Power to the People: Self-determined Identity in Black Pride and Chicano Movement Literature

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Tiffany M. Anderson

Graduate Program in English

The Ohio State University

2012

Dissertation Committee:

Valerie Lee, Ph.D., Advisor

Adélékè Adéẹ̀kọ́, Ph.D.

Frederick Aldama, Ph.D.

Abstract

Perhaps Du Bois's most famous line from *The Souls of Black Folk* comes from the Preface and serves as a prediction: "[T]he problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." With this statement, Du Bois positioned himself as the prophetic voice of U.S. race relations, and *The Souls of Black Folk* seemed a projection of the entire century despite its early-century 1903 publication date. As a result of this reception, double-consciousness, a compelling concept that positioned all African American identity as dependent on a dominant white American perspective, emerged as a foundational term in 20th century African American identity studies. Although Du Boisian double-consciousness has become a foundational concept in 20th century African American and Literary studies, it does not allow for an intercultural understanding of identity formations. Moreover, Du Bois offered no concluding advice, no recommendation for creating a single consciousness, and no discussion regarding the effect of double-consciousness on the African American community.

My dissertation *Power to the People: Self-determined Identity in Black Pride and Chicano Movement Literature* reassesses the critical legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness and considers how the literature of the 60s and 70s sought to replace the inevitability of sustained double-consciousness with a singular identity. Du Bois presented three properties of double-consciousness: problems of self-definition beyond a white American perspective; the exclusion of Negroes from

mainstream American institutions and culture; and the warring identities of race and nationality. Since the concept's inception, scholars have often employed Du Boisian double-consciousness in literary identity studies; however, most apply the concept outside of the historical era of its development without acknowledging the need for necessary revisions, and most ignore other complex identity issues that might alter the concept's application. My project considers double-consciousness not simply as a theoretical lens used to analyze literature but rather as a significant cultural phenomenon very much prevalent in actual African and Latino American communities. The Black Pride and Chicano Movements and the literature of the period identify the pervasive role played by white American perspectives in the formation of minority identities and, after rejecting these perspectives, promote self-determined racial and ethnic identities. In my analysis, I connect Du Boisian double-consciousness to José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica* and Gloria Anzaldúa's presentation of a new mestizaje consciousness to validate my intercultural project.

Dedication

In memory of my grandmother, Eunice Fucuals:

the very thing you left for me to achieve.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Valerie Lee, Adélékè Adéẹ̀kọ́, and Frederick Aldama for guiding me through this process, reading and critiquing this project while allowing me the freedom to find my own scholarly voice. I would also like to thank Christopher Lewis and Corinne Martin for being wonderful writing partners, one-time roommate and officemate, forever godmother, and much, much more. Thank you, Dennis Alexander, for your sound counsel, for your listening ear, for your encouragement, and for never telling me what to do though I often asked you to. Thank you, Mike, for believing and reminding me that this end to my degree is only the beginning. Thank you, Christa, Mommy, and Daddy for believing and praying that, despite all of my life-changing events over these years, I would finish. Your endless support and babysitting hours have made this project possible. Thank you, Meah, Nylah, and Ellison, for being my reasons to write.

Vita

1999.....First Baptist Academy

2004.....B.A. English with Creative Writing,

.....Southern Methodist University

2006.....M.A. English, Southern Methodist

.....University

2007 to present .....Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of English, The Ohio State University

Publications

Rev. of *Alice Walker* The Color Purple*: A Reader's Guide of Essential Criticism,* by Rachel Lister. *The European Legacy.* (forthcoming: 2012).

Rev. of *Racial Justice in the Age of Obama,* by Roy L. Books. *The European Legacy.*16.5 (2011): 668. Print.

"Suicide." *Encyclopedia of African American History.* Eds. Leslie M. Alexander and Walter C. Rucker. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010.

Rev. of *Hanif Kureishi*, by Bradley Buchanan. *The European Legacy.* 15.2 (2010): 241. Print.

"'Ten Little Niggers': The Making of a Black Man's Consciousness." *Folklore Forum. 39*.1 (2009): Web. http://folkloreforum.net/2009/05/01/%E2%80%9Cten-little-

Fields of Study

Major Field: English

Sub-Field: U. S. Ethnic Literature

Table of Contents

Introduction

Oscar Zeta Acosta includes a convincing example that connects the African American and Mexican American communities in his book *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973). At a UCLA protest against Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia and against the Kent State Massacre of 1970, Black and Chicano revolutionaries share the stage to incite the listening crowd of five thousand students: Angela Davis, a recently terminated UCLA professor, activist, feminist and communist, Corky Gonzales, the poet laureate of the Chicano Movement, and Acosta's slightly fictionalized character, Brown Zeta Buffalo. This poignant moment in what some might call an exaggerated memoir represents the shared concerns of Black and Chicano political activists. Acosta extends this demonstration when all historical figures meet backstage. The three share personal safety concerns, address each other with familiar terms like "sister" and "baby," and respect each other's involvement with cultural movements and national politics. It is as if the pregnant minutes of the encounter birth a second wind for each person to press on in their revolutions.[1]

While the historical accurateness of both Acosta's book and this literary moment might be questioned, even if fictionalized, Acosta writes the event to bring attention to the interconnectivity between the Black Pride[2] and Chicano Movements and the activists involved in the movements. It is not the purpose of *Power to the People* to prove that

one movement was modeled after another or to suggest that one imitated the other; but rather, it is my intention to demonstrate the shared purposes of the movements, namely, to cultivate identities for a united race or ethnic group. So, instead of simply noting the coinciding years of these two movements, I hope to note the similarities in how literature creates a trajectory towards self-determined identities for both groups.

In her book *"Shakin' Up" Race and Gender: Intercultural Connections in Puerto Rican, African American, and Chicano Narratives and Culture (1965-1995),* Marta E. Sanchez defines her comparative approach for the aforementioned cultures as a "recent rubric of social and literary analysis that posits cultures in contact" (7). Similarly, in my dissertation, I will present an intercultural literary analysis of African American and Latino/a Literature from the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of presenting a comparative model of the literatures that depend on similarities and dissimilarities, my project seeks connections that suggest contemporary associations between the literatures and cultures. I posit that literature advances political movements of the period and that blacks and Chicanos share similarities in political and cultural movements as well. I will discuss Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964), Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973), Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976), Estela Portillo-Trambley's *The Day of the Swallows* (1971), and Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). The critical framework and structural organizer of *Power to the People* is a reflection and reassessment of W. E. B. Du Bois's double-consciousness.

Perhaps Du Bois's most famous line from *The Souls of Black Folk* comes from the Preface and serves as a prediction: "[T]he problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." With this statement, Du Bois positioned himself as the prophetic voice of race relations, and *The Souls of Black Folk* seemed a projection of the entire century despite its early-century 1903 publication date. As a result, Du Boisian double-consciousness emerged as a foundational term in 20th century African American identity studies. However, in *Power to the People*, I contend that as it stands, Du Boisian double-consciousness is lacking for a 20th century application and should be regarded as an evolving concept representative of the evolving race relations of U.S. society. Du Bois qualifies the identity complex for African Americans only, dedicates a single paragraph for a concept that has inspired scholars for more than a century, and does not consider other identity formations (i.e. gender, sexuality, and class) as a factor within double-consciousness. While Du Bois notes the importance of merging these two consciousnesses into one, he offers no concluding advice, no recommendation for *how* to create a single consciousness, and no discussion regarding the effect of double-consciousness on the African American community. With a close reading of "The Forethought" to *The Souls of Black Folk*, it becomes apparent that he wrote the concept as a reflection of the Ante-Bellum era and not as a projection of the coming century. In fact, he specifically designates the first two chapters ("Of Our Spiritual Strivings" and "Of the Dawn of Freedom") as efforts "to show what Emancipation meant to [African Americans], and what was its aftermath" (Du Bois v). With these significant points under consideration, I analyze my primary literary texts after establishing their historical

context, introduce gender as a factor to complicate Du Bois's male-centered concept, and include an intercultural consideration of double-consciousness. The original three components of double-consciousness that Du Bois presents will serve as structural guides for Chapter Two, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four.

This introduction will provide background understanding of two influential philosophers, W. E. B. Du Bois and José Vasconcelos, in order to demonstrate the earlier connections between African American and Mexican identity philosophies to justify my intercultural analysis. I will show how Du Bois recognizes an issue with identity formations in African Americans, how Vasconcelos attempts to address the complications of identity by focusing on genetic strengths, and how scholars of the 60s and 70s engaged the philosophies of these early thinkers. I will then discuss the importance of united self-determination for positive self-esteem for Blacks and Chicanos in the U.S.

The Thinkers

Double-consciousness, a term introduced by W. E. B. Du Bois in his 1897 essay "The Strivings of the Negro People," and later, more famously, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, is a complicated identity doubleness that Du Bois defined exclusively as an African American complex. Du Bois presents three parts of double-consciousness: 1) problems of self-definition beyond white American perspective, 2) the exclusion of Negroes from mainstream America, and 3) the warring identities of race and nationality. Although Du Bois is often credited for the first use of the term "double-consciousness," the audience of

his 1897 essay might have known the previous uses of the idea by Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and by Du Bois's Harvard professor in psychology, William James. Du Bois studies these preceding concepts and applies, adjusts, and recreates double-consciousness according to his own experiences as a black American. In his 1992 article, "W.E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double-consciousness," scholar Dickson Bruce documents the historical use of the term that predates Du Bois's application of double-consciousness as it relates to racial identity formations.

According to Dickson Bruce, Emerson first used the term double-consciousness in his 1843 essay "The Transcendentalist" to define a problem Transcendentalists face when attempting to separate themselves from the world. Emerson writes:

> The worst feature of this double-consciousness is that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which he leads, really show very little relation to each other: one prevails now, all buzz and din; the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise; and, with the progress of life, the two discover no greater disposition to reconcile themselves. (73)

For Emerson, double-consciousness was an exploration into identity that makes allowance for two lives in constant disagreement, in particular, the Transcendentalist's struggle between the world (the downward pull of *materialist* strivings) and the spirit (the upward pull of *spiritual* strivings). Bruce suggests that for Du Bois the downward pull is the American consciousness and the upward is reflective of the African consciousness (Bruce 300-301). The irreconcilable nature of Emerson's "two lives" is similar to Du

Bois's "two unreconciled strivings." Although Du Boisian double-consciousness involves the advantage of insight, the second sight is a result of the veil (which will be discussed further in Chapter One) and not a consequence of the combining of the two consciousnesses.

William James, Du Bois's professor at Harvard, presented a concept of double-consciousness rooted in psychological theory. Although Du Bois regarded James as a mentor, Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis questions "to what extent, if at all, the insights in James's *Principles in Psychology* were the source of Du Bois's own special insights into what he would describe as the double nature of the African-American psyche" because of the lacking evidence to prove otherwise (Lewis 96). Despite the uncertainty of the influence of James's text, one thing is certain: "the very term Du Bois was to employ in his most famous work, *The Souls of Black Folk*—'double-consciousness'—had been used to characterize mental disturbance in a case study in which James was a consultant" (Lewis 96).

In his 1890 essay "The Hidden Self," James presented the concept of double and multiple consciousnesses. In his *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*, Eric Sundquist describes James's theory:

> James's pre-Freudian essay speculates about the influence of a "buried" or subconscious self . . . Just as hypnosis might bring forth the "fully conscious" double self in the hysteric, James hypothesizes that every consciousness might

> contain such layers of selves. . . influencing the behavior of the antagonistic or double self. (571)

Although "The Hidden Self" cites the term used in Du Bois's "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," the more comparable idea is found in James's 1890 psychology text *The Principles of Psychology*, wherein he describes "alternating selves" and "primary and secondary consciousness" (Lewis 96). A key point to James's double-consciousness which translated into Du Bois's concept was that both consciousnesses are equal. If there is no superior or inferior consciousness, Du Bois is able to place the African and American consciousness on equal grounds. Although consciousnesses are equal, all three (Emerson's, James's, and Du Bois's) concepts of double-consciousness assert that the two consciousnesses are always in opposition.

Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis links the greatest influence on Du Bois's concept of divided self to the fiction works of Charles Chesnutt and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, two of Du Bois's favorite writers (Lewis 282). Although he cites this in *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, Lewis fails to include the specific texts and situations that led to the influence that he claims so prevalent. He does, however, mention Du Bois's love for *Faust* and cites a claim printed in the local newspaper during Du Bois's education at Fisk University that encouraged the university's students to "immerse themselves in Goethe in order to speed 'the rise of the Negro people'" (Lewis 139). It is important to note that the character in *Faust* struggles with two inner selves, an obvious skeleton to the paradox of double-consciousness:

Two souls abide, alas, within my breast,

And each one seeks for riddance from the other.

The one clings with a dogged love and lust

With clutching parts unto this present world,

The other surges fiercely from the dust

Unto sublime ancestral fields. (Goethe 42)

Tracing the etymology and previous theories of double-consciousness demonstrates the varied uses and possibilities of the concept beyond the scope of Du Boisian double-consciousness. Although Du Bois cites double-consciousness as a uniquely Negro phenomenon, we see that its roots span German literature, American psychology, and the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century which validates its application beyond African American identity formations. In fact, Emerson's understanding of double-consciousness is comparable to Du Bois's because both address issues with identity. Emerson especially concerned himself with the individual and society's influence on the individual. Du Boisian double-consciousness is similar in that double-consciousness is a result of society's influence on the individual. However, Emerson champions individualism over society which negates the consequence of society's influence. The ethnic and race pride movements create a version of this individualism that requires a group of individuals to unite in order to offset the effect of double-consciousness, a point which will be discussed in further detail later in this introduction.

While Du Bois concerned himself with the identity formations of African Americans, Mexican writer, philosopher, and politician José Vasconcelos noted the biological benefits of mixed race people, namely Mexicans. In his canonical text for ethnic studies, *La raza cósmica* (1925), Vasconcelos rejects the notion of miscegenation as unnatural and dangerous. Instead, he recognizes the mixing of races as a desirable and natural urging that results in a fifth race, a race of mestizos he calls una raza cósmica. At the time of his writing, Vasconcelos notes that the race that seems most representative of this mega-race is the people of Mexico, a group of people who are essentially descendants of four existing races: American Indian, Mongoloid, Caucasoid and Negroid.

La raza cósmica begins with a wonderful documentation of past influential civilizations. Vasconcelos takes care to mention that each of these civilizations discussed, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, U.S. American, and Argentinean, become successful because of their racial or ethnic mixing. He notes the generative effect of mixing lineages and discusses, in length, Atlantis as the first mighty civilization, as ancient as the earth. The race of Atlantis, Atlanteans, migrated across the earth branching into the races that produced the modern great civilizations listed above, ultimately ending with the four races we know today. These races then mix to create the fifth, final, and superior race, la raza cósmica.

Although the biological thought behind *La raza cósmica* is indeed solid and consistent with Charles Darwin's theory of sexual selection, it seems as though Vasconcelos explores this concept more so as a way to validate Mexicans. In other

words, instead of addressing the subjective-determined identity that suggested mestizos as inferior beings, Vasconcelos focused on the genetic superiority of his people in hopes that healthy identity formations would follow suit. While the connection between biology and identity seems inevitable, Vasconcelos resists this reading of *La raza cósmica*. Regardless of his intention, writers and activists alike took up *La raza cósmica* as an exaltation of both biology and identity. Didier T. Jaén discusses this in his introduction to the bilingual edition of *La raza cósmica*:

> Some members of the Chicano movement in the southwest of the United States saw, in the early days of the movement, an exaltation of their own values in this concept of the Cosmic race, and identified with it in the concept of "La Raza," giving it new life [. . .] In the United States, the problem of racial and ethnic differences is still as vital as it was in the rest of the world during the first part of the XX century, when Vasconcelos wrote his book. Although Vasconcelos denied that his essay was written in order to exalt a race with strong feelings of inferiority, the tone of his work, and the interpretation it has received since it was written, contradicts him. (xv-xvi)

Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa is one of these writers who repurposes Vasconcelos's raza cósmica as an opportunity to reassess the process of Mexican/Chicano identity formations.

In her groundbreaking book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa attempts to define a new identity representative of the genetic makeup of

Mexican descendants living in America. She opens the chapter "La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness" with her interpretation of Vasconcelos's raza cósmica:

> José Vasconcelos, Mexican philosopher, envisaged *una raza mestiza, una mezcla de razas afines, una raza de color—la primera raza síntesis del globo*. He called it a cosmic race, *la raza cósmica*, a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly "crossing over," this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an "alien" consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands. (99)

For the purpose of this project, I choose to acknowledge yet not analyze the feminine gender Anzaldúa assigns the consciousness, but instead focus on her assumption that a new consciousness must accompany a new race, a consciousness she calls "alien." Anzaldúa, in other words, makes the leap that Vasconcelos was reluctant to make: a leap from genetics to identity.

Anzaldúa becomes a major connector between Vasconcelos and Du Bois in that she considers both of their concepts and creates a process to resolve the double-

consciousness Du Bois suggests is an ultimate end for people with doubled identities. Instead of speaking directly of double-consciousness, Anzaldúa speaks of nepantilism, "an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" (100). Though she never names double-consciousness, she provides a near exact definition when she speaks of "the coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference caus[ing] un choque, a cultural collision" (100). Anzaldúa continues past this state of double-consciousness and documents a seemingly unavoidable, predestined, and necessary process towards the new mestiza consciousness:

> Within us and within la cultura chicana, commonly held beliefs of the white culture attack commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, and both attack commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture. Subconsciously, we see an attack on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance [. . .] Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. But it is not a way of life. (100)

This "counterstance" that Anzaldúa speaks of in this quotation manifests in the period I consider in *Power to the People*. It is a position created in response to how one is taught to view themselves and their culture by white American perspective and is the beginning of self-determined identities. While this is the focal point of my project, I appreciate Anzaldúa's insistence that this is not the end of a healthy identity although it is in the process towards one. Anzaldúa asserts that a new mestiza consciousness is realized by

"developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (101). This new mestiza consciousness, however, is also a self-determined identity, but as Anzaldúa suggests, the counterstance is an identity created out of rebellion while the new mestiza consciousness is created purely to benefit the individual and/or racial/ethnic community.

The Period (1964-1977)

Scholars document the beginning of the African American Civil Rights Movement to have begun in 1866 soon after the abolishment of slavery in 1865 and coinciding with the Supreme Court's decision of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) which upheld the maintenance of segregation ideology. The historical movement began with a focus on progress through the U.S. judicial and congressional system championing the 14th Amendment of 1868 which granted African Americans citizenship and the 15th Amendment of 1870 which protected the voting rights of all citizens, regardless of race. Though these milestones were acknowledged through the pillars of American democracy, the actualization of these rights were fought for by Civil Rights activists through such practices as nonviolent protest and civil disobedience, especially following the overturning of Plessy v. Ferguson with the famous desegregating case Brown v. the Board of Education (1954). I go through this brief historical summation to emphasize that the Civil Rights Movement is not my focal subject.

Champions of the Civil Rights Movement acknowledged their rights as human beings in America: their rights to citizenship, suffrage, and equal opportunity, and these activists operated within the parameters created by the system they hoped to join. It is this very desire and need to belong that distinguishes activists of the Civil Rights

Movement from revolutionaries of the Black Pride and Chicano Movements. To participate nonviolently with civil disobedience is to participate on the playing field of those who suppress. Very similar to playing a football game on another team's field by the team's rules with the team's handpicked referees calling unjust penalties, the game becomes slanted, unfair, and seems, altogether, a waste of time and energy. It leads one to question, "Why play the game at all?" This question propels Black Pride and Chicano revolutionaries into action. And it is this desire to refuse to play by the rules (or even to *play* the game, for that matter) that lead them to self-determined identities. The literature of this time period reflects this shift in ideology.

My list of primary sources consists of texts in a thirteen year time period (1964-1976) that included multiple race and ethnic pride movements. Despite the racial/ethnic pride of the period, these texts demonstrate self-loathing within many of the main characters. This occasional contradiction between the racial and ethnic progression of the historical period and identity stagnation in characters metaphorically represents a manifestation of societal double-consciousness. However, this project will focus on the coinciding evolution of racial/ethnic identity of African Americans and Latinos and the evolution of literary double-consciousness. African American and Latino/a writers of the 1960s and 1970s are integral in creating identity for their respective race and ethnic groups while simultaneously projecting the struggles of minority identity formations to America. Through their unapologetic writing, these writers rejected the previous practice of writing to/for an Anglo American audience. As a result of this cultural project, these

writers influence each other across racial and ethnic lines while advancing their respective movements to self-determined identities beyond double-consciousness.

The Argument

Du Bois is progressive in naming the phenomenon of double-consciousness, yet he never moves to the place that eliminates blacks' dependency on white American perspective to determine identity. In fact, the claim of double-consciousness propels blacks into a type of consciousness slavery: white perspective becomes the master while black perspective is slave to the white master perspective. So while Du Bois identifies the effects of the institution of American slavery on black people's consciousness, he is also clearly noting a chattel-free slavery of consciousness.

According to Du Bois's narrative in *Souls*, we can identify the process of racial identity formations on the burgeoning of the 20th Century as follows: 1) One is made aware of one's race and/or 2) made aware of racism. 3) One sees oneself from the perspective of white Americans and suffers from double-consciousness and 4) undoubtedly responds with self-hatred that manifests either as anger towards one's race, hatred of all things white, or sycophancy.

Here is where Du Bois's process ends, stuck in the damning result of double-consciousness that leaves persons of color essentially hopeless and dependent on the white majority to determine their identity; however, the race pride movements of the 60s and 70s change the process of racial identity formations to include self-determination: 1) one is made aware of one's race and/or 2) made aware of racism. 3) One sees oneself

from the perspective of white Americans and suffers from double-consciousness and 4) recognizes the control white Americans hold through double-consciousness. 5) One unites with members of race (and possibly, other victims, regardless of race) and 6) collectively self-determine racial identity.

