated in making Maud's blackness a function of the feeling of inferiority, his death and the new ethos of domesticity collaborate in gendering that interiorized blackness and rescuing it from inferiority. "She did not need information, or solace, or guidebook, or a sermon" (178).

Chapter Four
Sex and Violence
The Poetics of Black Power

I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN I WAS COLORED. WHEN I WAS A NEGRO I KNEW I WAS colored; now that I'm Black I know which color it is." Nikki Giovanni's declaration in her essay "On Being Asked What It's Like to Be Black" (1969) notes an important social distinction within the African American population. For Giovanni, Negroes and Blacks are different—a nuance she believes has nothing to do with race. "Any identity crisis I may have had never centered on race,"[1] she explains, alluding to the psychological and political factors that, for her, determine the meaning of color. She elaborates on what she understands as a subjective fact. In her mind color, or race, has little value in the specification of identity. And, although she has been always "colored," Giovanni's words indicate that she has not been always Black, nor has she been always Negro. Her Blackness, now distinct from Negroness, depends on her revolutionary "consciousness" so that, now Black, she can understand herself as "a revolutionary poet in a prerevolutionary world." As a choice of consciousness, Blackness signals a new relation to power and a collective emancipation in which African Americans claim the social authority of self-determination. No longer Negro, nor enslaved by white supremacist hegemony, she argues that "Blackness as a cultural entity can only lead to revolution" (B 30). Her position depends on feeling, a kind of psychology, that refuses to accept self-definitions that do not come from within.

For Giovanni, Blackness is a state of mind. As an identity she chooses for herself, it distinguishes a psychological and political perspective that she believes not only separates her from whites, but more importantly, it differentiates her from other colored people:

> If your parents are colored we have found—statistically—the chances are quite high that so are you. If your parents are mixed the chances are even higher that you'll grow up to be a Nigger (*Gemini* 25).

Nigger, Negro and Black represent specific identities that are different despite the "color" they may share. And, although Giovanni offers an "objective" explanation regarding these factors of discernment, she believes "impartial" standards ultimately have no significant bearing on the truth. "There are no

objective standards when it comes to your life; this is crucial. Objective standards and objec-tive feelings always lead to objectionable situations" (*Gemini* 30). This discovery of her subjective authority, "I discovered I am not objective. Any feeling I may have for someone or something is based on how he or it relates to me" (*Gemini* 29), amounts to her understanding that, in addition to being colored, she is also Black. Her Black distinction depends on how she feels and on what she believes. More than a question of color, her exposition on the meaning of being Black requires a certain consciousness, one that emerges from a subjective response to a racial hierarchy that would render Negroes inferior to whites.

This perspective, part of the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movement of the 1960s and 1970s, calls attention to a revised narrative of racial authenticity that emerged in African American literature during the 1950s. Unlike the integrationist decade of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, a decade in which the social implications of racial distinction came increasingly to depend on psychological interiority, Giovanni and her peers deployed their own sense of internal difference to distinguish an identity and to enact an aesthetic and cultural "revolution." In its commitment to feeling as a crucially defining factor of cultural and political specificity, the Black Arts agenda recalls the integrationist project while it subverts both its idealism and its goals.[2] Rather than feel inferior, Black Aesthetic/Black Arts poets like Giovanni feel angry. While integration promises the repudiation of color distinction, Giovanni's post-integrationist position replaces "color" with "consciousness" so that Black and white are not only different, they are also unequal. This notion of inequality recognizes racial hierarchy and the social power and privilege such hierarchies afford; however, it replaces white supremacy with Black priority. Blackness, in Giovanni's "prerevolutionary world" imagines itself ascending to a masculinist power position in which white men, white women, Negroes, and Niggers submit to the authority of Blackness, a new aesthetic and new consciousness that ultimately reorders the social world.

Now a signifier for more than a racial identity, "Black" emerges as part of a political and aesthetic movement in which African Americans sought social and economic empowerment in the face of increasing racism and unemployment. Although during the first part of the 1960s, the entire American population experienced increased levels of economic prosperity, and African Americans saw individual black people overcome legal discrimination and enjoy national recognition for their accomplishments, by the end of the decade, disastrously high levels of unemployment undermined the idealism associated with integration.[3] Ironically, by the one hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, black employment reached Depression levels. Non-violent demonstrations met with the violence of police dogs and fire hoses, and the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., encouraged a new generation of militants preaching racial separation and violence. Along with white segregationists, they helped to transform the national landscape from

integrationist and "colorblind" into two distinct societies, one black, the other, white. Inside the black social context, "conscious" Black people sought even further distinction from what Giovanni calls Negroes. In many ways these Blacks imagined themselves as an emergent avant-garde, the new New Negroes whose art and politics would establish for them a new national identity within the United States. They would become Black Americans.

Disillusioned by what they understood as the less urgent aesthetics and platforms of civil protest, a "revolutionary" generation announced its presence and its seemingly new project of nation building. The United States had failed to recognize Negro citizenship and subjectivity, and like their nineteenth century predecessors David Walker and Martin Delany, intellectuals associated with the Black Aesthetic used their art to inspire separation from what they understood as hypocritical and detrimental political paradigms and practices. Activists Stokeley Carmichael, Eldridge Cleaver, H.Rap Brown, and Huey P.Newton emerged to advance a movement toward Black empowerment, a mission they believed was markedly different from the NAACP and the early stages of SNCC. A "whole new politics of protest" developed during the era, and "separatism…achieved a currency it hadn't enjoyed."[4] This new politics claimed the term "Black," as a declaration of what they believed was the psychological assertion of their defiance and independence from whites and from Negroes with integrationist principles. In 1965, the year that witnessed the assassination of Malcolm X, the Voting Rights Bill, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Selma-to-Montgomery March, as well as a six-day riot in Los Angeles, Stokeley Carmichael delivered his "Black Power" speech. His speech at University of California, Berkeley articulated this new understanding of Blackness as it explains a generation's intellectual position concerning political action. His words detail a commitment toward the realization of a new subjectivity by declaring racial difference as the site of individual consciousness and as a source of empowerment. His declaration, "I am black therefore I am," rewrites the Enlightenment construction of identity by situating blackness as the crucial factor of his being.[5] Like Jean Paul Sartre's "authentic" Jew, Carmichael advocates a racial and existential authority by choosing to embrace a phenomenological configuration of identity.[6] In the "Black Power" model, race becomes the consciousness of being—a crucial distinction that would break the oppression and the discursive silence that denies, from Carmichael's view, the full subjectivity of African Americans:

> Racism must die…we've based it [Black Power] on psychological grounds …all black people question whether or not they are equal to whites…. If we are going to eliminate that for the generations to come after us, then black people must be seen in positions of power doing and articulating for themselves (BP 462).

Like Giovanni's interest in Blackness as a subjective position essential to self-determination, Carmichael describes the social imperative of self-articulation as

crucially psychological. From this psychological foundation, Blackness becomes a social position that others can literally see. As the consciousness of existence, Blackness, and its political ambitions would confront the post-*Brown* account of an internalized feeling of inferiority and replace it with a version of the racial feeling as visibly defiant and empowered.

Within the "revolution," poetry becomes an essential weapon in the psychological war for subjectivity and for racial authenticity. Black poems concretize Carmichael's "I am black therefore I am" by offering a model in which white, Negro, and Nigger readers and listeners can see poets and other intellectuals as creators, in "positions of power and articulating for themselves." As speech acts, poems became a means through which Blackness in the 1960s became more than an abstraction: they became "tools of black power…their momentum is our feeling."[7] Notably, feeling defines the momentum for poetry even as it examplifies political consciousness. In his 1968 essay, "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist," James T.Stewert describes the objective:

> The point of the whole thing is that we must emancipate our minds from Western values and standards. We must rid our minds of these values. Saying so will not be enough. We must try to shape the thinking of our people…the task of the [black] writer is revolutionary.[8]

In this view, Black "revolutionary" poets like Giovanni hold a crucial position in the psychological, social, and intellectual emancipation of African Americans. Here, political liberation happens in the mind. "Black" poems reveal an existential imperative and they create a vehicle for an alternative subjectivity, one presumably outside of white Western values. However, even as this "revolution" seeks psychological and intellectual independence, its logic reproduces the same model of power and intellectual authority it repudiates. For Stewert, the artist's mission is political, directed "against the established order, regime, or culture," while at the same time, it assumes "a responsibility of understanding our roles in the shaping of a new world" (Stewert 6,7). But rather than attempt to eradicate a social and political structure that ranks personhood, the Black Aesthetic reproduces the same model of power by imagining a Black supremacy.

Within this political and cultural nationalism, consciousness is understood as immanently knowable. As a state of mind, Blackness becomes something anyone can see. Its tangibility emerges from within and it extends to the exterior surface of a person or a poem. Poets and critics of the era unequivocally expressed their commitment to "Black" as a sign of their temperament, their politics, and their poetics. And consistent with Giovanni's discussion of Black, Negro and Nigger, the explanations regarding the precise meaning and tangibility of identity relies on subjective logic. One Black Aesthetic poet and critic writes:

> Black as a physical fact has little significance. Color as a cultural, social and political fact, is the most significant fact of our era. Black is important because it gives us ground from which to fight—a way to feel and think about ourselves and our own reality—a way to define.[9]

Here, the salient aspects of a racial identity depend on a culture and a politics that create the impetus for an entire movement. Black poems make those abstract thoughts and feelings tangible. They represent visible signs of a subjective logic to celebrate social feeling as the foundation for the emergence of a new art and a new subjectivity. This new identity characterizes a "reality" that moves beyond obvious distinctions of color to designate an existential authenticity and authority. In another essay, poet and critic Don L.Lee (Haki R.Madhubuti) claims that the "true test for a black poem is whether you can tell an author's color." And, if a poem can reveal a person's color, it achieves this revelation through consciousness—it makes a poet's social perspective and position concrete. Lee equates consciousness with the "truth about the most significant fact of our era." In other words, "Black" poems offer "a way to define… reality,"[10] since it makes the social and psychological effects of racial distinction "real." An important question concerning the present inquiry is, then, what makes a poem, and thus a person, "Black"?