Chapter One of my dissertation provides a more detailed discussion of double-consciousness, Du Bois's evolved understanding of the color line, and his use of double-consciousness as a literary trope. I analyze "Of the Coming of John," the only fictional addition to *The Souls of Black Folk*, and *Dark Princess: A Romance* (1928) in order to establish how double-consciousness manifests as a literary trope according to its author. In addition, this chapter discusses Du Bois's use of double-consciousness as a global concept and demonstrates the evolution of the term from his limited application to a black/white color line into the more inclusive color-spectrum line that places all people of color against white power.

Chapter Two explores double-consciousness as an intercultural concept that connects African American and Latino people and literatures based on shared struggles to claim ethnic identities in a society that privileges a white American perspective. For my literary analysis in this chapter, I pull from similarly influential members of each ethnic group's literary and political movements: Amiri Baraka and Oscar Zeta Acosta. Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* documents the process of transforming a white-informed double-consciousness into a Chicano consciousness. Baraka's play *The*

Dutchman demonstrates the deathly compromise involved with passive movements that include white American appeasement.

The second chapter establishes double-consciousness as an evolving concept dependent on historical context. Because double-consciousness is a sociological concept that focuses on minority identity formations, the troubling existence of double-consciousness begins to subside as ethnic groups find footing in society and construct self-determined identities that unite entire race and ethnic communities. A heightened awareness of the importance to define oneself advances identity formations during the historic race and ethnic movements of the 60s and 70s. Acosta and Baraka encourage this shift by promoting unified arts movements and by no longer catering to a white American audience. The characters in *Revolt* and *Dutchman* do not always reflect the contemporary identities the literature promotes. Instead, Acosta and Baraka illustrate double-consciousness and, in doing so, point to the need for all to adopt the new unified Chicano identity or Black identity promoted by the movements. The struggle for these characters to stand secure in their identities reveals the strength in and need for self-determined identities for Chicanos and Blacks.

As doubly marginalized people during the 60s and 70s, African American and Chicano women experienced moments of exclusion and abjection from both mainstream America and their own ethnic movements. The third chapter examines the double-consciousness concept that notes the exclusion of blacks from mainstream America and how this issue of exclusion is similar to the treatment of women in the movements. I

include analyses of Alice Walker's *Meridian* and Estela Portillo-Trambley's *The Day of the Swallows*. Walker's *Meridian* addresses contemporary issues, particularly the role of female activists within the more male-centered Civil Rights movement, the unique issues (pregnancy, rape, and abortion) they encounter, as well as the sexist neglect they experience from the main movement. Portillo-Trambley published the more obscure play, *The Day of the Swallows*, in 1971. Centered on a lesbian protagonist, Josefa, who saves others from the evils of their male-dominated community, *The Day of the Swallows* focuses on creating uniquely female spaces amid such patriarchal systems.

The final chapter focuses on the third issue of double-consciousness: the warring identities of race and nationality. This chapter explores Du Bois's conflation of race and nationality for white Americans and his polarization of the two for African Americans. Here I argue that the existing belief that to be white is to be American defines the uniqueness of ethnic minorities' struggle for self-definition in the United States. In order to properly demonstrate the stressed dichotomy between race and nationality as explored by Du Bois, I employ Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*, a memoir documenting Thomas's struggle to self-determine his identity as a Negro Puerto Rican in America. Although Thomas helps found the Nuyorican movement, his memoir predates the Nuyorican Poets Café and documents his connection, instead, to the Black Pride movement.

Notes and Bibliography

Acosta, Oscar Zeta. *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*. 1973. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1987. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. Print.

Bruce, Dickson D., Jr. "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 64.2 (1992): 299-309. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: Modern Library, 1950. Print.

Goethe, J. W. *Faust*. Trans. C. E. Passage. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965. Print.

Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race.* New York: Henry Holt, 1993. Print.

Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. "Brown Power to Brown People: Radical Ethnic Nationalism, the Black Panther and Latino Radicalism." *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement.* Eds. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

Sanchez, Marta. *"Shakin' Up" Race and Gender: Intercultural Connections in Puetro Rico, African American, and Chicano Narratives and Cultures (1965-1995).* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. Print.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.

Vasconcelos, Jose. *The Cosmic Race: a Bilingual Edition*. Trans. Didier T. Jaen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Print.

[1] For an article noting such interconnectivity between movements, see Jeffrey Ogbar's "Brown Power to Brown People: Radical Ethnic Nationalism, Black Panthers and Latino Radicalism."

[2] There are many terms associated with the political and social movement of African Americans during the 60s and 70s. One might say that Black Pride is synonymous to Black Power and Black Nationalism. I choose to use the term Black Pride instead of the comparable terms often used for the African American revolutionary movement of the 60s and 70s to emphasize my primary concern with identity politics and the push for self-love that the movement included. I will distinguish between Black Pride Movement and the Civil Rights Movement later in this introduction.

Chapter One. Double-consciousness: The Soul of Du Bois Revealed

Du Bois's concept of black double-consciousness first appeared in his 1897 essay "Strivings of Negro People" and was reprinted in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Boisian double-consciousness addresses three main areas of racialization: 1) the power of white American perspective in the Negro's life, 2) The Negro's exclusion from mainstream America, and 3) the confusion that comes with being both American and not-American (Bruce 301). He claims that the Negro has "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body" (Du Bois 17), and, accordingly, that black Americans' constant attempts to reconcile the two conflicting ideals "has sent them often wooing false gods and invoking false means of salvation, and at times has even seemed about to make them ashamed of themselves" (Du Bois 18). Indeed, he even regards double-consciousness as a sentence of condemnation for the Negro people; at the same time, however, Du Bois unmistakably defines the consciousness as a gift. Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis writes:

> An intuitive faculty (prelogical, in a sense) enabling him/her to see and say things about American society that possessed heightened moral validity. Because he dwelt equally in the mind and heart of his oppressor as in his own beset psyche, the African-American embraced a vision of the commonwealth at its best. But the

> gift was also double-edged—always potentially enervating—because the African-American only saw him/herself reflected from a white surface[.] (Lewis 281)

A "double-edged" gift indeed. Du Bois often states the positive of double-consciousness with one breath and trumps the very victory he claims with another. An example of this is in the prophecy that the consciousness is not accurately stated as divided but "stronger for being doubled" (Lewis 283). He later affirms the separation of the consciousness by recognizing "a permanent tension" (281). Du Bois furthermore rejects both *assimilation* into white American society and *separation* from white America, yet explains the "destiny of the race" located in "enduring *hyphenation*" (Lewis 281, emphasis added).

The paradoxical nature of Du Bois's theory does not invalidate the concept of double-consciousness because double-consciousness itself is paradoxical—*two* consciousness in *one* soul. A marriage between achievement and struggle becomes a permanent distinction in Du Bois's life as demonstrated in the construction of *The Souls of Black Folk.* Although the collection of essays and fiction marks a moment of distinction for Du Bois, the collection is also a presentation of struggle painfully prominent, real, and experienced in his life as well as in the lives of other black Americans doomed to live behind, what Du Bois coins, the veil.

Power to the People serves as a reassessment of the concept double-consciousness. However, if we are to follow Du Bois's literary career and how he uses the concept in his own fiction, we are able to identify moments when Du Bois reassess his own scholarship. This chapter focuses on the evolution of Du Bois's understanding of double-consciousness, the color line, as well as the role of African Americans in a

world community as documented in his fictional novel *Dark Princess: A Romance. Power to the People* also seeks to understand how the use of a sociological phenomenon like double-consciousness operates as a literary trope. This chapter provides a literary analysis of the first intentional use of literary (or fictional) double-consciousness in Du Bois's only inclusion of fiction in *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of the Coming of John." Ultimately, this chapter provides proper basis for the chapters to follow. Instead of working under the assumption that literary double-consciousness is simply a tool for plot development and that double-consciousness is an unchanging concept, I address these issues here prior to dealing with specific undertakings of sociological and literary double-consciousness. First, I provide a brief analysis of double-consciousness as written in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings."

The Veil

Du Bois chooses to cite social situations in the chapter "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" before presenting his theory, suggesting by the order in the text (social situation precedes double-consciousness) that the development of the consciousness results only after participants in society make one aware of one's racial difference. In the chapter's first paragraph, Du Bois presents social situations that anyone of color may have experienced at one point in his/her life:

> They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At

> these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. (Du Bois 15)

Although this awkward social dance between whites and blacks is familiar to most, if not all black Americans, the encounter and observation are uniquely Du Bois's. While creating a universal connection to readers in the opening of the essay, Du Bois is still merely offering a personal anecdote despite the universal chord the anecdote strikes. Du Bois continues the essay with another personal experience identifying the moment he became aware of his racial difference:

> I remember well when the shadow swept across me. . . In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,--refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (Du Bois 16)

Du Bois recounts his childhood memory with specifics that inform the reader of the importance the moment held for him in his life. He remembers the setting, the situation, the price of the cards, and the fact that the offending girl was "a tall newcomer." Most importantly, he recalls the feeling of difference and the awareness of exclusion and rejection awakened within him. After identifying this never-before felt emotion, Du Bois explains that this feeling did not stem from anything within. Instead, he alludes to an

external difference by metaphorically relating his skin to a "vast veil." In all the ways one may consider it, a veil is never used for something inside. Instead, a veil is a covering, an outermost layer that protects or hides what is within. Despite the general understanding of the purpose of the veil and the effect the veil has upon young Du Bois, a clear definition of the veil is a crux for literary critics.

There are three main interpretations of the use of the "veil" in *Souls*. According to Eric Sundquist, the veil serves as (1) a separation between blacks and whites, (2) a layer of white people's ignorance of black perception of white America, and (3) "as the symbol of mystic vision" (Sundquist 565). The veil introduced in *Souls,* interestingly, affects both black and white readers. The black reader's recognition of the exclusion Du Bois cites in the introduction of double-consciousness operates as a veil, while the white reader's lack of understanding of the consciousness of black people also serves as a veil. The more complicated explanation of "mystic vision" encourages spirituality of the African American, but more specifically promises a "reunion with an African ancestral spirit that could be achieved by a 'modern lifting of the veil'" (Sundquist 565). In Pricilla Wald's explanation of the veil, the veil is both inhibiting and enabling:

> Du Bois's echo establishes the Veil not only as a visual impairment within the world, but also as a metaphor for worldly perception. Once again the Veil interferes with self-knowledge, but this interference applies equally to white and black America. (Wald 228)

And according to David Levering Lewis, the simplest explanation of the veil as "mystic vision" suggests prophecy or the enabling power to "see dilemmas far into the future"

(Lewis 283).

For the purpose of this chapter, I argue that the veil is the outward, inhibiting difference that separated Du Bois from the other students; more specifically, the veil is in fact his skin. For example, according to Wald, literary characters that choose to live without acknowledging their African ancestry, who choose to pass for white, are said to "choose to live without the Veil" (Wald 228). By applying this symbol as a replacement of race, Du Bois avoids addressing his skin in the anger and contempt with which he easily addresses the veil. The veil becomes a scapegoat. Although he acknowledges hate for the veil, he does not outwardly acknowledge hate for his skin or race, which is the very essence of his difference.

Du Bois's Double-consciousness

In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Du Bois acts as a psychologist; he analyzes his personal experiences, how these experiences made him feel, and what resulted consciously (and often times subconsciously) in response to the experiences, yet the text reads like a sociology experiment, as if Du Bois is presenting sociological research he has conducted on black Americans. Upon a first reading, one may assume that Du Bois begins with the analysis of black Americans' consciousness, but the autobiographical nature of *The Souls of Black Folk* suggests that Du Bois really begins by addressing his personal consciousness and then applies his findings to Black Americans as a group, allowing his personal experience to assume the power of the universal. Because the concept begins with Du Bois, a most effective understanding of double-consciousness comes by following Du Bois's encounters and response to being "an outcast and a

stranger in [his] own house" (16).

Although critic Shanette M. Harris claims Du Bois's "understanding of and empathy toward 'black folk' was rather limited because of his few experiences with other African Americans," it is my belief that Du Bois still understood what it was to be an African descendent in America (Harris 218). Du Bois's initial rejection due to his race made him instantly aware that factors like living in the North, getting a particular education, or having a near-white appearance could not alter his race and the society's response to it. In fact, Du Bois's immersion in white society only made him *more* aware of his race, for his associates still saw him as an "other" as demonstrated by cited conversations that hide the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" Although accepted in conversations and, sometimes, social situations with whites, Du Bois remained a black man to white America—perhaps a better man of his race, but a black man nonetheless. This constant reminder of race made Du Bois more aware of the dilemma of being a black man in America. Also, Harris explains the time period in which Du Bois wrote *The Souls* as being "the ten or more years when the life and destiny of Africans in America merged inseparably with his own," suggesting that he related his emotional and mental response to being an "other" in the world of whites to other black Americans' emotional and mental response to being an African in America (a larger scale of Du Bois's peculiar situation) (Harris 220). Harris observes the absence of African American psychologists and analyzes the shortage of black psychology available:

> Applied and theoretical outcomes are influenced by the number of psychologists who understand the culture and value structure of a population of people. The

> underrepresentation of psychologists trained from an Afrocentric orientation affects the types of questions asked, the manner in which they are asked, and the interpretation and application of the knowledge obtained. (Harris 223)

So, although Du Bois did not interact with black Americans on a regular basis and was not technically trained from an "Afrocentric orientation," he remains aware of how it feels to be black. As a result, Du Bois poses the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?"—a question psychologists of a different race would never ask because their affiliation with black culture would never lead to the awareness that this underlying question exists and poses itself in social situations. This question serves as the most appropriate with which to begin the journey into black consciousness because it allows entrance into an understanding of a black person's response to what white America thinks him to be—a problem. Du Bois's inclusion of personal experiences is essential because it leads to this question of feeling like a problem. Although other black Americans could relate to Du Bois's expressed experiences and feelings, other black Americans were less qualified to relate those experiences and feelings while simultaneously identifying the psychological responses to them. Du Bois's submergence in the white American culture that creates the second consciousness, his background in psychology, and his ability to identify social factors effect on one's consciousness make Du Bois uniquely qualified to analyze and present black consciousness (or the lack thereof) to America.

Du Bois's initial awareness of his racial difference took place at his grade school. This location plays an important part in how he responds to the rejection. Du Bois demonstrated great intellectual promise as a young boy and found comfort at school

because this was the one place in which he excelled beyond all others and was lauded for his achievement. If anyone treated Du Bois differently here, it was because of his unusual fervor for education at such a young age. School also serves as a primary site of socialization for young people, which, again, reminds us that double-consciousness is sparked in social situations. The "tall newcomer," however, identifies a difference that she believes makes Du Bois inferior to her. Rather than condescend to exchange cards with the black boy, the girl avoids interaction with young Du Bois beyond the glance she gives that demonstrates her rejection of him. Du Bois identifies the girl as a "newcomer" perhaps to excuse her ignorance of his academic reputation. Without the knowledge of his classroom performance, he is reduced to merely a black boy, marking his first unjust feeling of inferiority. For this feeling of inferiority to come at the very place Du Bois felt most superior acknowledges, for him, that his race prevails even beyond his academic strivings. Du Bois's expectations for this academic institution to be meritocratic are correct yet naïve. For Du Bois, the school changes from a sustainer of his meritocratic belief system into a caste based on race. Although superior intellectually, Du Bois learns that in America, he will always be inferior socially.

Du Bois hopes to access a world not available to blacks during this time. The very reason Du Bois tried so hard academically becomes ineffective once the girl rejected him. The girl's denunciation, however, challenges Du Bois's idealized belief that academic achievement trumps all else. According to Shanette Harris,

> The realization that skin of a certain color could "shut out" access to the European American world and its inhabitants produced psychological conflict for Du Bois.

> Despite his knowledge of race and how such differences were perceived, rejection because of race or skin color was incongruent with childhood socialization messages of education and unlimited achievement, individual determination, and control of one's destiny. Du Bois's inability to relinquish the irrationality of how racial group similarities in the inner or spiritual were so easily dismissed because of visible differences resulted in cognitions and affects that could be considered today as psychologically traumatic. (Harris 227)

Du Bois cites his emotional state after this experience; he hated the veil. As if abiding by Emersonian values, Du Bois then attempts to live "above [the veil] in a region of blue sky" (Du Bois 16). Once he expresses this response, the reader may believe that he has overcome with great maturity in his decision not to allow the veil to change his life. Because the veil is an issuance of inferiority, Du Bois chooses "to achieve superiority based on the types of feelings of inferiority" (Harris 225). He felt farthest away from the veil when "[he] could beat [his] mates at examination-time, or beat them in a foot race, or even beat their stringy heads" (Du Bois 16). His desperation to demonstrate superiority leads instead to a downward spiral of victories from intellectual, to athletic, to physical assault. Although he claims to go beyond the veil, the anxious desire to beat those who are different and supposedly socially superior (as interpreted by American society) is evidence that the veil remains burdensome. This is his response as a youth, but time allows "this fine contempt to fade" with the realization that his competitiveness that results from this contempt will never eliminate the veil (16). Consequently, Du Bois looks at the situation the veil presents more analytically by accepting the permanent

status of the veil instead of merely ignoring it. He acknowledges that the ultimate separation the veil presents is not between him and his white classmates, but between him and "the worlds he longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities" (16). He decides to focus his energies on "wrest[ing]" these "prizes" from their white, expecting hands (16).

Although Du Bois's second analysis of and response to the veil presents a more long-term plan whereas his initial response was for immediate satisfaction, there still rests within the plan a sense of immaturity and aggressiveness. Although he has set loftier heights beyond beating up the white children, competition remains a key component. And although his plan seems more thought out and reasonable, there remains a sense of desperation. He cannot decide on how to attain these "prizes"—"by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in [his] head,--some way"(16). Somehow, how he wins is not as important as the winning itself. The unfair overturning of meritocracy awakens a sense of competition grounded in unfairness within Du Bois, hence the "wrest[ing]" and "beat[ing]." These verbs do not represent a healthy competition, rather a competition that has evolved into a massive struggle. Gaining the world inaccessible to blacks, his previous desire, takes a back seat to the ambitious aspiration to reassign the hierarchal order between him and the white children altogether. Instead of merely beating his classmates in an immediate and temporary event, he hopes to beat them in life.

Upon revealing how he deals with the feeling of inferior difference, Du Bois claims to interpret how other black boys dealt with the exact same feeling:

With other black boys the strife was not so fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into

> tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house? (Du Bois 16)

Du Bois projects the less desirable response on other black boys, yet the response also applies to him. Du Bois does not claim to hate the "pale world." On the contrary, he wants to join it, to be equal instead of excluded. He does not admit to a "distrust of everything white." He simply envies them for their claim over the "prizes" of the "pale world." Although he disguises his similarities to the "other black boys" who deal with feeling inferior and different, the bitter cry that concludes his thought, "Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" is uniquely Du Bois. First, one may consider again his first sense of rejection. He felt rejection in the one place he thought he was accepted. He felt inferior in the one place he claimed superiority. As a young boy, the schoolhouse was his "own house," and there, for the first time, he felt like "an outcast and a stranger." Of course, the definition of his "own house" becomes more expansive to the Du Bois that writes *Souls* than the young Du Bois affected in the schoolyard. Du Bois defines the place of his alienation when "in Beijing, China, on his ninety-first birthday[.] Du Bois [declared]: 'in my own country for nearly a century I have been nothing but a "nigger"'" (Korang 168). Although this quotation surfaces many years after *The Souls*, it distinctly defines how he has felt his entire adult life.

It may seem simple how Du Bois acknowledges white America's minimization of him as a "nigger," but the ease with which he presents the idea hides the outcome this perspective holds on his consciousness. A better understanding of how white America's

view of him disturbs his personal outlook of himself will matriculate after addressing Du Bois's definition of double-consciousness:

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (Du Bois 16-17)

Applying Du Bois's explanation of double-consciousness raises a cruel, but important point. Not only did Du Bois feel the girl's rejection that day, he felt inferior. He did not pursue superior things simply because *others* saw him as inferior. But rather because others saw him as inferior, *he saw himself as inferior*, as well. Du Bois pursued excellence not only to convince the world of his superiority, but to convince himself. When the girl dismissed him with a glance, Du Bois saw himself through her eyes. When people speak to him with the underlying question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" he is not just a problem in their eyes. Because he views himself through their eyes, he actually sees himself as a problem, thus establishing the weight of this simple yet exacting question. By recognizing this question and defining double-consciousness, Du Bois identifies the daunting heaviness of double-consciousness as well as the challenge for black Americans to overcome it.

Double-consciousness not only identifies a second-sight, it explains a sense of two-ness demonstrated while Du Bois decides how to deal with the veil. As explained

before, he names his external difference a veil in order to avoid his harsh hatred for his race. He hates the veil, but loves his race. He hopes to achieve greatness, but with blind ambition. He hopes to claim the opportunities the world has to offer, but is beating his white classmates at anything prize enough? As emotionally satisfying as conquering his peers would be, the spiritual striving would not be contented. These dealings become the "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (Du Bois 17).

As demonstrated in his use of the veil as a metonym for his blackness, Du Bois avoids directly addressing race as the reason for the complications brought on by double-consciousness. He instead uses symbols like the veil in order to deal with the black American's separation from white America, focusing on society's hand in the development of the consciousness and the transplantation of being an African in America. Du Bois goes as far as making double-consciousness seem as if it is a complexity of nationality (or as if the African American is in danger of losing his Africanness to a white wash of Americanness) even though the African culture within black Americans for the most part has dissipated by the time of his writing. When speaking of the African, Du Bois truly speaks of the *race* born of Africa. When addressing societal situations, he really addresses society's response to the black race. When focusing on the veil, Du Bois actually focuses on the skin that makes him different from other classmates and indeed covers or hides the internal similarities that he shares with them. It is in Du Bois's avoidance of recognizing and naming race and skin color as an issue that he creates the title of the chapter—"Of Our Spiritual Strivings." Du Bois

does not include the mention of race in his title because he hopes that people will focus on the spiritual instead of the physical. Because of the disadvantage that the physical appearance of black Americans renders, the spiritual side is forced to struggle in its attempt to overcome. The consciousness does not develop without cause but in response to society's treatment of racial difference, a physical difference. Du Bois takes measures to identify that he is like his playmates "in heart and life and longing" but different externally (Du Bois 16). This external difference is so powerful that it causes the classmates, more specifically the "tall newcomer," to reject him despite their similarities. And with this rejection of the entire human due to his skin, the internal, the spirit, the only thing that was similar, changes into something different. The black American is not only disadvantaged because of his skin; he is disadvantaged because of the effect that society's response to his skin has on his soul. Double-consciousness takes charge placing the black American in a position of not knowing himself. Now, not only must he strive to become a whole American, the black American must also strive to become whole spiritually.

Literary Double-Consciousness in "Of the Coming of John"

Perhaps the application of double-consciousness to literature is most effective when applied to Du Bois's fiction in *The Souls of Black Folk*, "Of the Coming of John." From his initial presentation of the story, Du Bois presents a plot begging to be analyzed as a reflection of his concept of double-consciousness. Within the small town of Altamaha live two Johns. Although the two men share a single name, they lead two

different lives embedded in two different racial identities.

These two Johns are of comparable ages. Both leave their small town for schooling—the white John following an expected line of education and the black John risking being "spoil[ed]" by an education that will never serve him in his hometown (167). Du Bois recognizes the feeling of indifference of the Altamaha people when it comes to the John of the opposite race:

> And yet it was singular that few thought of two Johns,--for the black folk thought of one John [Jones], and he was black; and the white folk thought of another John and he was white. And neither world thought the other world's thought, save with a vague unrest. (Du Bois 168)

This passage defines the "veil" experienced within the small town. The separation between whites and blacks seem mutual and expected. The blacks never wonder about the white John and the whites never worry about the black John. Because the "veil" in Altamaha is a "veil" of unknowing, double-consciousness is not an issue within the community. The fact that each race only considered the John within their race represents that their consciousnesses are also embedded in their perspective racial identity, for "neither world thought the other world's thought." This does not mean, however, that the black people did not live under the control of white American perspective. The blacks in Altamaha are of course excluded from the mainstream Altamaha life and assume positions of servitude with acceptance and complacency. Yet the position of inferiority given to the blacks by the white Altamaha perspective is never considered wrong. The blacks see themselves from this white Altamaha perspective without ever questioning the

perspective or even imagining there to be another perspective in the world.

John Jones, however, leaves this segregated community behind and encounters the "veil that lay between him and the white world" (Du Bois 170). While undertaking an education and experiences beyond those typical for Altamaha blacks, he consequently undertakes a new consciousness: one that is fully aware of the opportunities available for whites and refused him simply because white American perspective will not allow it. The revelation of this new consciousness may be noted in both his hesitation to return home and his experience at the opera house:

> [F]or he sat in a half-maze minding the scene about him; the delicate beauty of the hall, the faint perfume, the moving myriad of men, the rich clothing and low hum of talking seemed all a part of a world so different from his, so strangely more beautiful than anything he had known[.] (Du Bois 171)

John's overwhelmed senses alert him to the alien, yet appealing, consciousness; the *sight* of the hall, the *smell* of the perfume, the *sound* of the white people talking were all "different from his" usual sensations, yet "strangely *more beautiful*" (171, emphasis added). Here, Du Bois not only acknowledges the differences between the experiences of blacks and whites, he introduces a problematic result of double-consciousness. After experiencing a world from which he is typically excluded, John identifies the white experience as "more beautiful," not merely different, or equal, or new, but "more." The music most importantly empowered John to question the single identity of inferiority that the people of Altamaha impart upon their colored residents:

> [H]e felt with the music the movement of power within him. If he but had some

> master-work, some life-service, hard,--aye, bitter hard, but without the cringing and sickening servility, without the cruel hurt that hardened his heart and soul. (172)

He envisions his mother and sister as "a soft sorrow crept across the violins" and decides in that moment that he will return to Altamaha (172). Through the characterization of John, Du Bois demonstrates that it is not simply the implanted white American perspective that triggers a complete undergoing of double-consciousness but rather the desire for equality.

Upon his return home, John's new-found awareness becomes obvious to the Altamaha community and burdensome for John. His sister inquires, "does it make every one—unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?" to which John answers simply with a smile, "I am afraid it does" (Du Bois 175). Although John is noticeably troubled by his second sight, he admits he would not trade the new knowledge if given another chance. Yet his educated self continues to interrupt his former black consciousness, causing disturbances throughout Altamaha:

> Every step he made offended some one. He had come to save his people, and before he left the depot he had hurt them. He sought to teach them at the church, and had outraged their deepest feelings. He had schooled himself to be respectful to the Judge, and then blundered into his front door. And all the time he had meant right,--and yet, and yet, somehow he found it so hard and strange to fit his old surroundings again, to find his place in the world about him. (Du Bois 175-76)

John's double-consciousness, interestingly, interferes with his interactions with both blacks and whites. He is no longer able to relate to Altamaha blacks and altogether too comfortable with the whites. Although he intends to do right by the people of Altamaha, the actions resulting from his intentions are now motivated by his double-consciousness. He no longer fits Altamaha because Altamaha is not for a black with double-consciousness, but for a black person oblivious to his unjust situation.

After being removed from his teaching position at the Altamaha Negro school for teaching equality, John comes across his sister struggling in the arms of the white John in the woods. He takes a large limb from a nearby tree and "struck him with all the pent-up hatred of his great black arm" (179). After bringing his sister home, John returns to the wood to wait for the approaching lynch-mob.

It is not clear if the mob overtook John or if he turned to the sea to drown himself. Regardless of the interpretation of this final passage of the story, the undeniable fact is John's choosing to meet his life's end whether it be at the hand of others or his own. John's lynching at the end of "Of the Coming of John" presents Du Bois's cryptic projection of life as a black with two consciousnesses. The problem does not lie in John Jones's two consciousnesses; the problem is within his possessing the concept of equality in a world where blacks are not allowed the "fool ideas of rising and equality" (Du Bois 176). The judge claims that these ideas will make the blacks "discontented and unhappy," and this is evident with John (Du Bois 176). He is not unsatisfied by his exposure to knowledge, the world outside of Altamaha, but by the reality that because he was called "to be the slave and butt of all," he is not allowed complete fulfillment within

his awareness (Du Bois 172). By demonstrating this problem within double-consciousness, Du Bois, more grandly, identifies the problem of the U.S. at the turn of the century. Why are "ideas of rising and equality" considered foolish if placed in the consciousness of a black man? The consciousness of blacks in Altamaha is not simply an identity grounded in cultural differences, but rather a consciousness grounded in complacency and hesitation of taking on a consciousness of the free men and women that they indeed are.

In Du Bois's fiction, literary double-consciousness serves as tool of awakening sociological responses to a fictional account. In other words, his implementation of literary double-consciousness excites recognition of unjust social standards although they are merely fictionalized in the story. Interestingly, then, Du Bois uses a concept rooted in reality to reflect upon real life once interpreted in fiction. While some fiction might use literary double-consciousness for other purposes, the writers discussed in *Power to the People* specifically seek to create a real reaction from their audiences. So the original purpose of literary double-consciousness is the same as its application sixty and seventy years later.

Du Bois's Evolved Understanding of the Color Line in *Dark Princess: A Romance*

The color line, as introduced by Frederick Douglass in his 1881 essay "The Color Line," truly was a line based on the black/white binary. Douglass states:

> [T]he old [slave] masters set themselves up as much too high as they set the manhood of the negro too low. Out of the depths of slavery has come this prejudice and this color line. It is broad enough and black enough to explain all

> the malign influences which assail the newly emancipated millions to-day [. . .] The office of color in the color line is a very plain and subordinate one. It simply advertises the objects of oppression, insult, and persecution [. . .] Slavery, stupidity, servility, poverty, dependence, are undesirable conditions. When these shall cease to be coupled with color, there will be no color line drawn. (573, 575)

It is with this idea in mind that Du Bois begins *Souls*: "for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." But at some point in the evolution of his scholarship, for Du Bois, the color line becomes a problem without a solution. Instead of attempting to dismantle the stronghold of white supremist ideology that securely pits race against race in an irreversible hierarchy, Du Bois takes up the tasks of uniting those oppressed within the hierarchy, the people of color.[1] In his novel *Dark Princess: A Romance*[2] we see an acceptance of the color line. In fact, Du Bois writes a world where people of color welcome the separation the line offers. In *Souls*, Du Bois claims that "Negro blood has a message for the world" (17). He investigates this essentialist notion in *Dark Princess* with a council of the darker races of the world (later named The Great Central Committee of Yellow, Brown, and Black) who align the blood of colored people, specifically the yellow and brown races, to the blood of royalty, unquestionably purposed to rule the world. According to the council, the hierarchy of the color line has veered off-track because of white rule over lands belonging to people of color and white suppression of those peoples. However, much of the good they hope to bring to oppressed people reinstates the notion of the color line and creates a wedge between Negroes and the other darker races (Japanese, Chinese, Arab, Egyptian, and Indian) based on the Negroes'

substandard abilities and inferior bloodlines.

The story is centered on Matthew Townes, a black American who discovers he is no longer allowed to pursue his studies in obstetrics because, as a black man, he will never be allowed to attend white women. In a downtrodden moment, frustrated with his position as a black man in America, Matthew meets Kautilya, the Princess of Bwodpur, India and a powerful council representing the darker races of the world. Although impressed by the council and especially by Kautilya, Matthew, similar to black America, attempts to make due with a life that white America offers him. He becomes a Chicago politician, lives in a beautiful home with expensive furniture, and marries a Negro woman who looks white. However, Matthew abandons this uniquely American life when Kautilya reenters his life. In the very moment he feels he has "sold his soul to the Devil," Kautilya claims, "I came to save your soul from hell [. . .] at any price, I will buy it back" (150, 151). In a scandalous twist, Matthew denounces the complacent American man he has become, manipulated by a larger political machine, consumed by greed and a false sense of power, to leave with Kautilya. There are mixed reactions from the people who witness Matthew's adulterous betrayal, "one said: 'I'm proud of him, at last.' But the other spit: 'The beast!'" (153).

Nonetheless, the lovers make a home together until Kautilya leaves without a complete explanation as to why. She heads to the South and stays with Matthew's mother in Virginia. In her absence, Matthew is made aware of how their relationship has created problems for Kautilya's allegiance to her country and her duty as princess: she must return to Bwodpur to marry. Per her request, Matthew rushes to Virginia to say

what he believes is goodbye only to find she has given birth to their son, the Maharajah of Bwodpur.

While so much of the novel is plot driven, the beginning section, "The Exile," provides insight into how the fictional council interprets the notion of the color line. Matthew is introduced to the council for the first time while in exile from America in Berlin. He feels immediately over his head when discussions of art and culture ensue in a range of languages spoken with ease by everyone present. However, he also feels like he's finally met a group with whom he could be a part when they discuss the primary concern of the committee. Initially, Kautilya explains that they represent "the darker people who are dissatisfied" to which a Japanese representative clarifies:

> If I may presume, your Royal Highness, to suggest [. . .] the two categories are not synonymous. We ourselves know no line of color. Some of us are white, some yellow, some black. Rather, is it not, your Highness, that we have from time to time taken council with the oppressed peoples of the world, many of whom by chance are colored? (Du Bois 16)

The Japanese introduces a connection between the oppressed and people of color while carefully clarifying that all colored people are not oppressed, he sets aside the members of the council. Of course, this connection between people of color and the oppressed is not coincidental. A Chinese woman reminds the council that "it is dominating Europe which has flung this challenge of the color line" with which the council must deal.

Initially, Matthew is reading the color line as one understands it in America. A problem that results from slavery, as Douglass explains in the earlier quotation. But the

larger world's understanding of the color line extends beyond the American institution of slavery to include all oppression. What is most surprising for Matthew is the council's interpretation of how the hierarchy engendered by the color line is unjust. While Matthew believes the color line refuses complete equality, the council "[agree] that the present white hegemony of the world is nonsense; that the darker peoples are the best" (Du Bois 18). So although the group is angered by the white people's instatement of the color line, their frustration exists because they identify "the inferior races [to be] the ruling whites of Europe and America. The superior races [are] yellow and brown" (18). In other words, the council believes the hierarchy itself is wrong, not the idea of superior and inferior races.

Matthew's desire is altogether different. He hopes to instate equality. For example, he leaves America because he is refused the opportunity to continue through the best program of medicine in New York. When he tells Kautilya his story, she is a bit confused considering he could indeed continue to study and work on colored patients:

> "But if we colored students are confined to colored patients, we surrender a principle."
>
> "What principle?"
>
> "Equality." (Du Bois 12)

This notion of equality has no place with the council who ranks one race above another based on "natural inborn superiority" (18). It is this line of thinking that leads them to wonder if Matthew has a right to sit with the council at all. Although the group is sympathetic to the situation of Negroes throughout the world, they still question "the

ability, qualifications, and real possibilities of the black race in Africa or elsewhere" (16). Matthew immediately realizes that he is asked to prove himself to a group of people who believe they are superior to him: "Suddenly now there loomed plain and clear the shadow of a color line within a color line, a prejudice within prejudice, and he and his again the sacrifice" (16).

The council viewed the Negro American to be of inferior blood. Because the council's understanding of greatness is determined by one's bloodline (royalty or otherwise), Matthew communicates the greatness of American Negro blood in the same manner:

> I reckon you're right. We American blacks are very common people. My grandfather was a whipped and driven slave; my father was never really free and died in jail. My mother plows and washes for a living. We come out of the depths—the blood and mud of battle. And from just such depths, I take it, came most of the worth-while things in this old world. (17)

Although tempted to reference Negro "high-born blood," Matthew recognizes that he would be depending on the supremist terms assumed by the council. Instead, he questions the issue they have with common blood noting the need for people with it in the world. The Japanese dismisses Matthew's conviction as mere human hope and "that always blood must tell" (17). Matthew recognizes the false assumption that blood alone can create a leader or dictate real achievement and, therefore, blood can never determine the worth of a person. He makes this point by debunking the council's belief that royal blood is superior simply because of the bloodline: "There is some weak, thin stuff called

blood, which not even a crown can make speak intelligently; and at the same time some of the noblest blood God ever made is dumb with chains and poverty" (17).

Matthew believes that his enlightened counter to this concept of birthright stems from the only real thing of value America has to offer the world—the idea "that ability and capacity for culture is not the hereditary monopoly of a few, but the widespread possibility for the majority of mankind if they only have a decent chance in life" (19). Although this American concept of one pulling oneself up by his bootstrap is revolutionary in the face of an old world concerned with various caste systems and royalty, the scene is especially ironic since the praise of the American concept comes from the mouth of a student in exile because he is refused the opportunity to continue his education at a university where he has earned a place to do so.

In *Souls*, Du Bois claims not only that "Negro blood has a message for the world," but that "America has too much to teach the world" (Du Bois 17) to be ignored. It is fair to assume that this is exactly what America has to teach the world, that greatness comes to anyone who chooses to achieve it. However, America also instates a system lacking in equality which denies access to opportunities that lead to notable achievement. Perhaps then the message the Negro blood has for the world is one of equality. Although Matthew presents the idea that everyone can achieve prominence as an American ideal, the requirement that there be equal opportunity for this achievement is uniquely Negro. Essentially, the American ideal is a lie without the obligation of equality.

The council remarks that Matthew's idea to overthrow hierarchal thinking altogether "will revolutionize the world [. . .] but not—today." They return to their

previous conviction that there are superior races, and they later admonish Matthew for treating Kautilya, a woman "of royal blood by many scores of generations of direct descent," as his equal (20). Regardless of how the council received Matthew's concept, he won the princess over. She regards his principles as a possible aid to their battle against oppression and almost as a personal project:

> I have started to fight for the dark and oppressed peoples of the world; now suddenly I have seen a light. A light which illumines the mass of men and not simply its rulers, white and yellow and black. I want to see if this thing is true, if it can possibly be true that wallowing masses often conceal submerged kings. (24)

This, of course, is a forshadowing of the novel's conclusion with the birth of the Maharajah of Bwodpur. The birth of the Maharajah joins both royal and non-royal blood in the production of a king which dismantles the expectation for royal/superior blood to exclusively lead.

Du Bois's new understanding of the color line is clear in *Dark Princess* published only twenty-five years after his major declaration, "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." Although he clearly equates oppressed people of the world to people of color and diversified the color line to expand beyond the original black/white binary, black people are still separated from the other darker races because of their more despondent heritage of slavery. However, Du Bois makes plain that black people are the only carriers of this uniquely African American understanding that marries the American appeal for opportunity and the Negroe's desire for equality.

Notes and Bibliography

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

_____. *Dark Princess.* 1928. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

Gregg, Robert and Madhavi Kale. "*The Negro* and the *Dark Princess*: Two Legacies of the Universal Races Congress." *Radical History Review* 92 (2005): 133-152. Print.

Harris, Shanette M. "Constructing a Psychological Perspective: The Observer and the Observed in *The Souls of Black Folk*." *The Souls of Black Folk: One Hundred Years Later.* Ed. Dolan Hubbard. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. 218-250. Print.

Kohli, Amor. "But That's Just Mad! Reading the Utopian Impulse in *Dark Princess* and *Black Empire*." *African Identities* 7.2 (2009): 161-175. Print.

Korang, Kwaku. "As I face America: Race and Africanity in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk." W. E. B. Du Bois and Race: Essays Celebrating the Centennial Publication of* The Souls of Black Folk. Eds. Chester J. Fontenot and Mary Alice Morgan with Sarah Gardner. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001. 166-186. Print.

Lahiri, Madhumita. ""World Romance: Genre, Internationalism, and W. E. B. Du Bois." *Callalloo* 33.2 (2010): 537-552. Print.

Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race.* New York: Henry Holt, 1993. Print.

Mullen, Bill V. "Du Bois, Dark *Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International"

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.

Wald, Priscilla. *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form.* Durham: Duke University Press. 1995. Print.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. "Reproducing Racial Globality: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Sexual Politics of Black Nationalism." *Social Text* 19.2 (2001): 15-41. Print.

[1] Madhumita Lahiri also deals with Du Bois's consideration of the color line in *Dark Princess*. She states, The novel *Dark Princess*, in contrast, draws upon the "third term" of the Indian figures of Du Bois's imaginative transfigurations, using brown bodies outside the United States race binary to regenerate the male protagonist of what is, finally, a "color line" internationalism. Whereas in *Souls* a dreamt of Ethiopia and Egypt restore the (masculine) national racial psyche, in *Dark Princess* the spaces of extra-national restoration have come into the United States, quite literally, through the travels of eroticized feminine forms. This element is also part of Du Bois's political pedagogy, for *Dark Princess* does not simply narrate political fantasy but also elucidates how to work against racism nationally and inter-nationally, at once" (539-540). See her article "World Romance: Genre, Internationalism, and W. E. B. Du Bois."

[2] There are several articles that deal with this novel. Bill Mullen's explores "*Dark Princess* as a symbolic configuration of Du Bois's political engagement with three central movements and events of the interwar era: the Indian home rule and national movements, the emergence of black radicalism in the United States, and the role of black and Asian radicals in revising Soviet policy on both "Negro" and Asian liberation during the formation of the third International after 1919 and the crucial 1922 and 1928 Cominterns in Moscow" (540). See his article "Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International." In their article "The Negro and the Dark Princess: Two Legacies of the Universal Races Congress," Robert Gregg and Madhavi Kale consider "the way in which Du Bois came to his own understanding of the limitations of the polarized and colonial view of race and racism in the United States, and how he, through his own brand of black Marxism, was able to understand what we consider the imperial and interconnected dimensions of the class and race systems of exploitation" (134). Alys Eve Weinbaum explores the interconnectivity of sexual and reproduction politics and race politics in *Dark Princess*. See her article "Reproducing Racial Globality: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Sexual Politics of Black Nationalism." And see Amor Kohli's "But That's Just Mad! Reading the Utopian Impulse in *Dark Princess* and *Black Empire*."