More than anything else "Black" poems are "ugly" and they are "angry." Within the movement's paradigm, poems represent a radical inversion of the aesthetic privilege associated with "white" poetry. "What this gets down to is that to understand the aesthetic of black art, or that which is uniquely black, we must start with an art form that…was not molded into that which is referred to as a pure product of European American culture" (Lee 222). This new aesthetic rejects formal considerations of beauty associated with literary poetics as it claims to produce not an art form, but a political forum. In speaking the vulgar and shocking "truth" of the world, Black poems seek to reverse the sublimated, non-aesthetic of a constructed Negro identity while it renders "ugly" hegemonically "beautiful" concepts of whiteness and its associated status. This aesthetic inversion emphasizes the crucial features of agency associated with the movement. In their commitment to an existential and, ultimately racial, authenticity, the poets of the movement claimed originality and the power to transform. The Black Aesthetic, declares Larry Neal, "is more concerned with the vibration of the word than with the word itself."[11] As vibration, the Black poem's achievement depends on its ability to evoke emotion: anger, hostility, and social division. It represents a collective perception "that has come to be known as *black consciousness*" (Lee 226, original emphasis). Poems make Black consciousness a thing listeners can see and touch.

As a warrior in a struggle for subjectivity, the "revolutionary" poet believes "our weapons are cultural, our poems" (Major 12), and he launches an assault against the forces that threaten the way he feels about himself. Addison Gayle's manifesto-introduction to the influential anthology, *The Black Aesthetic* (1972),

explains the force of such poetics: he and his colleagues "have given up the futile practice of speaking to whites," and they intend "to point out to black people the true extent of the control exercised upon them by American society" (Gayle xxi), and finally construct a new agency through its Black nationalism. With a poetics understood as an antithesis to a broken, false dialectic with "white" systems of value, Gayle, and his contemporaries such as Giovanni and Amiri Baraka, imagine the "Black" poem as a kind of declaration of independence. They claim an originality that locates their version of authentic blackness as part of "the vocabulary of nature" and, therefore, inconsistent with the falsely constructed social and aesthetic systems of a white status quo. This Black consciousness would offer access to the "real" truth of the world. But, as Kobena Mercer points out, their identity politics emerge from a stock of signs shared by blacks and whites alike.[12] Gayle's call to use Black poems to expose "the control exercised upon [Negroes] by American society" reveals the reaction to, and thus the vital engagement with, an American hegemony. Similarly, Carmichael's Black Power declaration at the University of California, Berkeley, "I am black, therefore I am," mirrors Descartes's declaration in Paris at the Sorbonne University. But, more than a revolutionary poetics, Black Aesthetic writers' sense of existential authenticity as original, transformative, and collective does, however, offer salient insight into the commodification of racial difference in the United States. It capitalizes on the social and political use-value of an articulated racial identity in as much as it acknowledges the specter of blackness as a haunting shadow of a larger American nationalism.

As one of the Black Aesthetic's most influential theorists, Amiri Baraka describes a version of racial authenticity, and its consequent, the Black revolutionary poem, as a presentation of societal truths since it graphically acknowledges the discursive and racial constructedness of American nationalism as well as the psychological and symbolic inversion critical to the reorganization of social and aesthetic castes. His poems, plays, and essays created a model for others to follow. In his manifesto, "STATE/MEANT" (1965), Baraka outlines the objectives that define his politics and his poetics:

> The black Artist's role in America is to aid in the destruction of America as he knows it. His role is to report and reflect so precisely the nature of society, that other men will be moved by the exactness in his rendering, and if they are black men, grow strong…if they are white men, tremble curse, and go mad, because they will be drenched in the filth of their evil.[13]

His statement seeks to render African American men empowered while it destroys the psychological stability of white males and white institutions that would render blackness impotent and inferior. Like Richard Wright's lectures in Europe a decade earlier, Baraka's manifesto calls for the acknowledgement of the ethical hypocrisy embedded in mainstream social life.[14] Baraka's poetics

privilege realism over romance, so that the Black poem's ugliness reflects the social malaise he believes distorts the world. And, as if to return humankind to its "natural" order, Black poems situate white males within the anger, insanity, and moral inferiority generally associated with Negroes.

In 1965, the year that marks Baraka's official departure from his association with the Beat Poets for a new commitment to writing "Black," he left Greenwich Village and his colleagues Charles Olsen and Allen Ginsberg and moved to Harlem and a new life as a cultural nationalist.[15] Stephen Henderson, editor of *Understanding the New Black Poetry* (1972), writes Baraka "is the central figure of the new black poetry awakening"[16]; and, Arthur P.Davis refers to him as "the high priest of this new Black literary renaissance and one who has done most to shape it's course."[17] This black nationalist period in poetry, in which Baraka changed his name from Leroi Jones to the Bantu Muslim title, Imamu ("spiritual leader," later dropped) Ameer (later, Amiri, "prince") Baraka ("blessed"), can also be characterized as a moment of intense hostility toward whites, especially Jews. According to Baraka, "We hated white people so publicly, for one reason, because we had been so publicly tied up with them before." His anti-white sentiment recognizes the racial interdependence of American nationalism as well as integration's implication of assimilation. He rejects them consciously: "I got the reputation for being a snarling, white-hating madman."[18] The poem "Black Art" (1969), published the same year as Giovanni's "On Being Asked What Its Like to Be Black," performs his feelings as well as his ideological position *vis-à-vis* racial interrelatedness. The poem was for Baraka, "the crucial seeing, the decisions, the actual move. The strengthening to destroy, and the developing the will power to build" (BMP, 1); and, it created the standard for the era's poetic production:

> Poems are bullshit unless they are
> teeth or trees or lemons piled
> on a step. Or black ladies dying
> of men leaving nickel hearts
> beating them down. Fuck poems
> and they are useful, wd they shoot
> come at you, love what you are
> breathe like wrestlers, or shudder
> strangely after pissing. We want live
> words of the hip world live flesh &
> coursing blood. Hearts Brains
> Souls splintering fire. We want poems
> like fists beating niggers out of Jocks
> or dagger poems in the slimy bellies
> of the owner-jews. Black poems to
> smear on girdlemamma mulatto bitches

whose brains are red jelly stuck
between ‘lizabeth taylor’s toes. Stinking
Whores! We want ‘poems that kill.’
Assassin poems, Poems that shoot
guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys
and take their weapons leaving them dead
with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland.
    Knockoff
poems for dope selling wops or slick halfwhite
politicians Airplane poems, rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr
rrrrrrrrrrrrrr…tuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuh
…rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr… Setting fire and
    death to
whities ass. Look at the Liberal
Spokesman for the jews clutch his throat
& puke himself into eternity…rrrrrrr
There’s a negroleader pinned to
a barstool in Sardi’s eyeballs melting
in hot flame. Another negroleader
on the steps of the white house one
kneeling between the sheriff’s thighs
negotiating cooly for his people.
Aggh…stumbles across the room…
Put it on him, poem. Strip him naked
To the world! Another bad poem cracking
Steel knuckles in a jewlady’s mouth
Poem scream poison gas on beasts in green berets
Clean out the world for virtue and love,
Let there be no love poems written
Until love can exist freely and
Cleanly. Let Black People understand
That they are lovers and the sons
Of lovers and warriors and sons
Of warriors Are poems & poets &
All the loveliness here in the world
We want a black poem. And a
Black World.
Let the world be a Black Poem
And Let All Black People Speak This Poem
Silently
Or LOUD[19]

"Black Art" makes concrete the idea of racial consciousness by announcing the poem's tangibility, "teeth or trees or lemons/piled on a step". As an object that can be seen and held, Baraka's poem claims something more than the representation of feelings. "Teeth and trees" have a recognizably concrete value just as the movement's notion of consciousness—of Blackness—is understood to be "real" and socially tangible. It demonstrates the notion of poetry as a social tool; it's feeling stresses the struggle against objectivity and rationality as it seeks political action in the service of revolution: "Clean out the world for virtue and love." Similarly, in its attack against the primacy of aesthetics, the poem revels in its announcement, "Let there be no love poems written/until love can exist freely and/cleanly." Now ugly, and even hateful, this "bad poem" mirrors how Baraka sees social reality. "Black Art" as "guns," "daggers," and "fists" cancels any possibility of its reception as a medium for abstractions such as leisure or the pursuit of beauty.

Nikki Giovanni's description of the political and psychological factors essential to difference becomes even more clear in the context of "Black Art." Just as the distinction between being Black, Negro, and Nigger invokes ethical criteria, social division in "Black Art" offers a moral explanation to instruct readers on the value of particular identities. The poem teaches its audience the rules of authenticity as it demonstrates the authors "color." In his essay "Nationalism and Social Division in the Black Arts Poetry of the 1960s," Phillip Brian Harper argues that Baraka's poem accomplishes its goal by segregating its audience along racial lines.[20] Clearly enunciated racial lines separate whites from African Americans, but morality distinguishes them even further. "[B]lack ladies," "niggers," "mulatto bitches," "negroleaders," and "Black People" each maintain their own ethical distinctions in this vulgar, urban distopia. "Black ladies," in their broken-hearted sadness, achieve superiority over the "mulatto bitches' whom the speaker derisively and misogynistically labels "whores." And, both "negroleaders" and "niggers" exist below "Black People" in the moral caste. For Baraka's speaker, "niggers" and Negroes submit to the moral and sexual degradation he believes reveals their weakness. And, certainly, in "Black Art," all whites are morally inferior: "owner-jews" are slimy in their greed; Italians become "wops" in their drug-dealing; and, policemen, the Irish in particular, suffer a terrorist demise as if in death they experience punishment equal to their crimes. Only "Black People" survive the destructive violence of "Black Art," they are "the lovers and the sons/of lovers" and "all the loveliness here in the world." Amidst the ugliness of the poem, "Black People" emerge beautiful as they complete, successfully, the tangible and psychological inversion so crucial to the Black Aesthetic.

The poem's insistent vulgarity produces an effect that seemingly fortifies blacks while it disempowers whites and other "colored" people who do not endorse the consciousness essential to the Black Aesthetic's psychological emancipation. In "Black Art," anger, once abstract and intangible, becomes a concrete weapon, and its result is power. Once only having visible *effects,* power

in the poem enjoys a physical *embodiment*. It transforms the previous chapters discussion of racial feeling and narrative interiority as integrationist and socially invisible by equating power with the choice to embrace a racial consciousness and by presenting both choice and psychology as graphically concrete. And because, Harper perceptively writes, the poem "achieves maximum impact in a context in which it is understood as being *heard* directly by whites and *overheard* by blacks" (Harper 98, original emphasis), "Black Art" repudiates literally Zora Neale Hurston's New Negro articulation of authenticity. Direct discourse governs the voice in the verse; and, although, blacks indirectly hear its narration, the force of the poem—its sense of power, its Blackness—depends on the defiant speech directed to a white establishment.

Anger, marked and instantiated by violence, enacts "Black Art." It advances the cultural nationalist agenda by making the poem a tool for political assault; Baraka explains, "words became weapons for me a long time ago."[21] And, if Baraka's poem is a political tool, a weapon, then it responds directly to national racial politics. Also in the same year as Carmichael' speech and Malcolm X's assassination, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's presented his report to the U.S. Congress, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*. As a spectacular example of the country's position on the new Negro Problem, it provided a perfect target for a Black Arts agenda. Moynihan's report argues that families constitute society, but that certain weaknesses within the Negro family cause the difficulties African Americans experience in education, employment and politics. He also contends white people fare better in society precisely because of a "strong" family structure. According to Moynihan, "a pattern of matriarchal authority… has reinforced itself over generations," and it has placed Negroes at a disadvantage because American society rewards male leadership and authority.[22] His position celebrates patriarchal values, "ours is a society which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs" (Moynihan 29), and it portrays black men as particularly at odds with the values he believes are a crucial part of American democracy. His perspective helped to reinforce the growing policy position that there was less need to change civil rights legislation and more need for changing the internal structure of black families by installing a man at the head of every house.

Moynihan's report helped to reorganize the meaning and social significance of African American subjectivity by focusing on the black male and his potential for good citizenship. During the sixties, the "crisis" within Negro families was not the only problem that brought attention to considerations of the role of African American men. Their behavior had created problems internal to the United States; their condition affected issues central to democracy. According to a 1968 national commission report, the riots in cities across the country illustrated what became known as "a time bomb ticking in the heart of the richest nation in the history of the world," and black males were at the center of the controversy.[23] Using language that echoes Gunnar Myrdal's postwar description of U.S. race relations, "a problem in the heart of every American,"

black men in particular, became a primary concern within domestic politics.[24] Now positioned in the hearts of national sentiment, black men and an institutional uncertainty about the status of their masculinity, became proof of the shortcomings of white America's integrationist goals.

According to the Commission study and report on the Negro crisis in urban America, "the typical rioter in the summer of 1967 was a Negro, unmarried male between the ages of 15–24," his problem, it argues, is an internalization of social inequality. Notably, this position concerning an internalized inferiority extends the psychological arguments in the decisive footnote 11 in *Brown*.[25] It also speaks to the postwar transition from recognizing racial distinction as visible and public, to new characterizations of racial difference as internal, psychological, and primarily based on feeling. Black men in the Comission report were either unemployed or underemployed, and the report cites Moynihan: "In America what you do is what you are: to do nothing is to be nothing; to do little is to be little. The equations are implacable and blunt, and ruthlessly public" (*Report* 252). The Commission explains the black male's consciousness, "social, economic, and psychological disadvantages surrounding the urban poor have impaired their work capacities and opportunities. The result is a "cycle of failure"" (*Report* 253), which, it argues has resulted in violence. The Commission offers suggestions to resolve the 'disease' within Negro communities by creating opportunities for black men to become economically and psychologically empowered and to discard the defiance, outrage, and negation that currently characterizes them.

In its direct address to white people, "Black Art" rejects popular notions of psychologically emasculated African Americans and builds images of sexually powerful black men whose vengeful feelings seek to reveal an impotence, even a sickness, in whites. More than general violence, "poems that kill," "Black Art" depicts a version of male power that responds directly to national public policy. "Fuck poems/and they are useful, wd they shoot/come at you," imagines masculinist sexual fury as the most critical aspect of its racial power. Even as Baraka's poetic manifesto presents "Poems that shoot/guns," they also ejaculate come. In this way, power—racial authority—is evidenced by semen as much as by bullets. Moreover, Baraka's heroic "Black People" are only recognizable as men; they are "lovers and the sons/of lovers and warriors and sons/of warriors," and thus they indicate the patriarchy that not only produces the ideal blackness, but also the power that generates the poem. Baraka's insistence on a hyper-masculine racial subjectivity intentionally addresses larger, more general, discourses concerning a crisis in Negro communities and in the black male.

In his essay "American Sexual Reference: Black Male," Baraka constructs an authentic masculinity by depicting an inauthentic white male. "Most American white men are trained to be fags," he begins, and describes an absent heterosexuality now indicative of their lack of power. He argues white men have no sense of "real" manhood:

> Even their wars move to the stage where whole populations can be destroyed by *pushing a button;* but even so the paradox, which is the recurrence of the homosexual-motif underpinning the society is that the bomb, which is their constant threat and claim to manhood, is not even real.[26]

Unlike Blacks, who fight with concrete objects like poems, guns, daggers, and fists, white men allegedly claim power in the abstract. "Real" men fight on contact, according to Baraka, and white men fight only symbolically. Their symbols of power are merely abstractions, which, like white men, are "not even real." Here the poet of "Black Art" associates white masculinity, and therefore white social power, with homosexuality. In this way he assaults the notion of "white" patriarchy and healthy white families.

"The white man has tried to keep the black man hidden the whole time he has been in America," Baraka declares, explaining what he believes is a consistent, historical attempt to steal black people's strength. He claims any assault on African American humanity is a specific attack on black masculinity, "when the possibility arose that these animals might really be men, then the ball cutting ceremony was trotted out immediately" (ASR, 226). He offers his grandmother's "memory" to substantiate his claim; in his narration of family history, his grandmother's recollection of being forced to witness a lynching and a castration in which the victim's testicles were forced down his throat. "Trying to strangle a man with his own sex organs, his own manhood: that is what white America has always tried to do to the black man—make him swallow his manhood" (ASR, 230). In this particular narrative of history and power politics, Baraka repositions racial violence not as an assault against a people, but as an attack on a distinctly gendered power position that, for him, reveals the madness and impotence of white men while it also exposes the illegitimacy of white social power. His point is to show that theories of black male impotence and sexual pathology are actually part of a conspiracy to undermine the natural authority of Blackness, of black men in particular.

Baraka's response to "plots" against black humanity, now understood as masculinity, requires an assertion of the phallus. If African American men have been historically construed as socially and sexually impotent, especially in the face of a white patriarchy, the Black man's agency necessitates a demonstration of sexual autonomy and an inversion of the conspiracy against black patriarchy. It is perforce homophobic and misogynist. For example, in his widely celebrated *Soul on Ice* (1968) former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver describes the process that he argues enabled him to become a man. While in prison, he had chosen to decorate his cell with pictures of white women; he later "realized" his preference was a result of "white" indoctrination, and upon his release he sought opportunities to liberate himself:

> I became a rapist. To refine my technique and modus operandi, I started out by practicing on black girls in the ghetto—…and when I considered myself smooth enough, I crossed the tracks and sought out white prey. I did this consciously, deliberately, willfully, methodically.