Chapter Two: Attempts for Self-Definition beyond White American Perspective in Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* and Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*[1]

To rage and look upon you with contempt is to rage and be contemptuous of ourselves.
--Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

The Revolutionary Theatre is shaped by the world, and moves to reshape the world[.]
--Amiri Baraka, "The Revolutionary Theatre"

It does not require a stretch of the imagination to suggest that literary figures have influenced movements and generational identities throughout modern history. Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg both wrote about and inspired a counterculture of young people in America known as the Beats and Beatniks. Aimé Césaire helped found the literary Negritude movement as well as the ideological movement that influenced black identity formations and political affiliations in Francophone Africa. History demonstrates that in order to mobilize identity movements, manifestos and literature supporting those movements must be produced and disseminated. So is the case with the Black Pride and Chicano Movements. We see such influences when James Brown wrote and recorded a song proclaiming "I'm Black and I'm Proud" in 1968. Similarly, Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzales's "I am Joaquin" defined a singular identity for a Chicano generation in 1967. These pieces of 1960s popular culture sought to announce pride in what had previously been acknowledged as inferior identities. The perspective that blacks and Chicanos were inferior to the white majority existed even after Brown's song and Gonzales's poem surfaced. However, the change that the artists hoped to enact was

within their racial and ethnic communities, communities they recognized were influenced by the opinion of the white majority. In other words, Brown and Gonzales wrote to encourage self-determined identities in the face of double-consciousness.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the application of literary double-consciousness to Du Bois's fiction, specifically "Of the Coming of John" and *Dark Princess: A Romance*. And while this is a valuable place to begin in connecting the cultural phenomenon of double-consciousness to literary double-consciousness, the literature discussed in Chapter One was written forty years before the literature that is the subject of this project. Within those forty years the focus of black people changed from Pan-Africanism to Civil Rights to Black Pride. Also, within those forty years, the focus of the color line as a binary separating blacks and whites evolved into a color spectrum including more diverse ethnic groups. This change alone demands the reassessment this project attempts. Du Bois writes double-consciousness as a black cultural phenomenon: "the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,--a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (Du Bois 16). This quotation presumes, then, that *all* people from races and ethnicities other than the Negroid race are able to obtain a "true self-consciousness" in America.

This chapter seeks to address these major issues of applying double-consciousness to other ethnic and racial groups in America, specifically Chicanos, and historically contextualizing the 19th century concept to literature and movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter focuses on how Oscar Zeta Acosta and Amiri Baraka respond to

double-consciousness within their communities and attempt to mobilize their ethnic and racial groups towards self-determined identity in *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* and *Dutchman* respectively. In *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, Acosta documents the process of identification for Chicanos in California. Baraka takes on a very different approach. He writes his play under the assumption that double-consciousness prevails for African Americans and demonstrates the looming destruction that awaits a people who submit to identities determined by white Americans.

Getting Started: *Un Choque* or Latino/a Double-consciousness and Anzaldúa's Counterstance

In her 1987 book *Borderlands*, Gloria Anzaldúa recognizes an issue similar to double-consciousness within Mexican-Americans.[2] First Anzaldúa notes the difficulty of a multi-cultural existence: "Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision" (Anzaldúa 100). Anzaldúa primarily discusses the incompatibility of the cultures, but in the following passage, she explains how the dominant white perspective interferes with and prevents a true Mexican-American consciousness:

> The dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty. As a people we have resisted and we have taken expedient positions, but we have never been allowed to develop unencumbered—we have never been allowed to be fully ourselves. (Anzaldúa 108)

It becomes increasingly clear that the identity phenomenon that Anzaldúa identifies in *Borderlands* is comparable to DuBoisian double-consciousness. There is a significant difference between Anzaldúa's noted "cultural collision" and DuBoisian double-consciousness because of the multiple identities and cultures that Mexican Americans must forge into a singular identity: Spanish ancestors, indigenous ancestors, Mexican nationality, American nationality and the cultures that come with all of these identities that create diverse appearances, languages, and religions. This difference is key, but the effect reinforces Du Bois's concern of double-consciousness, which is the struggle for self-determination in the face of a dominant white perspective.

According to Anzaldúa's assessment of her Mexican American community, the cultural phenomenon of double-consciousness not only exists but makes identity formations problematic for members of her ethnic group. Because the clearest alignment between Du Bois's and Anzaldúa's evaluations remains the prominent existence of white American perspective on the minority groups, we might consider the possibility of Du Bois's color line evolving to include other races and ethnic groups. Originally, at the time of *Souls*'s 1903 publication, the color line represented a perpetual division between blacks and whites. As the racial and ethnic makeup of the United States changed from a stringent color-line into more of a color spectrum, so did Du Bois's understanding of the color line. Du Bois acknowledges this evolved racial and ethnic cosmopolitanism in his 1928 novel *Dark Princess*. Known as the father of pan-Africanism, Du Bois adjusts the exclusivity of a movement that only considered people of African descent to consider all people of color in a unique union against white colonial control throughout the world.

With this idea in mind, we see that the color line indeed becomes a color spectrum but maintains the division between whites and people of color. In other words, the opposition still exists: the problem of the color line remains and issues of double-consciousness are applicable to all people of color situated on the colorful side of the spectrum.

As we see, the state of the United States matters a great deal when considering the status of double-consciousness in U.S. ethnic and racial minorities. From the time of *The Souls* (1903) to the writing of *Dark Princess* (1928), we see a wider range of people affected by double-consciousness. And from the time when Du Bois responds to double-consciousness to the period in which Oscar Zeta Acosta and Amiri Baraka write, the political climate for ethnic and racial minorities had changed a great deal. Champions of the Civil Rights Movement acknowledged their rights as human beings in America: their rights to citizenship, suffrage, and equal opportunity, and these activists operated within the parameters created by the system they hoped to join. It is this very desire and need to belong that distinguishes activists of the Civil Rights Movement from revolutionaries of the Black Pride and Chicano Movements. The literature of this time period reflects this shift in ideology.

While writers of the 60s and 70s acknowledge double-consciousness within their communities just as Du Bois did in the early 20th Century, these writers respond differently to the phenomenon's manifestation. Du Bois concerned himself with creating a union of colored people throughout the world so that blacks might collectively reclaim ownership of colonized land and culture. The Civil Rights Movement focused on gaining

social justice and equality for blacks in the United States. The literature I choose to engage in this project seeks to create secure, proud, collective identities that ignore the desire to access equality set up by and within an oppressive system. Here we see a very clear progression: Du Bois sought equality outside of the United States because he did not believe equality was possible within it, and Civil Right activists sought equality within the United States. Both Du Bois's and the Civil Rights activists' ideas of equality depended on *an allowance* of equality given by those in power. Activists of the Chicano and Black Pride movements rejected the need to prove oneself equal to white Americans who define their superiority in juxtaposition to the inferiority of ethnic and racial minorities. Their focus, instead, became the power one gains in a self-defined identity.

Writers and activists like Acosta and Baraka recognized the need to create identities to replace the dominant white perspective and hoped these identities might exist independent of white perspective. However, the fact that self-determined identities became necessary *because* of the oppressive white perspective of ethnic and racial minorities suggests it is impossible for the new self-determined identities of the Black Pride and Chicano Movements to exist completely uninfluenced by the dominant white perspective. Anzaldúa addresses these types of responsive identities in *Borderlands* and names them counterstances. She notes that the negativity of the dominant perspective makes the subject of this negativity respond defensively: "Subconsciously, we see an attack of ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance" (Anzaldúa 100). While this counterstance is a step away from double-consciousness, it is in no way independent of white perspective. Even the term

counterstance reminds one of the impossibility of singular identity independent of outside influences[3]. Anzaldúa considers the dependent nature of this rebellious response:

> A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant. All reaction is limited by, and dependent on, what it is reacting against. Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority—outer as well as inner—it's a step towards liberation from cultural domination. (Anzaldúa 100)

It seems then that a counterstance *encourages* a division between white and colored peoples even though it functions as a step toward cultural independence for the previously oppressed group. The divisiveness of the counterstance might lead one to consider how multiculturalism functions to encourage self-determined identities while erasing the line that separates whites from colored peoples; however, that line of thinking is not the concern of my project. While there have been discussions on double-consciousness and discussions on multiculturalism, this project fills the space between those two areas of research. This tiny moment in history when black and Chicano men and women choose self-determination is the connection that allows us to move past double-consciousness and towards multiculturalism.

Writing the History: Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*

Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* chronicles the unbelievable semi-autiobiographical adventures of protagonist Buffalo Zeta Brown, a

Chicano attorney. While the novel notes historical protests, namely the 1970 Chicano Moratorium, new legal precedents, and Brown's/Acosta's valiant political campaign for Los Angeles Sheriff under the Chicano Militant Banner, the novel most importantly documents the process of self-determined identification. Specifically, Acosta's characters noticeably struggle with double-consciousness. After recognizing the control of white opinion in their lives, the major characters express simultaneous anger and fear and funnel these emotions into the creation of Chicano consciousness.

A novel written in the tradition of Gonzo journalism[4], *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* is a difficult book to generically define.[5] Acosta takes the reader on a literary journey through history that is too honest to call fiction. However, the blurring between fiction and history is a complicated issue when considering the text for analysis. While it becomes increasingly obvious to any reader that Buffalo Brown is Acosta, writer and friend Stonewall Jackson is Hunter Thompson, and Chicano journalist Roland Zanzibar is Ruben Salazar[6], I will only discuss the literary characters created instead of referencing the historical figures. But, again, the trickery of Gonzo-style is the combination of fact and fiction: Acosta names Cesar Chavez, Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, Anthony Quinn, and others by name.[7] Interestingly, the inclusion of some historical names with the creation of pseudo-characters reminds the reader not to simply write the story or thematic issues of identity as fictional. As soon as a reader falls into the rapture of exciting language and radical happenings, Acosta includes an encounter with the most famous of Chicano historical figures jolting readers out of the comfort of fiction.

Buffalo Brown moves to Los Angeles in 1968 for a new beginning. He is unsure what this move is the beginning of until he decides he will write a book. In search of a good topic, he falls into the circles of Chicano Militants and somehow becomes the Chavez-approved Chicano attorney of the East L.A. community. Brown transforms from an interested witness and writer researching for a book into a leader, speaker, public figure, and attorney. We begin the novel believing Brown is a hungry leach seeking a good story for a quick book yet become a part of his journey from double-consciousness to a collectively self-determined Chicano identity.

Early in the novel, Acosta accounts Brown's first encounter with double-consciousness (an encounter that resembles Du Bois's first encounter with the veil in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"). The memory floods Brown's thoughts after hearing about the mistreatment of another Chicano. When practicing for an elementary graduation ceremony, Brown is paired with a German girl he likes only to be re-paired with a Mexican girl. He notices that all the Chicano students are rematched with other Chicanos and refuses to participate in the graduation by way of protest. In the end, he marches during the ceremony. However, his mother accuses him of being ashamed of his "race" and the Chicano girls hate him for not wanting to walk with them (31).[8] He remembers this moment of segregation, his instinct to revolt, and the surprising reason for his planned protests being his attraction to a white girl in his class. Many years later, he acknowledges his rejection of the Chicano girls and the larger rejection of (or distancing from) his race: "I've hardly even spoken to anyone in Spanish since I left Panama. All through schools, jobs and bumming, I haven't even held the hand of a Mexican woman"

(29). This account of double-consciousness happens before the journey to a singular identity to demonstrate the connection between the two, affirming that self-determined identity is indeed a responsive counterstance. After wondering, "Had my old mother hit it on the head? *Am* I ashamed of my race?" (31) Acosta creates a revolutionary response that jumpstarts his journey of identity:

> My brain goes off like explosives and by dawn I have made innumerable resolutions. I will change my name. I will learn Spanish. I will write the greatest books ever written. I will become the best criminal lawyer in the history of the world. I will save the world. I will show the world what is what and who the fuck is who. Me in particular. (Acosta 31)

His first resolution is to claim Chicano culture in the only way he knows how at this time, with language. After claiming this small sliver of Chicanoism, Brown counteracts the shame he now recognizes he had by attempting to bring pride to the identity he once rejected.[9]

Because Brown is so unaware of what it means to be Chicano and what the movement entails, he compares the movement to what he knows of Black Civil Rights movement, saying that "the whole so-called Chicano Movement seems to me nothing but another splinter from the old Civil Rights era" (36). Yet when he attends his first protest, an East L.A. high school student walk-out, he is so moved, he cries: "I am walking with my head tall and my fists clenched, with tears slithering unashamedly down my cheeks" (41). Yet his initial intentions to high-jack a story and run creates an uncertainty of his role. He understands that while he entered this stage of activism in order to write a book,

his desire to connect with the movement touches him in a surprising way. He sees himself as "divided [. . .], torn in two" (42). His body physically responds; his "heart aches and [his] head pounds with anger and fear" (42). Although Brown earlier claims familiarity with the movement and protest, he is clearly not expecting this emotional reaction. Brown's commitment evolves into a journey connecting his personal search for identity with the Chicano Movement's process of collective self-determination, a connection he did not experience in other movements in which he was involved.

As I contend in the introduction, the Black Pride and Chicano Movements revise the process of double-consciousness in order to allow self-determined identity.[10] Acosta documents this repurposing of identity in Brown. He recalls his double-consciousness with his grammar school memory and replaces his shame with the "fear and anger" he experiences once united with other members of his ethnic group. The unity overwhelms him and moves him towards a collective feeling, yet, at this point, he is unable to completely name or define this new development as a trajectory toward Chicano consciousness.

Brown then rummages through a bag of titles with hopes of defining himself personally and ethnically. All of these names allow for empowerment and, typically, allude to Mexican American popular culture. For example, Buffalo Brown inserts a new middle name, "Zeta," in reference to the protagonist of the movie *La Cucaracha*, General Zeta. Brown discusses the frivolity of his name when he becomes emotionally overwhelmed by the murder of a young Chicano kid:

> I lifted "Zeta" from a movie over two years ago because he was the closest thing to a Chicano Humphrey Bogart, the guy who always ended up with Maria Felix. The name I lived with for two years, the hidden name, an initial between two other words. And now there is no movie. (Acosta 123)

Here, how he chooses to name himself serves as a bit of frustration for him. Later, however, when he begins his political campaign for Los Angeles County Sheriff, the name becomes a symbol of revolution: "My name is now Zeta. I have given up my slave name" (136). This acceptance of the name Zeta disregards his previous aggravation with its superficial popular culture reference. We see here that the power in the name resides in the power of self-naming.

Similarly, there are several conversations in which the Militants struggle to name each other. While riding through L.A., on a search for a target of their anger, Brown argues with his other Chicano Militants, Gilbert and Pelon. Pelon begins:

> " 'I'm for shooting any fucking *gabacho* we see. What difference does it make?'
>
> 'Hey, you guys. I'm trying to . . . And we can't just shoot anybody. You think we're a bunch of hoods?' I ask.
>
> 'I'm a stone anarchist myself,' Gilbert says.
>
> 'I don't give a shit about politics myself,' Pelon says.
>
> 'I know. You're just a *vato loco*.'
>
> 'No he's not, *ese*. Pelon here is an outlaw, just like me.'
>
> 'You're full of shit, Gilbert. I'm no crook. I just don't like *gabachos*.'
>
> 'But you like white girls, don't you?' Gilbert says.

'I like all *viejas, ese*. You know me.'" (Acosta 122)

Gilbert rejects the title "hood" but accepts the self-defined term "anarchist." Pelon also refuses the names, "vato loco" and "outlaw," that Brown and Pelon provide. The banter between the friends is especially interesting because although they know each other well, each individual resists being named by another yet have no explanation for how they name themselves.

The politics of naming overflow into the collective Chicano identity as well. Throughout the novel, Brown identifies some people as Chicano and others as Mexican-American encouraging a distinction between the two. The tension between the two terms becomes especially apparent during a reception held for Chicano political candidates in L.A. The Master of Ceremonies, actor Anthony Quinn, emphasizes the term Mexican-American in his welcome:

> We who have reaped the rewards of this society because we are Mexican-Americans and have hidden in our anonymity, now we come out and publicly declare that we are of Mexican-American ancestry; that we are, in truth and fact, and proudly so: Mexican-American! (Acosta 69)

This passage comments to the hidden ethnic identity of Quinn and the other film celebrities in attendance at the event. And while the declaration of Mexican-American ancestry is a step from existing in "anonymity," the claim is completely disconnected from the ethnic *identity*. As if to emphasize this difference, the crowd reacts "feebly" with a "smattering of applause" (170, 169). The reaction is quite different when Brown is introduced as Chicano. In the midst of all of the ceremony and performance, a shout of

"Chicano Power" from the crowd immediately "[surrounds Brown] with the warmth of [his] friends and supporters" (170). On stage, Anthony Quinn is unsure how to respond to this call. The whoops and hollers Brown receives upon introduction force Quinn to wipe his drenched brow. Again, although he has made strides to claim ethnic ancestry, he has not moved towards Chicano identification until he verbally and very publicly considers the differences between Nationalism and Chicanoism as well as Mexican-American and Chicano:

> I have been against nationalism from my earliest days. My father was Irish and my mother was Mexican. . . They would both agree with those backstage who would have me call myself a Mexican-American. . . And I have called myself that all my life. . . I have acted every part, every race, every religion[. . .] And yet, I feel like a Chicano tonight. . . Yes, I feel like those guys up there who were just shouting for *El Zeta*. . . whoever he may be. . . I feel like I'd like to feel like I think he must be feeling. (Acosta 174)

There is a clear difference in empty names and an emotional connection to identity in Quinn's speech. Somehow the encouragement of others who identify as Chicano moves him to *feel* this emotional connection. His profound feeling leads him to an impressive performance of a speech. He unashamedly cries, "and as he reads his tears and emotions dig deep into [the crowd's being]" (175). It is because he chooses to accept this connection between him and those identifying as Chicano that leads the entire audience into stunned silence: "No one claps or shouts. Nothing is done for one full minute" until the audience's "roar rips the top off!" (175) The moment the applause disrupts the silent

appreciation of Quinn's performance, the "crowd melts into one consciousness and no man is alone in that madness any longer" (175). This scene not only pays particular attention to the transformative power of self-naming, but specifically addresses the importance of unity in order to attain this self-determined identity. [11]

Upon reading the emotional freedom that comes for Quinn once accepting and claiming the *feeling* of Chicano identity, one must consider the difference between the terms Mexican-American and Chicano. The term Mexican-American indicates a sub-category of American which implies inferiority and is an accurate representation of double-consciousness. There are two identities present in the one term, side by side yet separated by the tension of a hyphen.[12] By rejecting the term, Chicanos reject the inferiority emphasized by white American perspective and the double-consciousness this opinion creates. Adopting the term Chicano demonstrates the power of self-naming, and, symbolically, it reunites the disjointed self that is a result of double-consciousness.

Acosta also changes how we understand identity in this scene. First, identity is something projected to others, yet, here, the narrator emphasizes that those in attendance are Chicanos. This audience's ethnicity eliminates Quinn's need to perform whiteness. In other words, there was no fear in embracing his Chicano self because the haunting presence of white opinion was not there. With the pressure of whiteness gone, Quinn is moved by the ever-present Chicano identity in the room and, for the first time, recognizes its beauty.

Second, Acosta stresses the overwhelming emotion in the room. Quinn constantly speaks of a *feeling*. This feeling is especially interesting because it is easily

mistaken for the identity. However, we see that the feeling is what *leads* to the chosen identity, a progression that is prevalent throughout the novel. For example, Brown cries at his first protest at the sight of Chicanos mobilized against injustice. At the ceremony, Quinn feels something he's never felt before, (especially in his previous state of double-consciousness); Quinn feels accepted. This acceptance points to the importance of a united group. Similar to how rejection by the majority race leads to the state of double-consciousness, acceptance by one's own racial or ethnic group leads to a singular identity.

The most interesting term Acosta uses in the book is arguably cockroach. Acosta not only uses the term in the title, he also includes images of cockroaches throughout the book. Brown sings the song "La Cucaracha" in the second chapter as a roach crawls over him while he tries to sleep, and the name of the movie from which Brown lifts his middle name Zeta is *La Cucaracha.* But the most telling use of the term appears in the first chapter, which relates the protest at St. Basil Cathedral. First, he calls the Chicano protesters Cockroaches. Then he says the people attending the mass are "three hundred Chicanos and other forms of Cockroaches," clearly broadening the term to include people other than Chicanos (12). And, finally, the protest is against "the holy man who encouraged presidents to drop fire on poor Cockroaches in far-off villages in Vietnam" (13). Now, cockroaches are international. The larger metaphorical use of the term acknowledges "Cockroaches" as downtrodden people and aligns the treatment of the pests to the mistreatment of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic marginalized peoples. However, cockroaches are resilient because they are one of the oldest species known.

What matters most for this discussion is the connection that subjugated groups share through their oppression and their oppressor. Acosta connects all oppressed people into one category not to further suppress, but to empower through the union.

Setting the Stage for Self-Determination: Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* as Political Myth

Instead of documenting the process towards self-determined identity that Acosta does in *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, Baraka's play demonstrates what he imagines will happen if black Americans remain in the seductive clutches of white America. The early years of Amiri Baraka's career placed him on the trajectory of a multicultural existence. He worked with many Beatnik poets including Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, married a Jewish poet in the Beatnik community with whom he had two biracial children. During that time, his biography suggested the divide between the races was permeable, yet his 1964 play *Dutchman* seems to warn against mingling races. Although the play does not position the black character as the aggressor, the play raises the stakes of identity politics to that of a life or death issue. In doing this, Baraka encourages blacks to resist passivity encouraged by much of the Civil Rights Movement and move to action and create race identities free from white America's influence. This call to black Americans demonstrates Baraka's belief that art can and should spark activism, specifically in *Dutchman*, identity activism towards a collective self-determined identity.

The first production of *Dutchman* took place at The Cherry Lane Theatre in New York City on March 24, 1964. The original performance was produced by Theatre 1964

and directed by Edward Parone. The one act play takes the audience for a ride on a New York subway train in the "flying underbelly of the city" (Jones 3). A young black man named Clay meets an older white woman named Lula. Lula enters the scene eating an apple and immediately seeks out Clay, sits next to him, and strikes up a conversation. A cat and mouse game of chase commences. Lula aggressively flirts with Clay and often rebuffs any advances he makes in return. She tells him about himself, informing him that he is a "well-known type" (12). Her initial sexual innuendos turn into hysterics couched in racist rants geared towards Clay. After several attempts to calm Lula, Clay slaps her twice and returns her hostile words, specifically, expressing a desire to murder her. Weary from the exchange, Clay gathers his things to exit the train, but, before he can leave on his own accord, Lula stabs him and instructs the other passengers to dump his body off the train. Another young black man enters the subway train, and the audience is left to assume the process repeats itself.