Here, Baraka's theory of black power is realized in Cleaver's practice. Sexual power, understood literally as rape, seemingly demonstrates Cleaver's ability to recover his masculinity. Notably, the force of his "power" can only be realized after "practice" on black women and the smooth, deliberate assault against white women. And, while his self-described assaults against poor black women should be understood as counterrevolutionary to any model of black empowerment, Cleaver's choice to rape apparently enables his ability to reject white women, "white" indoctrination, and the "white" history of emasculating black men. Cleaver's idea of choice outlines a version of Black agency—a reasoning even Giovanni seems to endorse: "Power implies choice," she declares. And, "[a] slave has no control over whom he fucks" (*Gemini* 31). Giovanni's logic, like Cleaver's, stresses the equation between sexual control with power and agency. Cleaver's emasculated and enslaved black man achieves his liberation, his power, by choosing to exercise sexual control over women. Cleaver writes, "Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values, and that I was defiling his women."[27]

Violence—now a political and discursive act—illustrates the crucial feeling of racial consciousness. Cleaver describes how his actions delighted him, how they "reversed" the value system that denies his power. He returns to jail for his crimes, and in the instance of his book, he explains his new preference, writing, over the criminality of rape. Despite his new outlook, his narrative choice of telling the story effects similar results. Readers can only access his consciousness, his Blackness, through his writing. Maxwell Geismar's introduction to *Soul on Ice* illustrates this point, "there is a secret kind of sexual mysticism in this writer," and his book "is a document of prime importance for an understanding of the outcast black American soul today" (xii–xiii). Despite its viscous homophobia and misogyny, *Soul on Ice* was widely celebrated by mainstream critics: immediately after its publication, *The New York Times* listed it as one of the ten best books of the year, and *The New Republic* declared it "Unsparing, unaccommodating, tough, and lyrical by turns." Thirty years later, *Booklist,* published by The American Library Association called it "a book that sent shock waves through the zeitgeist with force of its truths and brilliance, and which shines with undiminished radiance 30 years later" and, Ishmael Reed's 1992 preface presents the book as a classic, emerging from the century's "most thrilling and humanistic era." The celebrations of *Soul on Ice* expose a broad endorsement of masculine and masculinist privilege. They also sanction the sexualized violence that makes this new articulation of black authenticity viable and socially profitable.

But men are not the only "Blacks" who demonstrate their "soul" by condoning assault as evidence of power. In the same year Carmichael published *Soul on Ice,* Nikki Giovanni writes "I like all militant poems that tell how we're going to kick honkies backside and purge our new system of all honkie things like white women, TV, voting and the rest of the ugly, bad things that have been oppressing us so long."[28] Her description offers a list of "things" that, in her subjective logic, pollute African American psyches. An eradication of those things, "white women," for example, serves the "revolution." For her, a poem that becomes a weapon, one whose anger creates concrete social effects, endorses Baraka and Carmichael's account of black power. In her poem, "The True Import of Present Dialogue, Black vs. Negro" Giovanni demonstrates her commitment:

> Nigger
> Can you kill
> Can you kill
> Can a nigger kill
> Can a nigger kill a honkie[29]

This speaker is Black, Giovanni's term for politically empowered African Americans. This difference from "Negroes" and from "Niggers" depends not on color but on consciousness. Unlike the Nigger, the Black speaker feels angry enough to be willing to "kill a honkie." The repetitive structure of the poem deliberately seeks to intimidate audiences, and its vulgar insistence hopes to "deAmericanize" Niggers so that they too can become "Black." The poem asks its colored audience, "Can you kill your nigger mind/And free your black hands to/strangle" (BN ll. 34–36), and identifies a psychological position as the definitive question of choice necessary to destroy, not only whites, but also the "nigger" within.

The assault in Giovanni's poem directed at whites invokes the violence of male sexual assault against women. Giovanni's speaker asks, "Can you stab-a-Jew" (BN l. 12), and recalls Baraka's notion of the poem as a weapon, and then it invokes the violent penetration that characterizes rape. The "revolutionary" question in the same poem, "Can you lure them to bed and kill them" (BN l. 44), insists on equating black agency with sex and with violence. Regarding power, Giovanni writes "Power only means the ability to have control over your life…. Power implies choice," she explains in a voice reminiscent of Baraka. She continues, "Black people have been slaves in America and in the world," and, like Baraka, she elaborates on the parallel between literal slavery and the social inequality she attributes to the status quo. She uses sex as a way of illustrating the effects of power. For her oppressed people have no choice ("A slave has no control over whom he fucks"), and to claim power blacks must claim sexual authority. Now Black, Giovanni's power depends on a masculinist domination: it is African American males who have been denied the choice. "All Black men in the world today are out of power," she explains, in a move that directly addresses

the concerns articulated in Moynihan's report. "If you don't have control you cannot take responsibility. That's what makes that latter-generation Irishman's report on the Negro family so ridiculous" (*Gemini* 31), she writes. For Giovanni, as for Moynihan, Baraka, and Carmichael, the question of racialized masculinity —the future of black patriarchal power—answers the question of authenticity.

Psychiatrists and social scientists of the same era sought to justify Giovanni's subjective position on Blackness, on power, and on a masculine ideal with objective, "empirical" data. Following the implications of *Brown,* many advanced arguments concerning a "damaged" black masculinity that, because of institutional racism had imposed a sense of inferiority on the Negro psyche and produced racial and social dysfunction. In one example, *Black Rage* (1968), a book claiming to profile the psychological condition of African America, black psychiatrists William H.Grier and Price Cobbs present case studies as examples of the contemporary race problem. As an explanation for the riots in Watts, Newark and Detroit, their book seeks to describe the "truth" about Negro psyches, "of all things that need knowing, none is more important than that all blacks are angry. White Americans seem not to recognize it."[30] And although the inquiry includes some considerations of African American women, particularly in their role as wives and as mothers, it focuses on black men:

> Their manhood is tested daily,…[the] racist tradition is pervasive and envelopes every American. For black men it constitutes a heavy psychological burden…[they] fight each other, do violence to property, do hurtful things to themselves while nursing growing hatred for the system which oppresses and humiliates them. (BR 71)

Within a "racist tradition," manhood, according to Drs. Grier and Cobbs, becomes the most salient commodity and loss for African Americans. Most importantly, the question of manhood is not one of physical or even social construction, but of psychological oppression. A system of oppressive humiliation challenges the very possibility of biological men to become social men. *Black Rage* can be easily read as an exegesis of Baraka's "Black Art" or Giovanni's "The True Import of Present Dialogue, Black vs. Negro" in that all describe a partic ular psychological burden that results in masculinist violence. In each instance the most recognizable and powerful evidence of racial meaning is anger.

But anger is not everything. The psychiatrists in *Black Rage,* like the poets of the Black Aesthetic, do not limit their discussion to feelings. Unlike the poets, these medical doctors claim an analytical objectivity in order to scientifically "explain" not merely racism but also its response. For the Drs. Grier and Cobbs, social and institutional racism, marked by the legacy of slavery, has transformed black masculinity into a "forbidden fruit" (BR 59) that socially, economically and sexually emasculates Negro men. Strangely reminiscent of Baraka, Giovanni, and Carmichael, they elaborate on a black male "castration anxiety"

(BR 7) that causes them to wield the only power available to them, sex, "in the privacy of the boudoir." Drs. Grier and Cobb explain, "Where sex is employed as armament and used as a conscious and deliberate means of defense, it is the black man who chooses this weapon" (3). Now a weapon, sex becomes the performative tool of an individual and collective racial power struggle. And, as Grier and Coobs diagnose this new, Negro problem, they position the question of black agency within a sexualized contest between black and white men, "[r]ecurrently, the pattern evolves of black men using sex as a dagger to be symbolically thrust into the white man." According to their theory, and like Giovanni's "Black" who "can stab a Jew," or Baraka's "dagger poems," angry and hostile black men resist "racist emasculation" and become "bad niggers" who "strike fear into everyone with their uncompromising rejection of restraint and inhibition" (BR 54). This characterization recalls Norman Mailer's sexual outlaw he describes in "The White Negro" (1957), James Baldwin's racially doomed protagonist in *Another Country* (1963), and countless novel by Chester Himes. In each instance, moments of literal and metaphorical interracial contact emerge within narratives of sexualized violence. The redundancy of these narratives calls attention to the highly charged issue of segregation, miscegenation, and the ambiguous promise of integration.

The psychiatric description of social power relations negotiated through coitus, produces an interracial fantasy of dangerous sex that reinforces also a simultaneous fear and fantasy of racial authenticity. Because "every black man harbors a potential bad nigger inside him" (BR 65–66), Grier and Cobbs argue that white America should fear them. That fear can transform into social recognition since "a potential bad nigger" apparently and potentially lurks inside every black man. Coupled with that fear, there is pleasure. Grier and Cobbs's study insists, "[t]he black man occupies a very special sexual role in American society. He is seen as the ultimate in virility and masculine vigor" (BR 87). They authenticate a notion of racialized sexual primitivism that produces separate black and white fantasies about interracial sex. The simultaneous pleasure and danger of black masculinity now "scientifically" established, returns to the discursive effects of Baraka and Giovanni's poems. That is, the violent direct address to white listeners in "Black" poems, enact an ugly kind of integration. It mirrors the violence of interracial rape while it also promotes a vision of a "bad nigger" with "the ultimate in virility and masculine vigor." *Black Rage* argues "The sexual act itself carries aggressive overtones, and in the fantasy of all men there is a likening of male aggression in the sexual act to murderous aggression and a likening of the female partner to the victim of murder" (BR 91). It positions heterosexual sex as male violence, an act of power that, in fantasy, incorporates by necessity the subordination—and even murder—of women. And, if African American men carry within them "a very special sexual role," then their racial authority would require the death of women.

Within this political, psychiatric, and aesthetic formulation of black racial authenticity and authority, Nikki Giovanni would have to assume the role of the

"bad nigger" in order to demonstrate her "color." Her 1960s poems lay claim to the power associated with male aggression and anger because her Black consciousness requires it. Her deployment of Black Aesthetic principles claims to reflect an isolated and independent racial consciousness; her poetics engage directly with "white" versions of racial identity by claiming a pathological, now justified, condition. Giovanni's position, however, claims to deny "white" characterizations that African Americans lack agency by seeking an existential power via the declaration of deliberate choice. In "A Short Essay of Affirmation Explaining Why" (1968) she begins:

> Honkies always talking 'bout
> Black Folks
> Walking down the streets
> Talking to themselves
> (they say we're high—
> or crazy)[31]

The speaker in this poem understands the contemporary discourses about a black psychology; the introductory declaration stresses a position in relation to the popular conceptions of her race. Its statement that "Black Folks" might be "high" or "crazy" acknowledges the emerging terms of racial meaning, so that psychology, not color, defines the salient characteristics of race. Giovanni's introductory lines signal a version of racial authenticity in which pathology characterizes blackness. But in this poem the speaker is neither intoxicated nor mentally instable; rather, the speaker's "consciousness" explains an angry and violent sexual ideal:

> That little microphone
> in our teeth
> Between our thighs
> Or anyplace
> That may have needed
> Medical attention
> Recently
> .....
> This is a crazy country
> They use terms like
> Psychosis and paranoid
> With us
> But we can't be Black
> And not be crazy
> How the hell would anyone
> feel

With a mechanical dick
in his ass
lightening the way
for whitey
And we're supposed to jack off
behind it
Well I'm
pissed off (SE, 10–16, 24–36).

In its vulgarity, the poem and its language, perform the subjective response Giovanni believes is crucial to black authenticity and its social distinction. The "microphone/In our teeth/Between our thighs" relies on phallic imagery to suggest it is black masculinity, misunderstood as psychological inferiority, that has been under scrutiny. Moreover, her point that this microphone/phallus "may have needed/Medical attention/Recently" calls attention to the contemporary scientific interest in the issue of manhood as the critical question in collective, African American agency. The speaker blames whites for oppressing Negroes and for symbolically raping them, "With a mechanical dick/in his ass" and the "bad nigger" speaker refuses to submit, to "jack off behind it." This defiance, framed by a sex act, renders Giovanni's speaker a man. And as a man, listeners can discern his "color." Here the now "revolutionary" speaker rewrites the terms of his identity, "But we can't be Black/And not be crazy," and he appropriates an alternative characterization of racial feeling, "Well I'm pissed/off," to reverse the racial and sexual power dynamic that governs Giovanni's Black poetics.

The problem Moynihan and others identify in Negro families suggests a deficiency in a black patriarchal legacy. Black Arts poets and intellectuals accept ultimately Moynihan's assessment and interpret this new Negro problem as an unfair feminization of African American masculinity. Their rebuttal asserts a version of manhood that celebrates patriarchal power. Their point is to proclaim the stability of the Negro family by disproving allegations of a feminized male. The logic of Black Power and its poetics requires an inversion in which seemingly disempowered, feminized Negro males become strong, masculine Black men; and, whites, formerly empowered and assumed patriarchs, transform into weak women now subject to black male authority. Giovanni's poem demonstrates strikingly how this conceptual inversion takes place:

They ain't getting
Inside
My bang
or
My brain
I'm into my Black Thing

And it's filling all
My empty spots
Sorry 'bout that,
Miss Hoover (SE, ll. 40–49).

In order to be Black, Giovanni must prove she has not been damaged by white power, the metaphorical white penis. Neither her vagina, "My bang," nor her intellect, "My brain," will submit to racism's penetration. The reference to an interracial sex appears here as a contaminating influence that destroys black people. Moreover, in her anger Giovanni's "bad nigger" needs to protect her authenticity by rejecting "white" penetration and a notion of feminization understood as weakness. Thus Giovanni[32] welcomes the black phallus, "I'm into my Black thing/And its filling all/My empty spots." Completely encompassed not by the "mechanical dick," but by the "real" thing, the speaker can enjoy her "consciousness" by proclaiming a sexual union with a now mythic and virile black man. As a female, Giovanni exercises her racial power not only by masculinizing blackness, but also by feminizing whiteness. The last words in her poem, "Sorry 'bout that/Miss Hoover," renders the FBI director female and consequently inauthentic in his "white" power. As a "woman," Hoover's whiteness, as well as his institutional position, lose force. The poem's sarcastic apology itself suggests the Black speaker's unwillingness to fulfill the white man's desire—another important expression of Giovanni's choice and willing segregation.

Black power concerns itself with integration since white people are a crucial part of black racial authority; racial authenticity makes the connection possible. A commitment to a racial psychology, whether as a feeling of inferiority or as a manifestation of anger, represents a mutual and interracial investment in difference. In both versions, black feeling makes race (both races) "real." The actual discrepancy lies within the question of agency: is racial psychology, as inferiori ty, a natural and inevitable result of a history of slavery, or is it, as anger, a subjective choice in the face of racism? For the Black Aesthetic poet, power requires the decision to embrace and to manifest feeling as indignation and outrage. Here, empowered racial feeling is masculine. Their resulting poetics lash out against "white" notions of Negro impotence and celebrate a black patriarchal order in which whites, as women, are rendered prone. By this time, the Black distinguishes himself literally and discursively as a man, angry at whites, who in their impropriety, are revealed to be women. And, in order for poets like Nikki Giovanni, to distinguish herself as a "revolutionary" and "Black," she must reinvent herself as masculine. Thus, authenticity finally makes segregation complete: all the men are black and all the women are white.

Postscript

THE IMPOSITION OF BLACK AUTHENTICITY REPUDIATES THE POSSIBILITY OF any art made by an African American. Art requires invention, artifice, something not natural, but something made from the imagination. In this way, racial authenticity is an invention masquerading as the natural, ontological "truth" about people of color. As "truth," anything read as "authentic" becomes not art, but reality—a reality that makes the creativity of African Americans, women, homosexuals, Latinos, Chicanas, Asians, Indians, etc, not art or intellect, but reportage. It becomes evidence of being, something unlearned and always already there. Even as authenticity promises consciously and unconsciously a kind of cultural capital to black writers, it also imprisons them in a logic that positions a myth of racial being as their contribution in art. It is a prison, however comfortable and seemingly natural.

This book signals a beginning for one young, intellectual whose career, in effect, begins with the publication of this book. An intellectual career calls to mind the paradox of language as a social exchange: this black intellectual will have to establish her mastery of language and critical discipline in order to claim her possession the world. Many better, smarter, and more experienced intellectuals before her have tried and have achieved their goals with varying degrees of success. Their challenge, like hers, is to name, problematize, and even dismantle the "paradox of the oxymoron," or account for the "ambiguity of their position—still within the veil while seeking to rend it," and write, literally, their "cosmopolitanism" into being.[1]

This declaration of cosmopolitanism depends on what Gwendolyn Brooks calls "technique," and it enacts an epistemological rupture of identitarian binaries (e.g., black/white, female/male, body/mind) and pictures intellect and aesthetics without regard to racial origin.[2] It can realize James Baldwin's aspiration to become a writer, not a black gay writer. It will require those safely on the other side of the binaristic divide to see, as Ralph Ellison puts it, the humanity of individuals.[3] It demands recognition of the particulars within universals, and the universals in the particulars. Most importantly, it confronts the man-made tensions of modernity and helps to create open access to Du Bois's "kingdom of culture."

The idea for this book happened in a barbershop in Baltimore. A week before the Million Man March was to take place in Washington, DC, this student needed a haircut. Uneasy in her barber's chair, she listened to the men, all black, in the shop discussing their plans to make a political statement and take a day off work and march on Washington. They were celebrating their possibility, their chance to make a statement as a group. This student, a self-proclaimed feminist, was uncomfortable and her barber knew it. He asked her why, and in her best graduate student-speak, she described the ways in which the March seemed to imagine a neo-conservative vision of black patriarchy as the solution of collective empowerment. For a few seconds, the men in the shop stopped, seemed to listen, and then continued with their conversation. Her barber, a great intellectual, teacher, and entrepreneur, whispered in her ear: "try it again, college girl."[4] She tried it again. In the legacy of Zora Neale Hurston, she offered a picture of her thoughts. She wanted to show them an image of what she understood was a collective sexism and homophobia that mirrored the logic of white supremacy. The men heard her, and upon her departure, one man said to her, "you're still 100% black," and her barber told her, "your credit's still good here." On her way to the library, this student felt simultaneously triumphant and sad: the men in the shop had read the education in her language as proof of her "imitation whiteness," and when they saw her ability to shed her academic self-consciousness, they accepted her as part of the group, as authentic, and they acknowledged her membership as credit. The economy of race in language had never been so clear to her. She had profited from its benefits, and when she arrived on campus (a racial and cultural distinction from the barbershop), she felt its disadvantages. Her story is not original nor originary, but it provided her an opportunity to think through ambivalence and ambiguity. She wanted to explore the "universal particularities" that Alain Locke had named but she had not yet read.[5] She pursued her voice, and in the beginning, like Maud Martha, she kept it to herself. When she sensed Hortense Spillers's declarative rereading of "double consciousness," that "it was not enough to be seen, one was called upon to decide what it meant," she began to write.[6]

New York City, 2003

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967) 17–18.
2 See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 28. Butler's argument attends questions of "gender" and "sex," especially the ways in which they signal an identity in language and political discourse.
3 See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).
4 W.E.B.Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* in W.E.B.DuBois, *W.E.B. DuBois: Writings* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986) 364.
5 Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 46.
6 Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 78.
7 Adorno and Trilling's separate positions emerge from their fear of facism and communism as well as their wariness of group identities associated with those political paradigms. Their interest in an authentic individual seems to parallel the shift from *Plessy* to *Brown* so that the emergent language of racial authenticity after the Second World War seemed also to privilege the individual. The rise of discourses of the individual, even in the context of *Brown,* reflects Cold War anxieties about collective (read "communist") consciences. I would like to thank Mary McGlynn for asking me to consider this parallel.
8 Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 241.
9 Houston A.Baker, Jr., *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) 73.
10 Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," in *Speech and Power: The African-American Essay and Its Cultural Content, from Polemics to Pulpit, Volume 2,* Gerald Early, ed. (Hopewell, NJ: The Ecco Press, 1993) 88–89.
11 Robert Bone, *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) xxii.
12 George S.Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum," reprinted in *Speech and Power,* 86.