Alongside practical stage directions, Baraka encourages the plays alignment to the Legend of the Flying Dutchman by calling the play a "modern myth" (Jones 3). In the folklore tradition, myths typically document the creation or beginning of an existing way of the world. We must question then the importance of Baraka's allusion to the Flying Dutchman and consider how the play *Dutchman* functions as a myth as well.

The Flying Dutchman is a legend of the 17th century that has been documented in literature, poetry, plays and opera performances throughout centuries. The tale is of a ship of sailors who die at sea. Some versions suggest that the sailors committed a horrible crime before dying and must live between the worlds of the living and the dead

to pay penance for their crime. A major point of interest is that the Flying Dutchman names the ship and not any one sailor. Specifically, the legend is not about apparitions of sailors but rather a ghost-ship condemned to the oceans without end.

In "Leroi Jones's *Dutchman*: A Brief Ride on a Doomed Ship," Hugh Nelson argues that Clay is the captain of the Flying Dutchman of the play: "he lives under an automatic curse in a white society [that] promises to lift the curse only if he sacrifices his identity" (55). Here we see that Clay's crime is being black in America and his penance is to assume the identity given to him by white America. Baraka especially demonstrates this through Clay's characterization. He is a hopeful young man who seems to be doing everything right in a country controlled by white opinion. He is well-dressed and educated. His interaction with Lula demonstrates, however, the puppetry involved in their relationship which serves as a representation of black and white relations. Lula manipulates the things Clay says in the first scene, feeding him lines so that he might act according to her wishes:

> Lula.
> [*Starts laughing again*]
>
> Now you say to me, "Lula, Lula, why don't you go to the party with me tonight?"
>
> It's your turn, and let those be your lines.
>
> Clay. Lula, why don't you go to this party with me tonight, Huh?
> Lula. Say my name twice before you ask, and no huh's.
>
> Clay. Lula, Lula, why don't you go to this party with me tonight? (Baraka 16)

While Lula leads Clay to believe that she will accept the invitation to the party if he performs exactly as she commands, she refuses. Baraka suggests that although black

Americans, much like Clay, act according to what white America dictates as appropriate, they will always be rejected. What is more alarming is that Lula need not provide Clay with lines in Scene II. He willingly performs what she taught him earlier in Scene I, repeating the invitation to the party without her prompting. He learns the desired behavior through Lula's manipulation and carries it out later as if it is natural to him.

The Legend of the Flying Dutchman places an emphasis on the perpetual existence between the worlds of the living and the dead. For Clay, blackness is life and whiteness is death. The in-between performance that he participates in is a manifestation of double-consciousness—a trap between black identity and white identity. And while Clay willingly participates in this space of double-consciousness when imagining himself as a "black Baudelaire" and a possible sexual interest for Lula, he recognizes the impossibility of continuing in this identity limbo towards the end of the play.

Nelson's insight into the requirement that Clay sacrifices his identity explains why he must die at the play's end. After much prompting from Lula, Clay reveals bits of his hidden self:

> You don't know anything except what's there for you to see. An act. Lies. Device. Not the pure heart, the pumping black heart. You don't ever know that. And I sit here, in this buttoned up suit, to keep myself from cutting all your throats. (Baraka 34)

After Lula forces him to reveal his true black identity despite his performance of whiteness, he must die because of his unwillingness to reject his black identity entirely. Clay characterizes his heart, an organ necessary for life, as black, which is unacceptable

for Lula. While a black identity is life for black Americans, a black identity requires death according to white opinion. Again, the Legend of the Flying Dutchman is about a ghost-ship, and Nelson names Clay as the captain. Clay is not the Flying Dutchman, but rather a passenger. The ghost-ship represents all of black American identity, the sailors as black Americans, and the waters that the ship is resigned to as white America. And if the play's subway is comparable to the Flying Dutchman, we must remember who controls the subway. Lula holds the attention of the passengers and, instead of being held responsible for the murder of Clay, creates accomplices out of each bystander (black and white) when she commands they drop Clay's body off at the next stop. While the ghost-ship is black America as a whole, the ship (in this case, the subway) is controlled by white opinion (in this case, Lula). Also, Baraka emphasizes the need for a collective black identity with the comparison to the ghost-ship. While Clay only represents one sailor, all black Americans are in the same boat. We see this when the second young man enters the subway at the end of the play. We assume the process will repeat itself, and Baraka suggests that the incident will become a massacre committed one murder at a time. If the two men were united on their passage, the likelihood of Lula stabbing both men decreases. And if the two men were united with an entire race, the murders would end altogether.

Although he employs an allusion to the Legend of the Flying Dutchman, Baraka calls his play a "modern myth." Most associate myths with ancient history, Greek mythology, and/or an explanation of deities and creation. In fact, Baraka alludes to Christianity's creation myth and the fall of man with the apples Lula eats throughout the

play. The apples play a role in Lula's trap for Clay. After he accepts and eats an apple from Lula, he quickly falls under her seductive spell and is no longer inhibited by their different races. Even his name, Clay, references his moldability alluding to the creation of Adam. Yet if Adam is created in the image of God, then in whose image is Clay created? This question quickly becomes the major issue of the play. It appears as if Clay models himself in the image of whiteness while privately claiming black identity. This mythical allusion places Lula as a temptress who lures Clay into the grasp of whiteness under false pretenses. In this updated temptation myth, Baraka resists the notion that myths are ancient and irrelevant by emphasizing the modernity of his myth and suggesting that mythology contemporaneously exists. But why myth and not legend?

In his article "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives," William Bascom clearly defines both myth and legends:

> Myths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed; and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief. Myths are the embodiment of dogma; they are usually sacred; and they are often associated with theology and ritual. Their main characters are not usually human beings, but they often have human attributes; they are animals, deities, or culture heroes, whose actions are set in an earlier world, when the earth was different from what it is today, or in another world such as the sky or underworld. Myths account for the origin of the world, of mankind, of death, or for characteristics of birds, animals,

> geographical features, and the phenomena of nature. […]Legends are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today. Legends are more often secular than sacred, and their principal characters are human. They tell of migrations, wars and victories, deeds of past heroes, chiefs, and kings, and succession in ruling dynasties. In this they are often the counterpart in verbal tradition of written history, but they also include local tales of buried treasure, ghosts, fairies, and saints.
>
> (Bascom 4-5)

Bascom clearly identifies the difference between myths and legends to be how recent the event and whether the events and characters are sacred or secular. By this definition, the play *Dutchman* seems more like a legend and less like a myth. The main characters are human; the plot involves a murder that results from complex race relations in America; the theme considers the complicated identity phenomenon of double-consciousness—all secular and contemporary issues, yet Baraka urges the viewer to consider the seemingly legendary play as myth for three reasons. First, he hopes to emphasize the truth of the story related to the audience. While the action of a play being performed before an audience is obviously fictional, the emotional takeaway is real and the identity politics is relevant which transforms this piece of art into activism. Second, Baraka wishes to elevate the importance of identity politics beyond the level of secular concerns. Similar to how he writes Clay's claim to his "pumping black heart" to merit something as extreme as death, Baraka identifies the importance of self-determined identity as sacred.

It is as if Clay serves as the sacrificial lamb for the salvation of black consciousness. Finally, Baraka does not write the story as a cautionary tale, which is how the Legend of the Flying Dutchman is often told. Instead, *Dutchman* is a clear *beginning* for black Americans and serves as an origin tale for black identity. Upon viewing the play, black Americans should walk away with a clear agenda: reject double-consciousness, create black identity, and avoid black victimization by white America.

In her article "The Logic of Retribution: Amiri Baraka's Dutchman," Nita N. Kumar argues that "while Baraka's retributive logic is focused on the need for assertion of ethnic and racial identity, his work also reveals complex negotiations with such binary categories as black/white and art/activism" (271). This connection between art and activism are especially important when considering Baraka's work, a poet famous for his demand for "poems that kill." Many read this phrase as metaphor, but Baraka seriously hoped black artist could write poems that would lead to aggressive (sometimes violent) activism. But Baraka removes his play from the category of art when he labels it a "modern myth." Instead of simply aligning art with activism as Kumar suggests, Baraka is creating political mythology.

Political myth, as defined by Henry Tudor in *Political Myth*, is extremely similar to how Bascom defines myth except with the clear distinction of subject matter: "political myths deal with politics […] A political myth is always the myth of a particular group. It has a hero or protagonist, not an individual, but a tribe, a nation, a race, a class" (qtd. in Armitage 52). The protagonist in Baraka's political myth is not simply black Americans but rather *black consciousness*. Clay is a victim in the myth but the very thing that gets

him murdered is the black consciousness that Baraka champions as the hero of his myth, the black consciousness that Clay refuses to denounce.

Dutchman is Baraka's attempt to move the ghost-ship of black consciousness out of the in-betweeness of double-consciousness and into a singular black identity. The acceptance of this black identity, as Clay suggests in his final monologue, will undoubtedly lead blacks to murder whites: "A whole people of neurotics, struggling to keep from being sane. And the only thing that would cure the neurosis would be your murder. Simple as that. I mean if I murdered you, then other white people would begin to understand me" (Jones 35). According to Baraka, removing oneself from the controlling grasp of white perspective allows one to clearly see his mistreatment at the hands of whites and admit one's hatred for whiteness. To live passively under the thumb of white America without reacting causes the insanity of blacks. Therefore, these murders Clay fantasizes about are not pointless but rather justified--an active attempt to create balance in an imbalanced existence. When Clay claims that only then will white people "understand" him, he suggests that the tolerance demonstrated by blacks in America is inexplicable, even to whites. In this sense, the murders, a reaction to the mistreatment of an entire race, will lead whites to understand the humanity of black people.

Although Clay can justify the murder of Lula specifically and white people generally, he resigns to insanity and rejects the idea of uniting with other suffering blacks:

> But who needs it? I'd rather be a fool. Insane. Safe with my words, and no deaths, and clean, hard thought, urging me to new conquests. My people's madness. Hah! That's a laugh. My people. They don't need me to claim them. They got legs and arms of their own. Personal insanities. Mirrors. They don't need all those words. They don't need any defense. (Jones 35-36)

While Clay admits the choice of insanity is foolish, he believes his decision is the safest option available. The performance of whiteness that hides his "pumping black heart," he believes, will provide him with access to "new conquests" otherwise unattainable. But we see how delusional this performance of whiteness makes him when he scoffs at the phrase "my people." With a condescending tone, he positions himself as a possible savior for the race; however, individuality wins out in the end. While the suffering is that of the entire race, Clay insists that the insanities are personal and individualized. The irony, of course, is in the fact that while he states that other blacks do not "need any defense," it is he who needs a savior, and it is his willingness and resolve to stand alone that allows his murder to take place. Clay chooses to live with two identities—the white performance and the "pumping black heart"— because he believes double-consciousness is safe and the future generations will commit the murders he was unwilling to execute. The decision to accept double-consciousness and pass the responsibility of the race to another generation becomes a death sentence for Clay.

It seems as though Lula kills Clay because he has revealed that his front of assimilation only hides his black identity and his desire to murder her. However, Lula knew of his murderous desires and hidden black consciousness before his monologue at

the end of the play. In the first scene, Lula shocks Clay by how much she knows about him without ever meeting him. She explains that she doesn't know anything about him but knows "the type very well" (12). She moves from the superficial (he is growing a beard and lives in New Jersey) to the political (his mother is a Republican and his "father voted for the man and not the party") (20). Finally, Lula probes into his subconscious: "May the people accept you as a ghost of the future. And love you, that you might not kill them when you can [. . .] You're a murderer, Clay, and you know it [. . .] You know goddamn well what I mean" (21). Lula knew about Clay's proclivity to murder her before he did. More alarming, perhaps, is that she also knew that he would be dead by the play's end. She calls him a "ghost of the future," a ghost of a radical generation that will never exist because she knows the "type" better than they know themselves. Here, Clay is betrayed by the controlling white perspective of double-consciousness. While he believes he is putting on a believable performance of whiteness, Lula recognizes the act and knows that the performance exists so that he (and his hidden black self) will survive. Lula is fully aware that if he survives, even though he does not murder whites when he has the opportunity to, the next generation will. So she must kill him and everyone who might serve as a connection between black identity and a future generation.

While Lula succeeds in murdering Clay and possibly the young man who enters the subway train in the end, the political myth is created as a result. The hero of black consciousness dies with Clay but only because of his unwillingness to wholly claim it and acknowledge the strength the identity has if owned by the entire race. Because the

political myth survives, black consciousness might thrive as well but only at the rejection of double-consciousness and the uniting of a race.

In his *The Revolt of the Cockroach People,* Acosta connects emotion to identity. Both *Dutchman* and *Revolt* encourage the audience and reader to work towards singular identity because of the emotions of the characters and the encouraged emotional takeaway. One of the major steps that moves one from double-consciousness to a singular identity is the realization of white opinion in one's life. These two texts demonstrate that this realization leads to an emotional response that then leads to a desire for a singular identity. In *Revolt* Brown's motivation is an inescapable anger and fear. In *Dutchman*, Clay voices a great deal of hatred. The two characters, however, respond differently to these emotions. Brown, in the presence of other Chicanos who feel the same emotion, is able to construct a Chicano consciousness in counterstance to double-consciousness. Clay, as a lone man expressing a hatred he only *imagines* exists with others, chooses to repress the anger instead of repurposing it into the creation of a singular black identity, and for this, he is murdered.

Notes and Bibliography

Alurista. "Acosta's *Revolt of the Cockroach People*: The Case, the Novel, and History." *Contemporary Chicano Fiction.* Ed. Vernon E. Lattin. Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1986. Print.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* 1987. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. Print.

Armitage, Susan, Patricia Hart and Yolanda Flores Niemann, eds. *Chicana Leadership: the Frontiers Reader*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print.

Bascom, William. "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives." *The Journal of American Folklore* 78.307 (1965): 3-20. Print.

Baraka, Imamu Amiri. "Black Art." *Black Magic: Sabotage, Target Study, Black Art; Collected Poetry 1961-1967*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969. Print.

____."The Revolutionary Theatre." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004. 1960-1963. Print.

Bellafante, Gina. "'60s Prejudice and Capitalism as a Big Blond Metaphor." *The New York Times*. N. pag. Web. 14 June 2009. http://theater.nytimes.com/2007/01/24/theater/reviews/24dutc.html.

Benston, Kimberly W. "*Dutchman*: Theatrical Ghost of a Future Politics." *Political Stages: Plays that Shaped a Century.* Eds. Emily Mann and David Roessel. New York, NY: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002. 133-136. Print.

Bruce-Novoa. "Fear and Loathing on the Buffalo Trail." *MELUS* 6.4 (1979): 39-50. Print.

Carrasquillo, Marci L. "Oscar 'Zeta' Acosta's American Odyssey." *MELUS* 35.1 (2010): 77-97. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Flood, Christopher. *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction.* New York: Garland Publications, Inc., 1996. Print.

Jones, LeRoi. *Dutchman and The Slave*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964. Print.

Kumar, Nita N. "The Logic of Retribution: Amiri Baraka's Dutchman." *African American Review* 37.2/3 (2003): 271-279. Print.

Lindberg, John. "*Dutchman* and *The Slave*: Companions in Revolution." *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 141-147. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* New York: Vintage Books, 1992. Print.

Nelson, Hugh. "LeRoi Jones' *Dutchman*: A Brief Ride on a Doomed Ship." *Educational Theatre Journal* 20 (1968): 53-59. Print.

Peavy, Charles D. "Myth, Magic, and Manhood in LeRoi Jones' *Madheart*." *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 167-173. Print.

Smethurst, James. "The Figure of the *Vato Loco* and the Representation of Ethnicity in the Narratives of Oscar Z. Acosta." *MELUS* 20.2 (1995) 119-132. Print.

Smith, Norman D. "Buffalos and Cockroaches: Acosta's Siege at Aztlan." *Contemporary Chicano Fiction.* Ed. Vernon E. Lattin. Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1986. Print.

Stavans, Ilan, Ed. *Oscar "Zeta" Acosta: The Uncollected Works.* Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1996. Print.

Tudor, Henry. *Political Myth.* New York: Praeger, 1972. Print.

Williams, Sherley Anne. "The Search for Identity in Baraka's *Dutchman.*" *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 135-140. Print.

---

[11] In this chapter, I use the phrase white American perspective to reference the prevailing viewpoint of the majority group in the U.S. This term feels monolithic; however, when contextualized in double-consciousness, it becomes apparent that this perspective is the influence that allows the formation of double-consciousness in the first place. While acknowledging the dangers in claiming a singular white American perspective exists or is even possible, I choose to bring attention to the existence of a perspective widely held by white Americans that claimed racial and ethnic minorities were inferior.

[2] Anzaldúa is discussed at length in the introduction. Specifically, her scholarship provides the leap from José Vasconcelos's biological concern of *la raza* to Du Bois preoccupation with black identity.

[3] I especially want to clarify that while I use the term singular identity in this project, I am mostly addressing an *attempt* to form singular identities and recognize the impossibility of singular identities in a multi-identity society. These black and Chicano identities created during my project's period are revoking double-consciousness and reprocessing white American perspective to reflect their own aspiration.

[4] Gonzo style journalism is a more extreme style of New Journalism most popularly documented as a creation of journalist and Acosta's friend Hunter S. Thompson. Acosta, however, argues that he and Thompson created and named this style together in a letter to the editorial staff of *Playboy* magazine: "In point in fact, Doctor Duke and I—the world famous Doctor Gonzo—together we both, hand in hand, sought out the teachings and curative powers of the word famous Savage Henry, the Scag Baron of Las Vegas, and in point of fact the term and methodology of reporting crucial events under fire and drugs, which are *of course essential to an*y good writing in this age of confusion—all this I say came from out of the mouth of our teacher who is also known by the name of Owl" (Stavans 109). To find more about this style of journalism in reference to Thompson's and Acosta's novels, read Bruce-Novoa's "Fear and Loathing on the Buffalo Trail" (1979).

[5] In his article "Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People:* The Case, the Novel, and History" (1986), Alurista argues that genre is a manifestation of "deliberately unrestrained subjectivity" (94).

[6] Salazar is considered a martyr of the Chicano movement. A columnist with *L.A. Times*, Salazar was one of the only journalists to report the Chicano political demonstrations to a mainstream audience.

[7] Norman D. Smith suggests Acosta keeps some names because of their importance to the creation of a contemporary Aztlán for Chicanos. See his article "Buffalos and Cockroaches: Acosta's Siege at Aztlan" (1986).

[8] Acosta uses the term "race" instead of "ethnicity."

[9] Contrary to my argument that Brown appropriates a Chicano identity in *Revolt*, in her 2010 article, Marci L. Carrasquillo argues that Brown develops an understanding of Chicano identity during his road trip which is documented in Acosta's first book *An Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*. Read more in Carrasquillo's "Oscar 'Zeta' Acosta's American Odyssey."

[10] My revised process of double-consciousness noted in the introduction follows: 1) one is made aware of one's race and/or 2) made aware of racism. 3) One sees oneself from the perspective of white Americans and suffers from double-consciousness and 4) recognizes the control white Americans hold through double-consciousness. 5) One unites with members of race (and possibly, other victims, regardless of race) and 6) collectively self-determine racial identity.

[11] In his article "The Figure of the *Vato Loco* and the Representation of Ethnicity in the Narratives of Oscar Z. Acosta," (1995) James Smethurst reads this scene and the union of Chicano identity quite differently arguing that Acosta places emphasis on the sub-categories of Chicanoism specifically identifying more succinctly as a *vato loco*.

[12] Toni Morrison speaks of the dangers of perpetual hyphenation of people of varied races and ethnicities in America in her book of criticism *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992).

Chapter Three: Double-consciousness Squared: Female Spaces and Identities in Estela Portillo-Trambley's *The Day of the Swallows* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*

Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness.

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

As double minorities[1] in the Black Pride and Chicano Movements, African American women and Chicanas experienced moments of exclusion and abjection from both mainstream America and their own ethnic groups and movements. This chapter focuses on the second precept of double-consciousness—the exclusion of the Negro from mainstream America—and how this principle is comparable to the experience of women in the Black Pride and Chicano communities. Similar to how blacks feel ostracized by America, the women in these particular movements are excluded. While black and Chicana women share the same concerns of racial and ethnic progress with black and Chicano men, their concerns that are unique to their sex (sexual assault and enslavement, birth control, motherhood, physical abuse) are often problems (or issues) created and reinforced by their male counterparts. Moreover, the reassessment I attempt in this chapter considers Du Bois's focus on manhood in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" and argues that the idea of double-consciousness is a male centric complex. Furthermore, I consider how, if we read double-consciousness as a gendered term, one might define female double-consciousness. As people excluded from society for being both colored and female, it seems that black women and Chicanas take on the weight of being liminal

participants of both racial/ethnic movement and feminist movement. As a result of this double exclusion, or double-consciousness squared, the women are forced to self-determine identities separate from black and Chicano men and exclusive to female activists of color. Through this process, black and Chicana women simultaneously revolt in uniquely female ways. Therefore, in this chapter, I consider how revolution is a gendered action.

This chapter's epigraph presents one of the many moments in *The Souls of Black Folk* in which Du Bois speaks specifically to the distressed construction of black "self-conscious manhood" in connection to double-consciousness (17). This epigraph combats the argument that when writing Du Bois spoke generally without concern of gender lumping all black people, men and women, into black "mankind." Here is a place in his writing when the specifics of sex are wholly unnecessary. Du Bois could have just as simply said "black people" instead of "black man." This, along with his concern with strength, weakness and power, words that might define or undo a man's masculinity, suggests that Du Bois is only speaking to black men. Similar to what is demonstrated in this epigraph, there are several moments in *Souls* when Du Bois distinguishes between the black man and a weaker, emasculated version of the black man. In essence, Du Bois defines double-consciousness not only as a complication to black identity formations, but also as America's refusal to black masculinity.