13 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Introduction: Writing "Race" and the Difference It Makes," in *"Race," Writing and Difference,* Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 5.
14 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Literary Theory and the Black Tradition," *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 11.
15 Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (New York: International Publishers, 1967) 43.

CHAPTER ONE: BLACK MAN, BLACKFACE

1 Lida Keck Wiggins, *The Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Naperville, IL: J.C.Nichols & Co., 1907)
2 William Dean Howells, *Harper's Weekly Magazine,* XL, 630.
3 A term applied to Dunbar early in his career, particularly in press releases. See Anon., "Paul Laurence Dunbar: The Negro Poet Laureate," *Watchword,* March 6, 1906. 150–51. In "Paul Laurence Dunbar: The Rejected Symbol" (*The Journal of Negro History,* 52:1, January 1967, 1–13), Darwin Turner notes Dunbar's legacy as one that became a symbol of the creative and intellectual potential of the American Negro. In "Paul Laurence Dunbar, An Evaluation" (Houston A.Baker, Jr., *Singers of Daybreak: Studies in Black American Literature* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974) 33–41), Houston Baker considers the racial implications of the poets achievements.
4 The Fourteenth Amendment (1866) prohibits states from limiting the privileges and immunities of US citizens, and the Fifteenth Amendment (1869) protects US citizens's right to vote regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude"; and the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 claims all persons within the United States are entitled to full and equal enjoyment of public accommodations and facilities and are "subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to citizens of every race and color, regardless of any previous condition of servitude."
5 See George M.Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1971); Lerone Bennet, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* (USA: Penguin, 1984) 253–296; Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 44–70.
6 See Robert Bone, *Down Home: Origins of the Afro-American Short Story* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 8–18; and Eric Sundquist, "Realism and Regionalism" in *Columbia Literary History of the United States,* ed., Emory Elliot (New York: Columbia University Press, 19888) 501–24.
7 Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Ol' Tunes," *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1913) ll. 18–25. All proceeding poems are cited from this edition.
8 In his collection of essays *Criticism and Fiction* (1893), William Dean Howells, perhaps the most powerful critic and advocate of American literary realism, writes

realism is "nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material" (Howells, *Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays,* eds., Clara Marburg Kirk and Rudolph Kirk (new York: New York University Press, 1959) 38). In his essays about realism Howells advocates depictions of the commonplace rather than the tragic or the extreme, usually associated with romance, because it exhibits the highest degree of verisimilitude. More recent discussions of realism formally characterize it in relation to a notion of mimetic accuracy. See Donald Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth Century American Literature* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966); Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s: The Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska press, 1966); Harold Kolb, *The Illusion of Life: American Realism as Literary Form* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1969). In *American Realism: New Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), edited by Eric Sundquist, a number of critics consider the writer's historical context and its ability to disrupt the realist trajectory by "refusing to renounce romance completely and by leveling the barriers of aesthetic freedom too completely" (9).

9 Many critics have contested the "objectivity" of realism. In his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, for example, Sinclair Lewis denounced "Victorian and Howellsian timidity and gentility" for its selective, and thus subjective representations. See *The Theory of the American Novel,* ed., George Perkins (New York: Rhinehart, 1970). Questions of social change and class have generated lively debate concerning realist claims of accuracy and objectivity. In her book *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Amy Kaplan considers the question of "objectivity" and realism particularly as it has evolved over several decades. Her introduction, "Realism and 'Absent Things in American Life,'" offers an excellent historical survey of critical positions concerning realism while it maps out the terms of what she argues is a socially constructed narrative structure that responds to the threat of social change. In addition, she argues realism is more than a relation to the world it represents because it is also a debate with competing modes of representation. Similarly, Michael Davitt Bell's *The Problem of American Realism: Studies in the Cultural History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) considers what he refers to as "a seriously problematic conception of literary realism" (9) in an attempt to evaluate the social purpose of realist claims. And, Stanley Corkin's *Realism and the Birth of the Modern United States* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996) problematizes realist "objectivity" in terms of class and social change.

10 William Dean Howells, "Introduction," Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1896) vii–viii.

11 See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: Writing "Race" and the Difference It Makes," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* ed., Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

12 Elsa Nettels, *Language, Race and Social Class in Howells' America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988) 83.

13 Kenneth Warren, *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 108.

14 The nineteenth century logic of white supremacy maintained a belief in the value of "racial purity." The Freedman's Inquiry Commission final report, for example, concluded that racial "amalgamation was neither inevitable nor desirable, because

the mixed race is inferior, in physical power and in health, to the pure race black or white" (Frederickson 173). By the 1890s white political divisions, characterized by the agrarian Populist revolt against conservative, business-oriented leadership, led to a competition for the black vote with the result that blacks quickly became the scapegoat for political and economic tensions of the period. Thus, white supremacy under the guise of racial purity became the ideology for the "tide of political democracy" as rhetoric of white paternalism and slogans of white equality and black proscription became the *status quo*. In *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), C. Vann Woodward quotes one Southern educator who wrote, "disenfranchisement of the Negroes has been concomitant with the growth of political and social solidarity among the whites" (92), and in 1900 *The Richmond Times* demanded that "a rigid principle of segregation be applied in every relation of Southern life on the ground that God Almighty drew the color line and it cannot be obliterated" (96).

15 See Eric J.Sundquist, "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy," in *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) 225–270.

16 See, Cheryl I.Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed., Kimberlé Crenshaw, et al (New York: The New Press, 1995) 276–291.

17 168 US 537 *Plessy v. Ferguson,* May 18, 1896

18 The Court argues sanctioned racial segregation is not legislating inequality. Rather, racial distinction, a processes of securing separate and equal accommodations for "white" and "colored" persons, is a reasonable exercise of police power concerning the promotion of public good: "[the Fourteenth Amendment] was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races …it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color…. Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation…are…recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power."

19 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), especially "Panopticism." For Foucault, "discipline" is a type of power that among others things it "fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion…it establishes calculated distributions."

20 See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Dis and Dat: Dialect and Descent," in *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 167–195; and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

21 In "The Problem of 'Negro Dialect'" from *Language, Race, and Social Class in Howells's America,* Elsa Nettels considers critical positions concerning dialect characterized as "black" from the 1860s to the 1960s. She notes the presence of "eye dialect" demonstrates understood characteristics of racial difference by illustrating the effect of illiteracy. She continues "deviations from standard English not only mark black figures as inferiors and aliens…[but] the Negro dialect fashioned by post-Civil War writers is itself a symbol of servitude…" (76–77).

22 See Carl Wittke, *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968); Robert C.Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1974); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy in the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

23 Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Aunt Tempe's Triumph," *In Old Plantation Days* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903; rpt. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969) 4–6.

24 In "The Preacherly Text: African American Poetry and Vernacular Performance" (*PMLA,* 1992 May, 107:3, 582–93), Marcellus Blount argues that when black writers turn to African American vernacular performance, "they call into question the authority of literary conventions and racial ideologies of the dominant society" (583). He contends poets like Dunbar employ dialect to simultaneously establish their literate and poetic authority "without sacrificing the distinctiveness of their experiences in the New World" (584). Regarding "An Antebellum Sermon" Blount describes Dunbar's preacherly text as one that employs racial discourse to educate discerning readers concerning culturally subversive ideas. I am deeply indebted to Blount's work on Dunbar; his insight has created the opportunity for my own criticism. While I agree with Blount's observations that the poem deploys rhetorical cunning, my point is to show how literal and visual aspects of the poem critique the racial discourses from which the poem was written and received.

25 See Henry Louis Gates, "The Trope of the Talking Book," *The Signifying Monkey*.

26 Benjamin Brawley, *Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1936) 77.

27 Dunbar's comments about racial identity are scattered throughout his oeuvre. On one occasion he wrote, "I am entirely white," but then added "it is one of the peculiar phases of Anglo-Saxon conceit to refuse to believe that every black man does not want to be white" (Virginia Cunnigham, *Paul Laurence Dunbar and His Song* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1947) 160.). Despite this seeming contraction, Dunbar most consistently wrote how he had hoped Negroes could be received as individuals without regard to color. See Booker T. Washington, et al., *The Negro Problem* (New York: James Pott and Company, 1903) 187–211.

CHAPTER TWO: RACIAL HIEROGLYPHICS

1 Zora Neale Hurston, "The Characteristics of Negro Expression," in *The Sanctified Church: The Folklore Writings of Zora Neale Hurston* (Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1981) 50.

2 Zora Neale Hurston to Langston Hughes, April 1928. Quoted in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: A Tragedy of Negro Life," Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, *Mulebone: A Comedy of Negro Life,* George Houston Bass and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) 9.

3 In *Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), Karla F.C.Holloway argues Hurston's fiction "speaks of the primacy of the word" as an instrument of literary talent and the metaphorical adornment of culture to ultimately represent itself as black. She continues, Hurston "celebrated herself through her word…and perhaps most important, most primal, *named* herself" (114–115). And while Holloway perceptively notes the importance of "the word" as crucial to Hurston's articulation of a dynamic culture, I disagree with

her notion that the apparent primacy of oral tradition is a biological and cultural embodiment of an African American woman's legacy (xiv). Rather, I view Hurston's "word" as an image whose significance lies in its claims to literally and figuratively act out its meaning as well as its representation of racial difference.

4 William Dean Howells, "Introduction," Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1896) vii.

5 Hurston studied under Boas at Columbia University between 1925 and 1927; in 1935 he arranged a Rosenwald fellowship for her to study for a Ph.D. in anthropology and folklore at Columbia. They developed such an intimate intellectual relationship, she referred to him as "Papa Franz." He taught her cul tural anthropology and encouraged her to think of herself and her community as applicable subjects of study. His training provided her an explanation for her depictions of Eatonville by suggesting how an unconscious folklore could be preserved without transformation into a conscious art. Hurston's systematic collection of folklore offered an alternative to the view that the conscious artist salvaged the folk art of the race by using it for aesthetic inspiration (e.g., James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*). Hurston admittedly idolized Boas, calling him "the greatest anthropologist alive" and "king of kings." See, Robert E. Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977) 21,62–3,86; and Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1984) 174–205.

6 Boas began a tradition in American linguistics with his approach to language study. He believed in the diffusion of anthropology and the unity of cultures—an indication of his commitment to cultural and linguistic relativism. The introduction to his influential *Handbook of American Indian Languages* detailed his view in which fieldwork was the background of significant linguistic investigation. His research influenced the intellectual emphasis of the American Anthropological Society (AAS) that privileged descriptive linguistics in field study. As a student of Boas and as an AAS member, Hurston understood the language of a people as an important indication of their culture.

7 Franz Boas, "Introduction," *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 40, Part 1, 1911) 64, 67.

8 Michael North, "Zora Neale Hurston and the Negro Anthology," *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 177.

9 Hurston's use of "the folk" engages more general literary and cultural interests in primitivism and modernism. "The folk" became a symbol of originality in American culture, and their role in art and literature were elevated to articulate a national art and authenticity. Modernist writers, artists and musicians within and outside the United States employed various notions of primitive folk to contrast and contest established versions of American, white, European, and "normal." See Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism;* and Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

10 Of course, Cunard's anthology is only one instance in which the "the folk" articulate racial meaning. My previous discussion of Paul Laurence Dunbar describes the turn-of-the-century commercial demand for black dialect speakers as an inauguration of twentieth century "black" literature. And, although the reception of Dunbar's work was beyond his control, African American authors after him responded to expected versions of the folk and folk culture in their writing.

11 In her essay, "The Politics of Fiction, Anthropology, and the Folk: Zora Neale Hurston" (in *History and Memory in African-American Culture,* Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)), Hazel Carby connects Hurston's work, particularly her commitment to the folk community as "a means for creating an essential concept of blackness," with a current fascination within the culture industry for projects by black women and within the 1920s white fascination with African Americans as exotic and primitive. She argues Hurston's deployment of the folk as rural and as racially authentic idealizes a historical past while it ignores the modern literary and cultural effects of black urban migration. In addition to raising issues concerning history, class, gender and representation in Hurston's work, Carby calls attention to racial authenticity as problematic during Hurston's era as well as during our own.

12 W.E.B.Du Bois, "The Forethought," *The Souls of Black Folk* in *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon Books, 1965) 209.

13 Houston A.Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 58.

14 Many critics have explored formal questions concerning *The Souls of Black Folk.* Among them, Keith E.Beyerman's, "Hearts of Darkness: Narrative Voices in The Souls of Black Folk" (*American Literary Realism 1870–1910* 14:1 Spring 1981. 43–51), considers what he refers to as Du Bois's narrative ambivalence as a formal possibility of reconciling two incompatible racial ideals. In "Between" (*Assemblage: A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture* 20 April 1993, 26–28), Nahum Chandler considers Du Bois's theme, syntax, and form as a kind of indirection. He argues *Souls* doubles and redoubles meanings as a site and form for the intellectual questions Du Bois poses. Arnold Rampersad contends *Souls* is a revival and a rejection of Booker T.Washington and others' reference to slave narratives. He believes Du Bois's project represents a direct parodic challenge to certain forms and assumptions concerning slave narratives. See, Arnold Rampersad "Slavery and the Literary Imagination: W.E. B.Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*" in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination,* Deborah E.McDowell and Arnold Rampersad, eds. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). In "Voices From The Veil: Black American Autobiography" (*The Georgia Review* 35:20 1981 Summer, 341–380), Gordon O.Taylor writes Du Bois "breached the Veil by mastering intellectual and literary systems of established culture." He argues that Du Bois's inclusion of himself and his personal affairs within the book's issues formally offers hope in reconciling the disparity between black and white.

15 Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995) 174.

16 The racial identity pursued by Du Bois, and later by New Negro intellectuals, is modern precisely because it advocates a group identity determined by race and culture more than by condition. In *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance,*

Houston A.Baker, Jr. argues that modernity is marked and instantiated by Booker T.Washington's 1895 address at the Negro exhibit at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition at which he articulated a national leadership program for the masses of black Americans since emancipation (15).

17 W.E.B.Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," *W.E.B.Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses, 1890–1919,* Philip S.Foner, ed. (New York: Pathfinder, 1970).

18 In 1915 the Ku Klux Klan received its charter from the Fulton County, GA, Superior Court and the modern Klan spread to Alabama and other states. It reached its height of influence in the 1920s with an estimated membership of four million. In 1915 fifty-six blacks were reported lynched, fifty in 1916, thirty-six in 1917, and sixty in 1918. Also in 1915, the Great Migration began. The First World War had opened the industrial economy to African Americans, and black-owned newspapers like *Chicago Defender* described economic advancement and racial dignity for those who moved North. By 1939, approximately two million African Americans moved from the South to Northern industrial centers. See Thomas J.Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: The Free Press, 1983) 112–142; and Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America,* Fifth Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) 516–521.

19 Quoted in David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1981) 21.

20 Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925) 3.

21 Contributors included Jean Toomer, Hurston, Bruce Nugent, Eric Walrond, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Angelina Grimke, Jessie Fauset, E.Franklin Frazier, and Charles S.Johnson.

22 My conception of the racial anthology as a spatial confinement is indebted to Julia Toews whose conversation is always clarifying.

23 All of these collections were edited by African Americans, and at least the majority of its contributors were also African American. Several other collections, edited by whites, about "black" literature and art also existed during the era.

24 Other writers associated with the era are: Sterling Brown, Gwendolyn Bennett, Nella Larsen, Rudolph Fisher, Eric Walrond, Richard Bruce Nugent, George S.Schuyler, Walter White and Wallace Thurman. After the publication of his novel *Cane* (1923), Jean Toomer hardly associated himself with the New Negro Renaissance or with black people generally.

25 See, John E.Bassett, *Harlem in Review: Cultural Reactions to Black American Writers, 1917–1939* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press and London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992); James DeJongh, *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue;* Cheryl A.Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995); Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African American Culture, 1920–1930* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995); Cary D.Wintz, *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1988).

26 Zora Neale Hurston, "Spirituals and Neo-Spirituals," *The Sanctified Church,* 79.

27 Sherwood Anderson, "Anderson on Winesburg, Ohio," *Winesburg, Ohio: Text and Criticism,* John H.Ferres, ed. (New York: Penguin, 1977) 14.
28 See Anthony Channell Hilfer, *The Revolt From the Village, 1915–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).
29 Edgar Lee Masters quoted in David Karsner "Sifting Out the Hearts of Men," *New York Herald Tribune* December 12, 1926, 28.
30 John E.Hallwas, "Introduction," *Spoon River Anthology,* Edgar Lee Masters (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992) 37.
31 Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," *I Love Myself When I'm Laughing*…, 154.
32 See Barbara Johnson, "Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston," *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 317–328.
33 *Spears* was submitted along with *Color Struck* to the 1925 Opportunity writing contest. *Spears* won an honorable mention but was never published. See Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*.
34 For a history and content summary of all of Hurston's available plays see, John Lowe, "From Mule Bones to Funny Bones: The Plays of Zora Neale Hurston," *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of Arts in the South,* Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 2–3, Winter–Spring 1995. 65–78.
35 As it is now known, "the *Mule Bone* controversy" concerned the question of authorship and publication rights. It is summarized in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "A Tragedy of Negro Life," in *Mule Bone,* George Houston Bass and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds, and is also detailed in Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York and London: Alfred A.Knopf, 1940) 331–333; Robert E.Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography,* and, Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
36 Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Zora Neale Hurston and the Speakerly Text," *The Signifying Monkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 170–216.