Du Bois presents evidence of the repudiation of black masculinity. He questions, "what need with education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing

more; what need of higher culture for half-men?" (21). Here there is a very clear connection between domestic work, "half-men," and emasculation. The quotation creates a conversation between black men and America. While black men long for educational and occupational opportunity, they are rejected. In fact, Du Bois suggests that the power to choose and move beyond the designated station of domestic work is a man's right, yet when black men are refused this right, it is a clear disallowance of their masculinity. More alarming perhaps is the sexual violence enacted upon black women and the threat to black male paternity:

> The red stain of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home. (20)

This quotation takes the argument of double-consciousness into extreme androcentrism. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," it becomes obvious that Du Bois is writing about men and for a male audience. However, when introducing the sexual violation of black women, instead of acknowledging the very real and lasting trauma of rape, Du Bois only considers the effect miscegenation will have on black men and, consequently, the entire race. Note the red stain he speaks of is not blood from the raped and abused women but rather the children without black fathers. Black men are publicly cuckold by the rape of black women; their defilement and the children produced by such acts are further emasculation of black men. Furthermore, Du Bois equates the plight of the black man to

the plight of the race, and this direct nexus between men and the race ignores the need for women.

So, what about the women? Generally, we see that there is no concern for women when considering the construction of a black consciousness in *Souls*. Yet, during the period I consider in my project, women are definitely present, however, combating racial oppression while simultaneously combating gender oppression within their respective groups[2]. Although Alice Walker and Estela Portillo-Trambley are only representatives of women writing during these movements, they present incredibly similar experiences and perspectives in their female protagonists.

While the movements of the period encouraged a singular identity, these women, while claiming the terms identified in the movements (black and Chicana), understood the faultiness presented in singular identities from the difficulties in assigning singular identities for themselves. Black women and Chicanas were not able to fully identify with Black and Chicano movements because these movements were male-centric. Similarly, the feminist movements of the era were concerned primarily with issues of white women and did not address the issues of double-minorities. Because of this lack of complete belonging to either movement, women of color especially understood that their doubly marginalized identities depended on the success of both movements, while not being able to expect personal progress from either. Meridian and Josefa, the protagonists in *Meridian* and *The Day of the Swallows*, place emphasis on the success and well-being of their immediate communities and interpret these racial and ethnic identity movements, instead, into personal quests for selfhood. So while there are issues that might disallow

these texts to be considered Black Pride and Chicano Movement literature, I contests that those issues require special attention as to how one might interpret the experiences of women writers living during the periods of these movements. My project interprets how literature is a representation of the sociological happenings of communities during the period. With this in mind, Portillo-Trambley's and Walker's protagonists, while fictional, are literary manifestations of the period, the women of the period, and their racial and ethnic communities.

Self-creation in Estela Portillo-Trambley's *The Day of the Swallows*[3]

Estela Portillo-Trambley is most widely recognized as the first Chicana to publish a book of short stories *Rain of Scorpions and Other Writings* in 1975. But even before that groundbreaking publication, Portillo-Trambley had already published a play she originally wrote for her bilingual theater group in El Paso, Texas (Vowell 59). Without her knowledge, a friend submitted the play for publication; and in its first time out, *The Day of the Swallows* caught the attention of Quinto Sol Publisher Octavio Romano and was published in 1971 (Vowell 60). In a 1982 interview with Faye Nell Vowell, Portillo-Trambley admits that she was simply a novice when she initially published, but the play *The Day of the Swallows* is anything but the work of a novice writer riffing off of traditional Chicano/a plays. Instead, *The Day of the Swallows* is a groundbreaking, contemporary play that begs the question of the place of Chicanas in male-dominated, often violent, Chicano communities.[4]

The play begins with an astonishing scene: a beautiful room filled with light streaming from lace-adorned windows and the gruesome sight of a terrified young

woman, Alysea, scrubbing a blood-stained rug. Immediately the audience knows there is an untold story; however, the story of the blood and the mysterious attack on David, a male resident of this home, will not be revealed until the end of the play. Instead we get the back story of Alysea, a youth once captured as a sex slave and plucked out of her situation by the protagonist, Josefa. Also, in the midst of a traditional, annual celebration that welcomes the traveling swallows on their return to the village from their long, seasonal journey, Josefa tells the story of how she came to love the swallows so much and, consequently, chooses to protect them. On a previous celebration, when Josefa was a young girl, boys who were mistreating the birds sacrificed one on her body after she admonished them. The latter flashback, the story of Josefa's abuse, marks the moment she refuses victimization and the first flashback of Alysea's abuse notes Josepha's position as a valiant protector for other victimized Chicanas. Interestingly, these stories present unjustified actions exacted by men in search of a feeling of control and power. Yet the final flashback of the play, the story of David's attack in Josefa's house, is quite different. After David walked in on Josefa and Alysea having sex, Josefa cuts his tongue out of his mouth to keep him from telling what he has seen. In the end, after she tells the priest of the local parish about her homosexuality and confesses her violent act against David, Josefa drowns herself in the nearby lake the day virgins routinely bathe there.

From the first scene of the play, the audience recognizes that there are two versions of Josefa. While Alysea speaks to the milk lady about Josefa, she calls her "the most considerate of persons;" however, the milk lady includes greater detail of who Josefa is to the community:

> Dona Josefa is an angel. All her life, she goes around . . . with that walking stick of hers . . . always she goes . . . like an avenging angel . . . helping . . . what a sight she must be . . . pounding with her stick on those evil people. One, two . . . that's for wickedness! [*She makes motions of one pounding away.*] She takes care of the devil all right . . . eh? Yes . . . she saved you from the sickness . . . (Trambley 210)

The milk lady's impression of Josefa grows more detailed with each phrase allowing for the audience to get a rounded perspective of Josefa however mysterious the final picture remains. First she is simply an angel, but once her walking stick is mentioned, the milk lady clarifies that she is an "avenging angel." And, as if to undo whatever negative connotation might be derived from the term "avenging," she immediately adds "helping." Yet, to make sure Josefa's desire to help is not mistaken for weakness, she includes a specific image of Josefa "pounding with her stick" while physically demonstrating the motion. With one word, the milk lady adds gentleness; with another phrase she incites violence until the audience is left with what seems an altogether mythical creature.

Josefa, upon entering the stage, matches this image. She is graceful and strong and gentle yet meaningful; "her bones are Indian's; her coloring is Aryan": her appearance is an exemplification of the coexisting contradiction that the milk lady uses to describe her. Furthermore, Alysea's response to Josefa affirms her complexities: Alysea is both comforted by her presence and frightened by her. The audience expects to get a honest perspective of Josefa, but the woman speaks in riddles and rarely gives way to emotion. Instead, she obsesses over the beauty of her room and the hand-crocheted lace

that brings light to the beauty. When Alysea tries to speak to her about the night before, the night Josefa attacked David, Josefa responds with, "Beautiful days demand our strength. . . We must be faithful to loveliness. [. . .] There are things we must do. . . to keep a sanity" (Trambley 211).

Josefa's allegiance to "loveliness" and things of beauty is expressed in her house. The house, in fact, becomes a character of the play as well as a manifestation of Josefa. Clemencia, the milk lady, claims, "There is beautiful peace here" to which Alysea responds, "here it stretches itself out to breathe" (209, 210). Josefa calls the room "[her] world . . . a crystal thing of light" (211). It is a consistent repetition of the play that upon entering the room, women immediately comment on the beauty of the room while simultaneously commenting on the graciousness of Josefa. It is indeed Josefa's "world" as she notes in her own musings. However, Portillo-Trambley writes the room to be a highly manufactured thing of beauty. The lace through which the light shines is created through the painstaking efforts of Josefa. Because the entire play takes place in this room and on the porch of the house (where Josefa has also created a garden compared to the Garden of Eden and a house for the swallows to rest) and because all Clemencia and Alyssea speak so fondly of the space, the audience immediately recognize that this space is different from the world beyond the walls. How the house is different becomes more evident upon visits by male characters.

The first man to appear in the play is Josefa's uncle Tomás, an alcoholic who comes to snoop and ask for money to buy Tequila. While Josefa welcomes the milk lady saying "this is your home," she refuses her male family member (211). We see a

different side of Josefa. She is immediately annoyed by Tomás's begging and antagonism, and he is the first character we see who is unaffected by the beauty of her home upon entering it.

In the second scene we are introduced to Alysea's male suitor, Eduardo, who has been invited to have breakfast at the house by Josefa. It is his comments that most clearly explain the oddity of this beautiful room and why it seems to entice women in with its beauty:

> *Alysea*: [. . .] you hadn't seen this room . . . had you?
>
> *Eduardo*: No . . . never! [Looking around.] Well . . . you were right . . . what a room! . . . for women.
>
> *Alysea*: What do you mean?
>
> *Eduardo*: It is a dream of gentleness . . . peace; it is not a man's room . . . but it is beautiful.
>
> *Alysea*: You're right. Josefa made this haven . . . away from the world of men.
>
> *Eduardo* [Looking at her quizzically]: You like that?
>
> *Alysea*: After what I've lived through . . . yes; this was heaven. (215-16)

Josefa has created a space exclusively for women as an escape from the male-dominated world that exists beyond her front porch. And although Portillo-Trambley does not directly name the male world, the binaries are indicated; therefore, if Josefa's house is a "haven" and "heaven" for women then the outside world is purgatory and hell for a woman. In this manner, Eduardo helps define Chicano masculinity when he explains that it is not "gentleness" and "peace." In fact, while the women who visit base the beauty of

the room on its peacefulness, Eduardo must excuse its peacefulness in order to acknowledge its beauty.

Josefa's establishment of an exclusively female space in protest to the patriarchal Chicano world becomes a patterned response of hers to other traditional institutions. For example, Josefa rejects Catholic practices with a pagan devotion to light and to the lake. This anti-religious consecration is born the day she rejects the barrio's tradition of virgins bathing in the lake at noon on San Lorenzo's day. Josefa chooses, instead, to bathe in the moonlight. She recognizes this as her first act of insubordination:

Josefa: When I was young . . . when I refused to go bathe on San Lorenzo's day . . . when I chose the moonlight in any season . . . it was defiance . . .

Eduardo: What did you defy?

Josefa: What defied me . . . the world! (221)

It was this night, the night that her "desire was heavy," that the moon made love to her and she found her magicians and her new religion (221). And instead of producing children created by a man and a woman, she knew "[she] would bear the children of light . . . the moon . . . the burning lake" (222).

Josefa's new religion is, in fact, born from her Lesbianism and her rejection of all male-centric things. Tradition dictates that virgins bathe in the lake on San Lorenzo day as a hopeful yearning for the perfect love that comes with marriage. It is not that Josefa does not believe in love, but rather she does not believe in heterosexual love. More specifically, Josefa does not believe men are capable of such love. To her, "all the dreams of those girls would turn to jagged violence" (240). Josefa does not reject the

bathing altogether for she too has the repressed desires of a virgin. However, choosing to bathe in the moonlight is distinctly female. The sun's light is harsh in comparison, and the moon's consistently changing shape is comparable to that of a woman's menstrual cycle. When the moon makes love to her that night, it is like a woman making love to her for the first time. While Catholicism, a religion led by men (Priests, Bishops and Popes), is traditionally critical of homosexuality, Josefa's magicians are born from the coming together of one female body to another female body.

"The secret of the magicians" is made known to Josefa: spiritual love can be attained through female love and beautiful things will be born from this realization. Alysea affirms her belief in this procreation. She whispers to Eduardo her belief in Josefa's bearing children of light, "look around you, the children of light . . . her garden . . . the lace . . . her love for the barrio people . . . her bright, bright calm" (222). The garden and lace are things used to create the oasis in the midst of a male community for the women in the town. We must read, then, that the "love for the barrio people" is also a departure from the patriarchal community. Her activism within her town is therefore gendered female.

Ultimately, religion, heterosexual marriage, and the community exclude women from active participation but require and expect their presence and allegiance. Similar to the control the white American perspective has on minorities in America, Machismo holds the same control over their women.[5] The creation of the female space, the light religion and her rejection of marriage is Josefa's revolutionary protest against the patriarchal system and allows for a self-determined life. So while her male-centered

community dictates female identity as Catholic and submissive wife and mother, Josefa creates a counterstance in response. In fact, the identity that Josefa chooses for herself is lover of women and people of her ethnic community.

Once the comfort of this self-determined identity is threatened by David, the young man who lived with her, Josefa must protect who she is and what she has created. Because of this, when confessing her Lesbianism and her attack on David to the barrio's priest, she expresses no remorse:

> I was silencing the world from reprimand. I knew I had to silence the world from reprimand. I felt not guilt. All I knew . . . the life I had . . . the faith of the barrio people . . . this house of light . . . must be preserved. I silenced all reprimand with my terrible deed. (241)

Although David is young, he is still a member of the patriarchal community, and therefore, is unable to understand her completely female identity. By silencing David, Josefa imagines that she has silenced patriarchy altogether.

Despite Josefa's belief that she has escaped reprimand, the play marks the crumbling of Josefa's manufactured world. Her alcoholic uncle Tomás painstakingly puts the pieces of the present and the past together until he arrives at the truth of Josefa's sexuality and her attack on David in order to protect it. Alysea abandons her relationship with Josefa to marry Eduardo. The priest forsakes his love for her and instead pities her as a crazy woman. Josefa quickly realizes that although she has carefully created a female place, life, and spirituality, her world is still firmly planted in the larger patriarchal Chicano world.

The moment this real hopelessness takes hold, Josefa, instead of dealing with the reprimand of her male-centered community, chooses suicide. She gives herself to her magicians the same day they revealed themselves to her so many years before. She returns to the lake, clothed in white, and after death, she returns to her house as light streaming through the lace adorned windows.

Maternal Activism in Alice Walker's *Meridian*

In her 1986 article "*Meridian*: Alice Walker's Critique of Revolution," Karen F. Stein argues that Walker's 1976 novel *Meridian* is a revision of her previous belief that the Civil Rights Movement was valuable. Regarding Walker's first published essay titled "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" Stein states:

> [W]hile [Walker] wrote of the Civil Rights Movement with unreserved approval in 1967, she would later contend that it continued to oppress women and so failed in its mission of human liberation. In *Meridian* she rewrites her attitude toward '60s activism, and substitutes for the concept of revolution the more powerful ideal of transformation. (122)

While I agree with Stein that Walker "reaches for a new definition of revolution" in *Meridian*, I do not agree that she is simply redefining the Civil Rights Movement (130). *Meridian* is published after the heights of both the Civil Rights and Black Pride Movements and considers the in-between periods of both.

The protagonist Meridian Hill begins her activism in the Civil Rights Movement. But as Stein points out in her essay, "Walker suggests that a primary reason for the Movement's failure was its lack of a sustained sociopolitical critique" (131). However,

Stein fails to more than mention a defining moment of the book when Meridian comes face to face with a more violent revolutionary group one summer in New York:

> To join this group she must make a declaration of her willingness to die for the Revolution, which she had done. She must also answer the question "Will you kill for the Revolution?" with a positive Yes. This, however, her tongue could not manage. (Walker 14)

Meridian's inability to say "yes" haunts her throughout the book. This might be the reason for her unwavering commitment to nonviolence and, perhaps even more relevant, her frustration with a "society that kills the feeling of self, and most especially women's selfhood" (Stein 130).

Stein's point that the novel indicts "activists [who] merely turned political rhetoric to their own ends while continuing to repress spontaneous individuality" references the Black Pride Movement's dependency on a united self for the sake of a self-determined identity. By not dealing with this place of in-betweenness, Stein, much like other scholars, only acknowledges *Meridian* as a book critical of the Civil Rights Movement and not critical of both the Civil Rights and Black Pride Movements[6]. Yes, Meridian Hill seeks to create a new type of revolution, but this creation is based on the in-between-Movements space in which she lives.

In her essay, "Remembering the Dream: Alice Walker, *Meridian* and the Civil Rights Movement," Roberta M. Hendrickson considers this space briefly although her article's focus is on the Civil Rights movement:

> With Meridian, Walker raises a difficult question, both political and philosophical, the question of how to create a just and peaceful or nonviolent society from one that is both unjust and violent. This question was raised but left unanswered by the Civil Rights Movement. By creating Meridian divided against herself on the question of nonviolence, Walker challenges the abandonment of nonviolence that followed the Civil Rights Movement. Though Meridian agrees with her friends that 'nonviolence has failed' to free black people, she cannot, like them, proclaim herself ready to 'kill for the Revolution'" (115).

Hendrickson notes that she is a divided self, stuck in-between movements. Meridian is then forced to create an activist's perspective all her own, a perspective mostly created through her experiences as a woman in the movements and her unwavering maternal instincts for the group of people she hopes to free.

Meridian is an especially interesting and progressive character. She becomes a pregnant teenager, then bride and then mother all while remaining quite uninterested in the roles she quickly takes up. She neglects these identifiers, ultimately giving her child up, to become active in the Civil Rights Movement and to attend a fictional university, Saxon College. In both situations she is urged to become simply a part of a whole. The university hopes to shape her into a Saxon woman, "chaste and pure as the driven snow," a feat that is impossible considering her past marriage and motherhood (92). So although Meridian enjoyed being at Saxon her first year there, she knew that she would never be a woman the school expected her to be, a woman "*accepted* as an equal because she knew and practiced all the proper social rules," because she knew that society refused her

equality because of her blackness and femaleness (94). Similarly, while she was fully committed to the work of the Civil Rights Movement, she began to explore a version of revolution all her own, maternal activism.[7]

In order to better understand this concept of maternal activism, I would like to turn to Alan Nadel's essay "Reading the Body: *Meridian* and the Archeology of Self."[8] In it, Nadel first identifies the double-consciousness of the time, "It is not surprising [. . .] that in the fictional world Walker presents, Blacks as a result of this oppression often repress their desires and sublimate their frustrations in ways that enable them to accept the status quo and/or even adopt their oppressors' values" (155). We see this adoption of white perspective, for example, with Truman, a former lover of Meridian, and his marriage and sexual desire for white women and his exoticism of black women through the art he creates. What affects Meridian most is how a white American perspective requires women to be wife and mother.

The novel reaches all the way back to Meridian's great-grandmother, a maternal figure with whom Meridian especially connects. Her great-grandmother creates an identity outside of white American perspective specifically appropriating American Indian spirituality and walking the Native burial grounds nude in worship of the sun. Nadel comments on Meridian's paternal great-grandmother's level of "independence rarely found by black women because of their enslavement to men and to maternity" (158).

It is after acknowledging the freedom of her great-grandmother that allows Meridian to feel guilty for trapping her mother in maternal responsibility. Nadel furthers

comment of maternal enslavement to include Meridian's struggle as a mother and how motherhood refuses her "[the] capacity to be active in the emotional, intellectual, or physical world" (158). It becomes apparent that Meridian cannot be both mother and activist. Nadel argues that her decision to "relinquish her role as mother" allows her to recognize a difference between her and other women enlisted in this maternal history: "[Meridian] thought of her mother as being worthy of this maternal history, and she herself as belonging to an unworthy minority, for which there was no precedent and of which she was, as far as she knew, the only member" (qtd. in Nadel 158). So Meridian leaves her family in order to "[reconstitute] the existing fragments in a new context" (158). It is this gathering of the broken pieces of motherhood that allows Meridian to repurpose maternal instincts for the public space of activism. By choosing to mother members of her race instead of her own child, Meridian rejects the values of a white American perspective as her great-grandmother did years before.

Yet the guilt that Meridian carries for "stealing her mother's serenity, for shattering her mother's emerging self" combines with the guilt she feels for abandoning her child and squandering her opportunity for black motherhood. This guilt makes Meridian feel unworthy to live. Hendrickson argues that "[Meridian's] readiness to die is an expression of her suicidal impulses" (115). The abuse her body undergoes as an activist operates as penance for her rejecting motherhood and betraying her mother by choosing a college education and a life as an activist. She became "capable of inner gaiety, a sense of freedom, as she saw the [police's] clubs slashing down on her from above" (Walker 97). After being beaten unconscious, she awakes with a "feeling of

yearning, of heartsick longing for forgiveness" (97). Her hope and commitment to the cause bleeds into her guilt and desire for forgiveness. It is as if, because she did leave her family, both mother and child, to join the movement, both movement and guilt are intertwined.

The last section of *Meridian,* titled "Ending," marks the conclusion of flashbacks and soundly forces a resolution of Meridian's self-determined style of activism. Specifically, the section begins with the funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr. The mood is originally somber, respectful of the "great dead man" both inside the church, where dignitaries, politicians, and celebrities mourn, and outside the church, where "the pitiable crowd of nobodies" gathered "[clear] their throats repeatedly against their tears" (202). Walker beautifully crafts a scene that documents the end of the Civil Rights Movement, a point with which she begins the book with the addition of an epigraph by Black Elk:[9]

> I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now . . . I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream . . . the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead. (qtd. in Walker)

The funeral does not simply document the death of a movement, but also how quickly the mourners resume life upon the passing of both King and the Movement. In many ways, this very real death signifies the death of a struggling movement and method. The death

brings freedom not only to King but to Meridian. She is now able to move past the shadow of the Movement that grouped members into one and is left to deal with remaining questions that exist from the more revolutionary Movement in the following chapter.