CHAPTER THREE: "UNSPOKEN WORDS ARE STRONGER"

1 347 US 483, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. May 17, 1954.
2 Barbara Christian, "Nuance and the Novella: A Study of Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha,*" *A Life Distilled: Gwendolyn Brooks Her Poetry and Fiction,* eds., Maria K.Mootry and Gary Smith (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 245.
3 See also, Sigmund Ro, "Coming of Age: The Modernity of Postwar Black American Writing," *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African American Literature and Culture,* Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
4 Quoted in C.Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow,* Third Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) 132.
5 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1944) lxxv.

6 E.Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949).
7 Kenneth B.Clark and Maime P.Clark, "Racial Identification and Preference in Negro Children," *Readings in Social Psychology,* eds., Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene Hartley (New York: Henry Holt, 1947) 602; see also K. B.Clark, "Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development" (Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1950).
8 The Clarks cite Theodor Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality*. His discussion of "democratic" versus "authoritarian" personalities illuminates much of their reasoning, particularly the notion that children with "unhealthy" mental hygiene may mature and become detrimental to civic morality.
9 Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," *I Love Myself When I'm Laughing…: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader,* Alice Walker, ed. (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979) 152.
10 *Phylon,* Special Issue, "The Negro in Literature: The Current Scene" (4th Quarter 1950):296.
11 George Kent, *A Life of Gwendolyn Brooks* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990) 98.
12 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *History and Memory in African American Culture,* eds. Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 289.
13 Ben Keppel, *The Work of Democracy: Ralph Bunche, Kenneth B.Clark, Lorainne Hansberry, and the Cultural Politics of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 105.
14 Gwendolyn Brooks, *Report From Part One* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1972) 148.
15 Mary Helen Washington, "Plain, Black and Decently Wild: The Heroic Possibilities of *Maud Martha,*" *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development,* Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, eds. (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth University Press, 1983) 270–286; and "Taming All That Anger Down: Rage and Silence in Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha,*" *Black Literature and Literary Theory,* Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed. (New York: Methuen, 1984) 249–260.
16 Phillip Brian Harper, "Gwendolyn Brooks and the Vicissitudes of Black Female Subjectivity," *Framing the Margins: The Social Logic of Postmodern Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 115.
17 Gwendolyn Brooks, "Song for Joe Louis," June 28, 1935. Quoted in *A Life,* 36.
18 Georg Lukacs, The *Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophic Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature,* Anna Bostock, trans. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994). Lukacs makes a distinction between *"having a problematic"* and *"being problematic"* because for him the novel form "establishes a fluctuating yet firm balance between becoming and being," whereby the necessary and antagonistic nature of inner and outer worlds not only "signifies an interior diversion of the normatively creative subject into a subjectivity as interiority," but exemplifies the search for meaning. Original emphasis.
19 Hortense Spillers, "'An Order of Constancy': Notes on Brooks and the Feminine," *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 261.

20 Gwendolyn Brooks, *Report From Part One* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1972) 38–39. Also, *Maud Martha,* 34.
21 Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 110.
22 Lewis A.Erenberg and Susan E.Hirsch, "Introduction," *The War in American Culture,* eds. Erenberg and Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 8.
23 Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988) 11.
24 Wendy Kozol, "Public News and Private Lives: The Politics of Merging Spaces," in Wendy Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) 97–138.
25 Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994) 3.
26 See Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
27 See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Feminism and History,* ed., Joan Wallach Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
28 Secretary of State Dean Acheson, December 12, 1952, statement to the Supreme Court. Quoted in Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* (New York: Penguin, 1982) 376.

CHAPTER FOUR: SEX AND VOLENCE

1 Nikki Giovanni, "On Being Asked What It's Like to Be Black," *Gemini: An Extended Autobiographical Statement on My First Twenty-Five Years of Being a Black Poet* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971) 24.
2 Within integrationist idealism, outward signs of racial difference were understood as having no outward and public credibility. Because of desegregation, public space and literary communities sought, theoretically, to erase the social division associated with the color-line, and, at least superficially, the races were imagined as equal. The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* most significantly influenced the era's idealism; in its ruling in favor of desegregation, the Court located racial meaning internally. See Lee D.Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the construction of Race,* 1896–1954 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 192; and Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage, 1977) 444.
3 The first five years of 1960s can be characterized by stark contradictions in the racial climate: President Lyndon B.Johnson appointed the first black cabinet member—Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Weaver—and the first black Supreme Court justice—Thurgood Marshall. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, Sidney Poitier received an academy award, and James Baldwin was honored for his novels and essays. During the same time, more than 250,000 people participated in the largest civil rights demonstration in the history of the United States, over one million students in Boston, Chicago and

New York boycotted schools to protest *de facto* segregation, four black girls were killed in a church bombing in Birmingham, and race riots occurred in Harlem, Rochester, Jersey City, Paterson, NJ, Dixmoor, IL, Philadelphia, and several other cities. See Lerone Bennett, Jr. *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984) 386–440, 557–594.

4 Peter Goldman, *Report from Black America* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1971) 21–22.

5 Stokeley Carmichael, "Black Power," *Black Protest: History, Documents and Analyses 1619 to the Present,* Joanne Grant, ed. (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1972) 460.

6 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), especially 59–84.

7 Clarence Major, "Introduction," *The New Black Poetry* 19.

8 James T.Stewert, "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist," *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing,* Leroi Jones and Larry Neal, eds. (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1968) 10.

9 John O'Neal, "About Black," *The Black Aesthetic,* Addison Gayle, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972) 51.

10 Don L.Lee, "Toward A Definition: Black Poetry of the Sixties (After Leroi Jones)," *The Black Aesthetic,* 227–228.

11 Larry Neal, "Some Reflections on the Black Aesthetic," *The Black Aesthetic,* 14–15.

12 Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 84.

13 LeRoi Jones, *Home* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1966) 251.

14 See Richard Wright, *White Man, Listen! Lectures in Europe, 1950–56* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1995).

15 As he turned away from his predominantly white, bohemian community, he established the Black Arts Reparatory Theater School. *Home* (1966), a collection of "social" essays, and *Black Magic Poetry* (1969) elaborate on his new status as a primary figure in the Black Aesthetic literary movement.

16 Stephen Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972) 17.

17 William J.Harris, "Introduction" in Amiri Baraka, *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991).

18 Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1984) 172.

19 LeRoi Jones, "Black Art," *Black Magic Poetry* (New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1970)

20 Phillip Brian Harper, "Nationalism and Social Division in Black Arts Poetry of the 1960s," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Chicago: University of Chicago, Winter 1993).

21 D.H.Melham, "Revolution: The Constancy of Change: An Interview with Amiri Baraka," *Black American Literature Forum* 16:3, 98 Fall 1992.

22 Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965) 30.

23 Tom Wicker, "Introduction," *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,* New York Times Edition (New York: E.P.Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968) x.

24 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974) lxxv.

25 *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,* 128.
26 Leroi Jones, *Home,* 216–217.
27 Eldridge Cleaver, "On Becoming," *Soul on Ice* (New York: Delta Publishing Co., 1968) 14.
28 Nikki Giovanni, "Black Poems, Poseurs and Power," *Gemini,* 106. All following quotations from this essay will be noted textually as BPPP.
29 Nikki Giovanni, *Black Feeling/Black Talk* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1969) ll. 1–5.
30 William H.Grier and Price Cobbs, *Black Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968) 2.
31 Nikki Giovanni, *Black Feeling/Black Talk* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1968) ll. 1–6.
32 The difference between the author and the speaker is at times unclear. As Black, the speaker must be male, his exercise of power requires it. But as Giovanni—the author—shows her color (as Don L.Lee explains), she also shows how she endorses how her identity will submit to the revolution, since after all, the woman's place is to be prone. (See Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Super Woman* (New York: The Dial Press, 1979)). Giovanni's female voice emerges to give her allegiance to the masculinist practices of the movement.

POSTSCRIPT

1 In his book *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), Ross Posnock argues that black intellectuals emerge as the modern intellectual. The paradoxical imposition of racial particularity and universal themes and concerns of intellectuals such as W.E.B.Du Bois position them as oxymorons who have set an example for simultaneous engagements with politics and aesthetics, the fundamental feature of intellectual work. In her essay, "Peter's Pans: Eating in the Diaspora" in her *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), Hortense Spillers calls the emergence of Black Studies "the paradox of the oxymoron" as she explains the incompleteness of theories about African American culture. "We never surpass some things," she writes, "or get over them, insofar as their opaqueness bears down on the imagination with a clarity of refusal that must be confronted" (3).
2 In "Poets Who Are Negroes," Gwendolyn Brooks writes, "Every Negro poet have 'something to say.' Simply because he is a Negro; he cannot escape having important things to say… But no real artist is going to be content with offering raw materials. The Negro poet's most urgent duty, at present, is to polish his technique." I read her words as claiming art for black intellectuals. See, *Phylon,* Special Issue, The Negro in Literature: The Current Scene. (Fourth Quarter 1950) 11:4. 312.
3 Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* like his essays in *Shadow and Act* and *Going to the Territory,* speak to the urgency of universal human recognition, a recognition that does not deny nor fear history.
4 James Dickerson, Perfect Gentleman Barber Shop, 326 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD.

5 In 1950, Alain Locke writes his own claim for black intellectuals' access to the complete implications of art and intellect: "The necessary alchemy is, of course, universalized rendering, for in universal particularity, there has always resided the world's greatest and most enduring art." See *Phylon* 11:4, 392.
6 Spillers, "'All the Things You Could Be by Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race," in *Black, White, and in Color,* 397.

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