Meridian's refusal to kill for the Revolution earlier in the book haunts her throughout the ten year span from then until the end of the novel.[10] Specifically, Meridian feels the heaviness of her position between the space and ideologies of both movements and her confusion of her purpose as a woman in either movement. Instead of simply demonstrating the mistreatment of women activists, she also demonstrates an overt disregard by the revolutionary Movement for this maternal activism she has created, a female perspective that, as a carrier of life, refuses to take the life of anyone. Meridian's commitment to peace, life, and maternal activism is quite contrary to her lack of commitment to actual motherhood. Not only does she leave her child to be raised by his paternal grandmother, she aborts Truman's baby when she becomes pregnant and gets her tubes tied to assure she will never birth any more children. She does all of this, arguably, because she will not allow motherhood to disrupt her maternal obligation to the race and movement. Because there is a connection between Meridian's inability to kill and her maternal activism, her question to Truman, "Is there no place in a revolution for a person who *cannot* kill?" might be interpreted as, "Is there no place in a revolution for a woman?" (206).

Meridian's personal choice of activism required her to act alone. Similarly, revolutionary activism requires oneness with the fellow participants of the revolution.

Perhaps Meridian was unable to commit to murder for the revolution because she had yet to self-determine her personhood and recognize the need for solidarity with other revolutionaries. Many scholars write about *Meridian*'s focus on individualization and the lack thereof in the movements. This might explain why, after struggling throughout the book, Meridian concludes that she could in fact kill. After watching a father suffer through the anniversary of his revolutionary son's death, Meridian recognizes a "communal spirit, togetherness, righteous convergence" take place amongst the viewing church congregation (219). A genuine transformation happens to Meridian:

> [S]he understood, finally, that the respect she owed her life was to continue, against whatever obstacles, to live it, and not to give up any particle of it without a fight to the death, preferably *not* her own. And that this existence extended beyond herself to those around her because, in fact, the years in America had created them One Life [. . .] she made a promise to the [father] herself: that yes, indeed she would kill, before she allowed anyone to murder his son again. (220)

In this moment, Meridian concludes two things: that she is worthy of life and that she will kill for others who are worthy.

Meridian moves forward aware of her personal transformation in the midst of togetherness with her people. Although Meridian is still registering voters at the novel's end, Walker focuses on Meridian's individualized attention to members of the community instead of generalizing her activism. Meridian touches one person at a time. And, to bring more attention to Meridian's maternal activism, the final three stories all center on women and motherhood. First, Truman and Meridian visit Agnes, a dying

woman who prays she can be buried on Mother's Day. Her husband, Johnny, registers the Monday after Mother's Day, presumably after she passes. Then they meet Miss Margaret Treasure, a woman of sixty-nine who believed, after a love affair with a younger man, she was pregnant. Finally, they visit a thirteen-year-old mother who is in prison for killing her daughter. Meeting this venomous child brings Meridian to tears, hoping to feel tenderness for her own son. However, "her heart refuses to beat faster, to warm, except for the girl, the child who killed her child" (235) demonstrating to whom she feels most motherly.

After Truman witnesses Meridian on her individualized missions, Truman becomes like her, "intensely maternal," and their realized method inspires a poem that praises individualization as a method "to heal and re-create ourselves" (236). Of course, this sentiment does not simply speak of Meridian and Truman, but the revitalization and the freeing of black and poor people alike.

Estella Portillo-Trambley and Alice Walker write female characters who self-determine personal identities in order to exist in their respective ethnic and racial androcentric world trapped in a larger world controlled by white American perspective. Both Josefa and Meridian could easily subscribe to the requirements of their communities to be wives and mothers, yet both isolate themselves in order to create more fitting identities allowing them to become better, more effective women for their larger communities. Ultimately, both Trambley and Walker write perfect womanist texts before Walker even published such an idea. Defined by Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* as "a black feminist, or feminist of color [. . .] Responsible. In charge. Serious

[. . .] A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture [. . .] Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people," womanism celebrates femaleness and, essentially, identifies the unique position of women activists of color and their need to create spaces that allows for their activism. Trambley and Walker create characters that surpass the traditional identities of women. Josefa and Meridian existed in communities that excluded women and, therefore, accepted this exclusion as opportunity to self-create uniquely female spaces and identities.

Notes and Bibliography

Christian, Barbara. "An Angle of Seeing: Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*." *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency.* Eds. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey. New York: Routledge, 1994. 95-120. Print.

_____. "Novels for Everyday Use." *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives Past and Present.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993. 50-104. Print.

_____. *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980. Print.

Collier-Thomas, Bettye and V.P. Franklin, Eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement.* New York: New York University Press, 2001. Print.

Danielson, Susan. "Alice Walker's *Meridian,* Feminism, and the 'Movement.'" *MELUS* 19.3 (1994): 317-330. Print.

Dewey, Janice. "Dona Josefa: Bloodpulse of Transition and Change." *Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings*. Eds. Asuncion Horno-Delgado, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott, and Nancy Saporta Sternbach. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989. 39-47. Print.

Downey, Anne M. "'A Broken and Bloody Hoop': The Intertextuality of *Black Elk Speaks* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*." *MELUS* 19.3 (1994): 37-45. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Dubey, Madhu. *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Print.

Harris, Norman. *Connecting Times: The Sixties in Afro-American Fiction*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.

Harvel, Valeria G. "Afrocentric Humanism and African American Women's Humanizing Activism." *Journal of Black Studies* 40(2010): 1052-1075. Print

Ikas, Karin Rosa. "Estela Portillo-Trambley: Playright, Fiction Writer, Poet, Actress." *Chicana Ways*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002. Print.

Marcus, Greil. Rev. of *Meridian. Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives and Present.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993. Print.

Portillo, Estela. *Day of the Swallows.* 1971. *Contemporary Chicano Theatre*. Ed. Roberto J. Garza. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976. 205-245. Print.

Stein, Karen F. "Meridian: Alice Walker's Critique of Revolution." *Black American Literature Forum* 20.1/2 (1986): 129-141. Print.

Vowell, Faye Nell. "A MELUS Interview: Estela Portillo-Trambley." *MELUS* 9.4 (1982): 59-66. Print.

Walker, Alice. *Meridian.* 1976. Orlando: Harcourt, 2003. Print.

_____. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983. Print.

[1] I use the term minority based on one's access to civil rights and one's representation in power systems such as the political stage. In this sense, especially during the 60s and 70s, women, though more than half of the U.S. population, were indeed minority voices.

[2] *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Womein in the Civil Right-Black Power Movement* considers the journeys of specific women through these movements.

[3] I included in the introduction of this chapter the question of belonging that this play has to the Chicano Movement. Janice Dewey considers this issue in her essay, "Dona Josefa: Bloodpulse of Transition and Change." She asks, "How can a woman's suicide in the face of an entire town's condemnation of her lesbian love not be considered a symbolic protest, a protest 'staged' against both the violence that leads to her own death and the farce of the lie that she lived? Perhaps this is the culmination of theater for social protest: when the codes of both violence and a patriarchal value system that can entrap free expression of humanity are exploded in full view in the tragic self-drowning of a woman driven beyond the very limits of social acceptance" (Dewey 40).

[4] Another valuable interview with Portillo-Trambley was conducted by Karin Rosa Ikas and published in Ikas collection of interviews titled *Chicana Ways*. In this interview, Portillo-Trambley notes, "I've always been on the peripheries of the Chicano Movement because the Chicano world does not consider me Chicana enough" (208).

[5] In a video interview with Francisco Lomeli, Portillo-Trambley called for Chicanas, "Not to fight machismo but to transcend it." In a more recent interview with Karin Ikas, Portillo-Trambley claimed, "[T]oday the abhorrence of machismo is felt not only by strong women, but also by *intelligent, secure* males" (Ikas 208).

[6] To find more perspectives dealing with Meridian as a Civil Rights Movement novel, please see Barbara Christian's book *Black Women Novelists: the Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976,* Melissa Walker's book *Down from the Mountaintop,* Susan Danielson's essay "Alice Walker's Meridian, Feminism, and the 'Movement'" and Norman Harris's book *Connecting Times: The Sixties in Afro-American Fiction.* Madhu

Dubey considers the self-determination of black women in the more patriarchal Black Nationalist revolution in her book *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic.*

[7] Valeria Harvell argues that the humanist position of African American activism comes from is instated by female activist. See "Afrocentric Humanism and African American Women's Humanizing Activism."

[8] There are also several articles regarding Meridian and motherhood. See Barbara Christian's "An Angle of Seeing: Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*." Christian also discusses motherhood considerably in her essay "Novels for Everyday Use."

[9] Anne Downey discusses the connection between this epigraph and Meridian in her essay "'A Broken and Bloody Hoop': The Intertextuality of *Black Elk Speaks* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*."

[10] In his 1976 review of *Meridian*, published in *The New Yorker*, Greil Marcus connects the novel to *The Rebel* by Albert Camus. Marcus quotes at length from the final chapter of the book titled "Thought at the Meridian," "For it is now a question of deciding if it is possible to kill someon, whose resemblance to ourselves we have at last recognized and whose identity we have just sanctified. When we have only just conquered solitude, must we then re-establish it definitively by legitimizing the act which isolates everything? To force solitude on a man who has just come to understand that he is not alone, is that not the definitive crime against man?" (qtd. in Marcus 11).

Chapter Four: Fake it till You Make It: Self-documentation Leads to Self-determined Identity in Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*

This project narrowly escapes considering only African Americans and Chicanos by including a memoir written by a Negro Puerto Rican author, Piri Thomas, due to the need to further reassess Du Bois's final principle of double-consciousness, the tension between race and nationality for Negro Americans, and the limitations the original precept enforces in a country that is home for Negroes with other nationalities. How is double-consciousness different for Negroes exempt from the burden of proving oneself American? And does their national identity alter how their race is received in a highly racialized country like the United States? In his first memoir *Down These Mean Streets* (1976), Piri Thomas explores these complications leading one to further consider Puerto Rico, an associated Free State or Commonwealth of the United States, as an analogy for double-consciousness that actually manifests identity complications for its people.

Down These Mean Streets documents Thomas's evaluation of U.S. race relations. Consequently, this chapter also explores Du Bois's conflation of race and nationality for white Americans and his polarization of the two for African Americans. I assert that ethnic minorities struggle for self-definition in America *because* of the existing belief that to be white is to be American. If Americanness requires whiteness, is black citizenship even a possibility? I question this stressed dichotomy between race and nationality when considering the identity of black non-citizens. Negro immigrants must adjust to the racist

categorization of blacks in America regardless of their nationality. This particular reality suggests that double-consciousness has nothing to do with one's Americanness (as Du Bois originally suggests) and everything to do with one's race. Therefore black citizenship relies not only on the dismantling of white supremacy, but the dismantling of Americanness as an exclusionary and racialized identity.

Puerto Rico's Double-consciousness

Du Bois places emphasis on America being a racist nation almost to the point of absolving other nations of racism altogether. He claims that, for a black person, a moment free from racism is only possible "in babyhood and in Europe" (DuBois 15). In order to complete his definition of double-consciousness, Du Bois considered the doubled self of an American Negro living in a nation whose citizens insist on excluding black people from feeling like a part of the national fabric. In order to prove the warring identities of race and nationality, Du Bois recognizes the conundrum as a part of American history:

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American[.] (17)

We see several important things happening in this passage. Of course, Du Bois clearly notes the division between self and the desire to complete selfhood with a singular identity composed of the two. However, Du Bois offers no advice as to *how* the two identities might merge. And, with closer observation, one sees that Du Bois's understanding of America refuses a Negro to ever be American.

First, he comments that both the Negro race and the American nationality are "older selves" that the American Negro hopes to remain intact. He then changes his terminology to include "Africa(n)" which, of course, does not only speak of race and does not reference nationality, as he might have intended, but evokes ideas of multiple ethnicities and cultures. Interestingly, the terms African and Black only became synonymous when Africans were brought to America in the 17th century.[1] So even while documenting double-consciousness and the evasiveness of white American perspective, Du Bois himself is unable to escape the prevailing concepts in his ponderings. There are even greater incongruities when Du Bois considers one self overtaking the other self. While initially it seems as though Du Bois is encouraging multiculturalism, a bringing together of the best parts of each identity, he only uses terms that focus on race instead of culture: "He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world." The OED defines "Africanize" as an overturning of power from European or white hands to black Africans. Du Bois follows the dismissal of "Africaniz[ing] America" with the very visual image of blackness being bleached in "white Americanism." Two important things happen in this

section. First, Du Bois notes the prevalence of control and power in this struggle between two selves. Unfortunately, however, the power is never in the hands of the Negro. If he is to "Africanize America," he is to wrest power from those who have it, presumably white people. The following possibility of "bleach[ing] his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism," places the Negro in submission to white control. Second, Du Bois confirms the Americanness, similar to that of Africanness and blackness, is synonymous with whiteness. More alarming, perhaps, is the alternative question: If whiteness is Americanness, then can a Negro ever be an American?

While freed slaves were granted U.S. citizenship in 1868 by way of the 14th amendment, blacks were bullied by violence and intimidation into living lives less than U.S. citizens. State and local governments enforced Jim Crow Laws to continue the disenfranchisement of blacks in America. Blacks were refused their right to due process and their right to bear arms, and unfair voting laws that included poll taxes and literacy tests drastically reduced blacks' access to voting. Therefore, black citizenship, while federally documented in the constitution, was not actualized immediately. Although black citizenship technically existed, the federal government failed to address the social and cultural prominence of racism that prevented its actualization. So while Du Bois claims that double-consciousness is a manifestation of the tension between a Negro's blackness and his Americanness, double-consciousness, in fact, comes from the widespread racism that prevents whites to acknowledge blacks as Americans in the first place. Consequently, this precept of double-consciousness cannot be healed by a

merging of the two selves (the Negro and the American) as Du Bois suggests, but rather only by the dismantling of white supremacy.

In his book *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History,* Rogers M. Smith argues that the type of U.S. citizenship afforded a group of people depends on the present racist ideology of the U.S. Specifically, Smith creates a hierarchy of citizenship which he claims prevailed during the Progressive Era:

> [F]irst, the excluded status of people denied entry to and subject to the expulsion from the U.S., generally owing to their ethnic or ideological traits; second, colonial subjectship, reserved chiefly for territorial inhabitants declared racially ineligible for citizenship; third, second class citizenship, usually understood as required by impartial grants of formal citizenship to races not capable of exercising it, and as the proper status for women; and fourth full citizenship, including voting rights. (Smith 429)

Du Bois writes during this period of increased political reform. Smith's hierarchy identifies the second-class citizenship of blacks, however, I would like to acknowledge the unexacting word "capable" and note that due to racist laws and violent intimidation, "disallow" is more fitting. I would further argue that black citizenship was more of an in-between status during the Progressive Era connecting their status as slaves to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which better protects and indeed attempts to provide full citizenship to blacks in America). This in-betweenness of black citizenship at the time of Du Bois's introduction of double-consciousness is comparable to the in-betweenness of Puerto Rican citizenship at the time of the publication of *Down These Mean Streets*.

The Foraker Act of 1900 evolved the United States's 1898 acquisition of Puerto Rico to include a form of governance and Puerto Rican citizenship (with limitations). One might regard the limitations on Puerto Rican citizenship to be an honest representation of the actual citizenship of blacks in the United States. Smith writes that Puerto Rican limited citizenship demonstrates the U.S.'s willingness, "for Puerto Ricans, like other peoples of color, to be designated 'American' so long as what that meant in terms of citizenship still remained unclear" (438). Smith opens up a broader understanding of Americannes and U.S. citizenship through his interpretation of Puerto Rican citizenship: 1). the terms are not synonymous and 2). "American" is a manipulative term offered with the intention to pacify and end a quest for real power, which rests in active citizenship.

How can we imagine Du Bois regarding Americanness and U.S. citizenship at the time of *Souls*? It seems that being American, for Du Bois, depends on the place America and a feeling of connection to that place—almost as if the term "American" is a birthright or a proper inheritance of American opportunity for blacks in America. So while he recognizes the importance and existence of power, a sense of belonging that comes with a shared term (and identity) serves as Du Bois's primary concern. Du Bois never addresses the issue of citizenship or rights as an American. Du Bois wishes to belong and expresses frustration in his rejection from the inner circle of Americanness (or maybe, since he conflates Americanness with whiteness, his rejection from whiteness). This further demonstrates that nationality has never been a true concern for Du Bois.

Du Bois's sense of America is very different than what we see in the movement literature I consider in this project. These authors recognize the impossibility of acceptance, and, therefore, create a space where white approval is unnecessary. The majority of these authors, specifically the African Americans and the Chicanos, do not waste energy on vying for acceptance into a national identity or striving for an American consciousness. Piri Thomas, however, depends on his Puerto Rican identity to exclude him from the racism afforded to black Americans. The treatment of the Puerto Rican identity in *Down These Mean Streets* operates almost as a national identity even though Puerto Rico is not a nation. The fact of Puerto Rico's commonwealth status and its existence as a non-state and non-nation mimics the lack of a full identity in double-consciousness.

In his article "Race, Space, and the Puerto Rican Citizenship," Charles R. Venator Santiago discusses Michel Foucault's notion of the liminal[2] in order to fully explain the liminal condition of Puerto Rico:

> In the context of Puerto Rico, this argument would suggest that the Puerto Rican space is located on the horizon or the juridical line separating the foreign from the domestic. The political expression of this juridical status could suggest that Puerto Rico is somewhere in between colonial and territorial status. (Santiago 908)

Santiago constructs interesting binaries in this passage: foreign/domestic and colonial/territorial. The first binary comes from the perspective of the United States. For the U. S., Puerto Rico, while affiliated with the United States, will never completely be a

part of the U. S. because of a certain level of unfamiliarity due to its distant location and cultural difference. Essentially, Puerto Rico will never completely be American because its exotic existence only places it in the categorization as an Other. And, of course, Puerto Rico's liminal existence makes the U.S. more American in contrast. The second binary recognizes the official identification of Puerto Rico affected by how the island identifies itself, the identification projected to others, and how others identify the island. As previously stated, *Down These Mean Streets* characterizes Puerto Rico as an individual nation, separate culturally from the U.S., however, despite how Puerto Rico might see itself, what matters and what defines the island is how others (namely the United States and the United Nations) characterize it. So, Puerto Rico's liminal existence between colonial and territorial has nothing to do with Puerto Rico. In fact, even the binary colonial/territorial designates a lack of agency for the island eliminating the option of self-governance. Ultimately, when placing both binaries in conversation, we see that the U.S. refuses to accept the island as a part of itself and only regards Puerto Rico as a subject that affirms U.S. power and the exclusivity of the American consciousness.

Analyzing Puerto Rico as an analogy for double-consciousness allows one to see past the simplicity of a divided self and identify the play of power involved and how this power does not provide an option for self-definition (or in the case of Puerto Rico, self-governance). This refusal to allow the subjected Other to create an identity free from the dominant perspective exists simultaneously with the empowered's unwillingness to relinquish control as well as the empowered's resistance against diversity. Double-

consciousness, therefore, can only exist within a power dynamic similar to that of a colonizer and the colonized.

And if Puerto Rico is a perfect political manifestation of double-consciousness, what might we imagine will become of the identity of its residents? In the context of the double-consciousness precept I consider in this chapter, the tension between race and nationality, we must first consider the complexity of Puerto Rican citizenship. Santiago places the involvedness of such a citizenship in the center of his argument:

> [T]his ambiguous condition [of Puerto Rico as a commonwealth] facilitated the creation of a Puerto Rican citizenship that could be distinguished from an Anglo-American citizenship and an alien status. Moreover, this ambiguous condition served as a prison for the Puerto Rican citizen, preventing him from becoming either an Anglo-American citizen or a citizen of a sovereign nation-state. (Santiago 908)

Similar to Du Bois, however more purposefully than Du Bois, Santiago equates citizenship with whiteness and, moreover, suggests that it is no accidental association but rather a purposeful manipulation of U.S. citizenship by white Americans. While black citizenship, as discussed earlier, was legally a full citizenship yet not actualized and resulted in a second-class citizenship, Puerto Rican citizenship was *created* as a second-class citizenship, a status Santiago writes is as restrictive as a prison.

If there is no clear citizenship, no clear national identity, how does a Puerto Rican identify? There are several other issues that further complicate the matter. Puerto Ricans in the mainland, for example, are never identified as American but rather Puerto Rican,

yet their citizenship does not even allow for such an identity. Their second-class citizenship, however, has marked the Puerto Rican in the U.S. mainland as a perpetual Other. Of course, race and the different treatments of race in the U.S. require a more detailed analysis, an analysis that Piri Thomas affords us in *Down These Mean Streets*.

On Becoming Black

Before the Nuyorican[3] movement existed, there was Piri Thomas. His memoir, *Down These Mean Streets*, allows for such an inclusive exacting term as Nuyorican to exist. As we see in his autobiography, Thomas discards and embraces various identities in the process of satisfactorily naming himself. A Negro child of a Negro Cuban father and white Puerto Rican mother, born in New York (or the U.S. mainland), Thomas claims Puerto Rican as his singular identity in the beginning of the book. However, he later recognizes that in America, he is no more than a Negro but, later in life, claims manhood above all else. The self-documentation of his life allows for a proper reflection of how one creates one's identity and how influential outside forces are in the process. Regardless of the external experiences and circumstances that make Piri Thomas the man he becomes, the internal dialogue noted in *Down These Mean Streets* allows for an understanding of the complex process of self-determination and empowers him to define himself however he sees fit.

Down These Mean Streets documents Piri Thomas's episodic life on the streets in El Barrio, New York. Effortlessly, Thomas communicates the sense of urgency of the streets, the need to belong to a gang, and a desire to replace the pain of poverty with the high of heroin. He chronicles, with honest language and with complete access to

his thoughts, his life of crime and the seven-year prison sentence that resulted from it. Often categorized with other prison narratives like Elderidge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968), *Down These Mean Streets*' strongest campaign is its quest to understand one's racial designation in a highly racialized country.

Initially, Thomas exposes a great deal of pride in the protagonist's identity. Piri dreams his ancestors were "noble princes from Spain," and talk of beautiful Puerto Rico served as an imagined alternative of the financially depressed times of the 1940's (10). Even Piri's dark skin, the very thing that causes much distress throughout the book, makes him happy when acknowledged in the context of his Puerto Rican culture. His mother calls him *morenito* and *negrito* and, immediately, he is "full-of-love" (18,19). The negative associated with race only becomes an issue out of Piri's Puerto Rican context and in the world of U.S. racist ideology.[4]

Everything changes for Piri when he moves away from his beloved El Barrio into a predominantly Italian neighborhood and he is no longer assumed to be Puerto Rican. Similar to Du Bois's childhood realization of race in his school days, Piri has a rude awakening of race and how race trumps the Puerto Rican identity he previously assumed:

> I turned around real slow and found my face pushing in the finger of an Italian kid about my age. He had five or six of his friends with him.
>
> "Hey, you," he said. "What nationality are ya?"
>
> I looked at him and wondered which nationality to pick and one of his friends said, "Ah, Rocky, he's black enuff to be a nigger. Ain't that what you is, kid?"

My voice was almost shy in its anger. "I'm Puerto Rican," I said. "I was born here." I wanted to shout it, but it came out like a whisper. (Thomas 24)

In this first confrontation of race and nationality, Piri is caught off guard and is unsure how to respond, and yet how he responds is extremely important. First, the Italian demands to know his national identity, which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is a difficult thing to answer for Puerto Ricans, yet it is only when accused of being black does Piri say he's Puerto Rican. Even this response is complicated: he claims to be Puerto Rican yet specifies, as if to further undo the accusation of blackness, that he was born in the continental U.S. Piri only answers the initial question of nationality because he resents the question of race[5].

Immediately, Piri experiences the psychological and physical price one pays for blackness. The Italian boys who label Piri "black enuff to be a nigger" bully him as they would any other black child in their neighborhood blinding Piri temporarily and sending him to the hospital. This isolation, me-against-them dynamic, and the ever prevalent physical threat of being black seems a thing of the past when Piri's family returns to Spanish Harlem. However, a final move to Long Island again disrupts the solidarity Piri felt in a community of blacks and Latinos, instead, reminding him that blackness trumps Puerto Rican every time. After being rejected by a white classmate at a school dance, Piri overhears the girl and a group of students discuss his race and nationality:

"[. . .] I hear he's a Puerto Rican."

"Ha—he's probably passing for Puerto Rican because he can't make it for white," said the thin voice. "Ha, ha, ha."

[. . .]

"[N]o, *really*!" a girl was saying. "I heard he's a Puerto Rican, and they're not like Neg—"

"There's no difference," said the thin voice. "He's still black." (Thomas 86)

Piri's schoolmates remind him of something long-forgotten in Little Italy: in America, black skin defines one's place in society. The second affirmation of his blackness, in Piri's mind, changes the incident in Little Italy from a case of mistaken identity to a precedent of how white Americans view him and exclude him from their world. In this case, Piri is deprived access to the women of their world, a denial that repeats itself several times throughout the story. Additionally, this exclusion, a primary principle of double-consciousness, only manifests when Piri lives in a mostly white community. When in El Barrio, Piri feels Latino. When in a black community, Piri feels Negro. He acts primarily as a chameleon. Yet when he is in a white community, Piri's Puerto Rican heritage is stripped away and blackness is assigned in its stead.

Indeed, Piri Thomas's case of double-consciousness is extremely complicated because he must come to grips with being black before confronting the double-consciousness. In the Introduction, I describe the process of double-consciousness as Du Bois writes it and as writers of this period rewrite it. The first two steps are the same in both processes: 1) one is made aware of one's race and/or 2) made aware of racism. What is particularly unique in Piri's circumstance is that he was aware

of the general idea of race before he was made aware of his race. In other words, Piri understood that there were black people, yet he never knew that he was black.[6] For much of his life, black people were an "other" for Piri. When the Little Italy boys call him black, he is placed in a category with which he has previously never identified. So Piri is completely aware of race and racism before his process of double-consciousness even begins. For him, the process begins with being made aware of his race and reprocessing his understanding of race and racism through the filter of him being black. Furthermore, his struggle for self-determination extends beyond identity (per what has primarily been discussed in previous chapters) and into actual being. The shock for Piri is not that the white world believes he is inferior, but rather that the white world believes he is black (Puerto Rican or not) and because of his blackness, he is inferior. Piri, therefore, must process these things simultaneously.

His return to Harlem from Long Island is Piri's attempt to interpret his blackness along the backdrop of his own community. Before, when the Little Italy boys and students at the school in Long Island call him black, it is an external naming. Piri has yet to claim blackness himself. He begins to see a difference between him and other Latinos and the similarities between him and his black friends. Ultimately, he begins to see race through the eyes of white America (as a stringent binary), and a flood of double-consciousness overwhelms him:

> The next day I looked up at the faces of the people passing by my old stoop. I tried to count their different shades and colors, but I gave it up after a while.

> Anyway, black and white were the most outstanding; all the rest were in between. (Thomas 120-121)

Upon recognizing the world as a racial binary, Piri realizes to which side he belongs. Immediately, Piri's double-consciousness takes him to a place of self-hatred:

> Why did this have to happen to me? Why couldn't I be born like [my white brothers]? I asked myself. I felt sort of chicken-shit thinking like that. I felt shame creep into me. It wasn't right to be ashamed of what one was. It was like hating Momma for the color she was and Poppa for the color he wasn't. (Thomas 121)

Although his double-consciousness takes immediate effect, Piri straightaway takes issue with the uncontrollable shame. For someone else, the shame would simply be a part of being black. Perhaps because double-consciousness is not an early issue for him, he recognizes that the knowledge of his blackness brings on this irrepressible feeling.

Without delay, Piri attempts to release this stint of self-hatred into aggression towards his black friend Brew, further aligning his actions with the process of Du Boisian double-consciousness. However, halfway into an argument, Piri recognizes the faulty foundation of his anger, "Was I trying to tell Brew that I'm better than he is 'cause he's only black and I'm a Puerto Rican dark-skin?" (122). Piri withdraws from the process of Du Boisian double-consciousness and reflects on the larger picture instead: the existence of white supremacy in America and the "claim that white is the national anthem of the world" (122).

Piri's peculiar process of double-consciousness becomes more obvious when compared to the double-consciousness of his father and Brew. As a black kid from the South, Brew is reared with an understanding of his place in white-dominated America. His mother teaches him the "ABCs" of life as a black man in the South. Brew's survival lessons were essentially lessons of passivity: "A—accept, B—behave. C—care. [. . .] Mom wanted us to do all three, but especially the last one. She wanted us to care for the white man, not hate him." Essentially, Brew's mother is teaching from the page of Du Bosian double-consciousness. She hopes Brew will respond to the racist treatment and feeling of inferiority with sycophancy. A divide in the generation becomes evident when Brew responds to his mother's teaching with anger towards both the ABC philosophy and whites.

As indicated in the revised process of double-consciousness, Brew recognizes and resents white control. However, the completion of this revised process of double-consciousness depends on a community of like-minded individuals, which Brew does not have. Nonetheless, Brew tries to dismantle the racial power dynamic upon which double-consciousness depends. We see this in a story he tells Piri and his girlfriend of a time he was almost raped by two white men in Alabama. After rendering one man unconscious and kicking another in the groin, Brew goes beyond the realm of self-defense and gravitates to the side of vengeful gratification:

> "Ah got me a big rock an' walked over to the white boy named John. He was holdin' on to his balls an' twitchin' all over. When he saw me standin' over him with that big rock, he began to whine like one of his dawgs. 'Damn, boy,' he

said, ‘we’s only funnin’ with you-all. We warn’t goin’ do you no harm at all. Please, boy, don’t drop that damn rock.’

“’Say *suh*,’ I told him.

“’Suh.’

“’Say, *Youh better’n Ah am—suh*.’

“’You’re better’n Ah am—dammit, boy, I tole you we was funning—‘

‘’Say, *A black man’s better’n a white man*.’ He sat there lookin’ at me funny-like. Ah raised the rock an’ said, ‘Say it!’

“’A-black-man-is-is-bet . . .’ *You goddamn black bastard! I won’t say it, you goddamn nigger!”*

Brew stood there and his hands slowly let go of an imaginary rock. (Thomas 161-162)

Brew attempts to access power by victimizing a man who victimized him. The reversed power dynamic is demonstrated through their positions, the white man on the ground and Brew standing above him, extended arms holding a large rock over his head. Yet, despite his physically dominant position, Brew needs to hear a verbal admission of black superiority. This need is proof that, even with the reversal of physical domination, the power dynamic of white supremacy still exists. It is as if Brew requires black supremacy to be ordained and affirmed by a white man before he can truly believe it himself. The fact that the white man, even under compromising circumstances, refuses to concede power reminds Brew that his power is only physical and temporary. Consequently, Brew takes his opportunity to exercise his fleeting power and drops the large rock. While Brew

demonstrates a desire to break away from double-consciousness, his inability to value self-determination over white-affirmation disallows him to do so. It is not enough to recognize white-manipulation of black identity; one must understand that white supremacy has nothing to do with how one chooses to identify.

Poppa's double-consciousness is especially interesting because, as a result, he influences Piri's double-consciousness negatively and positively. Before the Italian boys made Piri aware of his race, his father gave him cause to believe that his darker skin was the reason for their strained relationship. Although he is also a black Latino, Poppa already understands what being black in America means so he chooses simply not to claim blackness. He has gone through the process of Du Boisian double-consciousness. His self-hatred has manifested into hatred of his race, and the closest and main target for this hatred is Piri. In order to proceed with life, he lives in racial denial and surrounds himself with whiteness: his wife, his mistress, and most of his children. Piri is the only persistent reminder of his race. At first, Piri is only a physical reminder. However, upon Piri claiming blackness, he demands his father reckon with his race as well:

> You protect your lying dream with a heavy strain for a white status that's worthless to a black man. You protect your dream, Poppa, protect it, but that's all it is –just a dream. You gonna have to wake up to the fact that you ain't white, but that's all right, Poppa, that's all right. There's pride galore in being a Negro, Poppa. (Thomas 151)

In his case, double-consciousness prompts Poppa's racial denial. It is his awareness of the prevailing white perspective that fuels his hate for blackness and encourages his

distancing himself from the race. Because Piri sees double-consciousness played out in his father, he chooses to act differently and claim blackness completely. Piri's self-determination frees him from the burden of white American perspective and allows him to see blackness as a source of pride.

From Black Back to Puerto Rican

Perhaps the most critically discussed chapter in *Down These Mean Streets* is "Barroom Sociology." A pivotal chapter, "Barroom Sociology" both affirms Piri's claim of blackness while simultaneously reintroducing the possibility of complex, multi-racial existences. When at a bar in Norfolk, Virginia, Piri meets an especially interesting man, Gerald, who, although one-eighth Negro, disassociates with the Negro race and hopes to soon pass for Latino. Immediately, the similarities and differences between Piri and Gerald seem almost fictional given the impression of purposeful juxtaposition. While Gerald is extremely condescending and is, ultimately, an unlikable character, he serves the important role of reinforcing Piri's self-determined moyeto identity while simultaneously illuminating the influence of white American perspective on his claim to blackness.

Gerald and Piri both find themselves in the South to better understand the plight of Negroes. Piri goes through the Southern experience as a black man while Gerald sees the Southern Negro community as a subject for a future book he hopes to write. Although he claims the book will tell both sides, both black and white, it becomes quite apparent that his opinion of the "Negro Situation" is one in the same of the white majority perspective. Specifically, Gerald distances himself and the book from violence

against blacks in the South stocking it up merely as "incidents" and attributing the racist, violent whites as an "ignorant and small minority" (171). Instead, Gerald hopes to focus on "warmth and harmony," the Negro's "wonderful capacity for laughter and strength, their closeness to God and their way of expressing faith through their gospel singing [. . .] the richness to their poverty," and "their really fantastic ability to endure and absorb the anguish of past memories of the slavery that was the lot of their grandparents" (170). His chosen angle angers Brew who challenges Gerald to experience more of the South. While Gerald claims that Negroes are treated the same everywhere in the South, the apparent truth is that Gerald refuses to be reminded of his own blackness, which would inevitably become a problem in more rural southern counties.

The physical and identisicatory differences between Gerald and Piri almost qualify them to be each other's alter ego. Gerald "was tan-colored and not really very negroid-looking," which gave Piri an "almost proud feeling that [he] looked more negroid than [Gerald] did" (170). And soon enough, Piri related his identity crisis to Gerald's racial considerations noting "that [Gerald] was a Negro trying to make Puerto Rican and [Piri] was a Puerto Rican trying to make Negro" (177). While this quotation seems to summarize the racial identisicatory relationship between the two, that they are two sides to the same coin, their efforts to self-determine are quite dissimilar.

In his article "Gerald and Thomas: The Subtext within the Text in *Down These Mean Streets*," Alfredo J. Sosa-Velasco argues that "Gerald's incapacity to identify himself as black or white, given that he is one-eighth black with Hispanic and American Indian heritage, problematizes concepts of race and identity within Thomas's

autobiography" (Sosa-Velasco 292). Sosa-Velasco continues this argument by comparing this moment between Gerald and Piri to Jacques Lacan's mirror stage, an experience necessary for Piri's "process of subject identification" (292). He argues:

> While "Piri" looks to discover who he is, he encounters Gerald's image in front of himself, as if he were in front of a mirror, since Gerald negates part of his black blood because he feels, seems, and thinks like a white. This makes "Piri" rethink his own identity because he sees himself through Gerald. (Sosa-Velasco 292)

Primarily, Gerald represents a greater power of choice than Piri knows at this point. While Piri claims blackness and, specifically, self-determines a proud black identity, he becomes susceptible to the white U.S. supremacist perspective of race that only allows for the black/white binary. This binary requires Piri to choose between the two. Gerald, however, opens up several new ideas of racial and ethnic identity. 1) He rejects the required racial black/white binary and, instead, chooses the "Spanish extraction" (177). 2) He asks the question, "if a white man can be a Negro if he has some Negro blood in him, why can't a Negro be a white man if he has white blood in him?" (176). 3) He introduces the notion of feeling one's race: "I feel white, Mr. Johnson; I look white; I think white; therefore I am white" (177). Despite the very clear negativity Brew feels towards Gerald at the end of the conversation, Piri "found it hard to hate a guy that was hung up on the two sticks that were so much like [his]" (178).

Gerald undoes the assuredness of Piri's self-determined identity cultivated in previous chapters. Just before meeting Gerald, Brew convinces Piri that he is indeed black despite his Puerto Rican ancestry by asking if being Puerto Rican "means anything

to them James Crow paddies?" (123). Later, Piri tries to convince his brother of his blackness by reminding him that their black father's blood "carries more weight with Mr. Charlie" than the blood of their white mother (144). Similar to Brew's need for white-affirmation of black superiority, without knowing it, Piri adjusts his identity according to how he is seen from the white majority. Although Piri overturns feelings of double-consciousness and assumes pride within his blackness, the dependency his claim of blackness has to white perspective is an excellent example of Gloria Anzaldua's explanation of a counterstance.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Anzaldua argues that counterstances are created in direct response to negative interactions: "Subconsciously, we see an attack of ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance" (Anzaldua 100). Piri's negative association to his race only came through his interactions with white people (the Italian boys and the Long Island girls). We must remember that Piri always knew he was morenito, yet never identified as black. His race was only introduced through the negative lens of white American perspective. Piri's counterstance does not reject the racial identity assigned by white people, but rather it reprocesses the negative association of blackness into a positive one.

Piri, as a result of his conversation with Gerald, realizes his dependency on white supremist ideology. Although he creates a counterstance that allows for black pride, his counterstance is still rooted in the requirement of white American perspective that he chooses a race. Gerald, however, recognizes the faultiness of this requirement. Through their conversations, Piri realizes that not only is double-consciousness a product

of the power of white American perspective, but even his own attempt to create a singular identity comes from the same source of power.

For Piri, similar to Brew with his fight with the two white men in the South, everything becomes a reckoning with power, specifically, the lack of power afforded people of color in America. And in an effort to gain a bit of power in a country controlled by white American perspective, Piri devises a plan to have sex with a white prostitute while in Texas. He finds a Mexican with Anglo features to guide him into a whore house and introduce him as a Puerto Rican who only speaks Spanish. After having sex with the prostitute, Piri tells her he is black:

> "Baby, I just want you to know,"—and I watched her smile fall off and a look of horror fill the empty space if left—"I just want you to know," I repeated, "that you got fucked by a nigger, by a black man!" And I didn't wait to hear her gasp or to watch her jump up out of that bed. I ran, I disappeared[.] (Thomas 189)

This scene presents complex commentary on the racial binary created by white American perspective. Piri, although questioning the white supremist ideology that requires the binary, still subscribes to his newly claimed black identity. Yet, in order to have sex with this prostitute, he must *pretend* to be what he in fact is: a black Puerto Rican. Strangely enough, here his mestizo identity gains him access that black men do not have. And once he reveals himself as a black man, he simultaneously traumatizes the prostitute and gains power through the very binary that gives power to whites.

In his article, Sosa-Velasco agrees that by claiming blackness, Piri "[accepts] the gaze of a social system that blackens him" (289). For Sosa-Velasco, "Thomas's

interest is to identify and constitute himself as a mestizo subject" (290). In other words, in terms used in this project, *Down These Mean Streets* documents more than Piri's claim to a counterstance (which for him is black pride), it also documents an allowance to move beyond his proud black identity into a mestizaje consciousness. A combination of Piri's self-proclaimed black identity and his conversation with Gerald give Piri a clear understanding of the great manipulation white American perspective has over identities of people of color, even self-determined counterstances. And with this understanding, Piri is free to seek an identity completely free of this control. Piri's move towards a mestizaje identity actually undoes the hold white supremacy has over him. Specifically, white power depends on terms created by white people and a very clear separation between white people and people of color. Piri gains power once recognizing the embedded white supremacy in the black/white racial binary and recognizing his identity complicates this attempt to categorize. Upon this realization, Piri claims an identity all on his own that dismantles white supremacy by celebrating the blending of the very binary that maintains white power.

Notes and Bibliography

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1963. Print.

Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. "'Puerto Rican Negro': Defining Race in Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*." *MELUS* 29:2 (Summer, 2004): 205-226. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason.* 1965. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. Print.

Lane, James B. "Beating the Barrio: Piri Thomas and *Down These Mean Streets*." *The English Journal* 61:6 (September, 1972): 814-823. Print.

Sanchez, Marta E. "La Malinche at the Intersection: Race and Gender in *Down These Mean Streets*." *PMLA* 113:1 (January, 1998): 117-128. Print.

Santiago, Charles R. Venator. "Race, Space, and the Puerto Rican Citizenship." *Denver University Law Review* 78:4 (2001): 907-920. Print.

Smith, Rogers M. *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History.* New Haven: Yale University, 1997. Print.

Sosa-Velasco, Alfredo J. "Gerald and Thomas: The Subtext within the Text in *Down These Mean Streets*." *Romance Notes* 49:3 (2009): 287-299. Print.

Stavans, Ilan. "Race and Mercy: A Conversation with Piri Thomas." *Massachusetts Review* 37:3 (1995): 344-355. Print.

Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*. 1967. New York: Vintage Books, 1997. Print.

[1] In "'Puerto Rican Negro': Defining Race in Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets,*" Marta Caminero-Santangelo discusses the past tendency to equate race with nationalism specifically noting that "[t]o be 'black,' 'negro,' or 'negroid' (a 'race' identified geographically with the entire continent of Africa) was to have absolutely no part in the origins of a European nation, if indeed it did not imply being of an entirely separate species" (210-211).

[2] In order to explain this notion of liminal, Foucault speaks of the journey of madmen during Medieval times away from major cities, "The madman's voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage. In one sense, it simply develops, across a half-real, half-imaginary geography, the madman's

liminal position on the horizon of medieval concern" (Cite). Read more in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.

[3] Nuyorican is a term used to designate Puerto Ricans born in the mainland U.S., specifically the northeast region or New York. The concept celebrates all ambiguity of this identity which is a concept Thomas learns by the end of *DTMS*. He goes on to help found the Nuyorican Poets Café, a location symbolic of the claiming of this multicultural identity.

[4] While this is true, there is a moment early in the book when Piri contemplates the stressed relationship he has with his father. After imagining several possibilities, he quickly suggests that his skin color might explain the tension. Throughout the book, however, it becomes apparent that Piri's father indeed is affected by racism towards blacks and allows the typical self-hatred associated with double-consciousness to settle on his son who is proof of his blackness.

[5] Thomas speaks about his impression on racism in the U.S. in an interview with Ilan Stavans. See "Race and Mercy: A Conversation with Piri Thomas."

[6] I do not claim that Piri's awareness of race is a marker for how he identifies. On the contrary, we see that several years go by since the first time he is made aware of his blackness to when he claims his blackness.

Conclusion

The histories of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and black Americans are marked by a remarkable lack of control. Africans were brought to America against their free will; lands were taken from both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. America has created a unique type of colonialism in the sense that it has created a system in which the very people they have stolen from and stolen seek acceptance and approval from their violator. This astonishing desire to become American and accepted can be explained by the prevalence of Du Boisian double-consciousness and the pervasive white American perspective that convinces the victims of American colonization to believe they are less than worthy for the very country they either previously possessed or never chose.

Never since the publication of double-consciousness and the widespread awareness and applications of the concept thereafter did a group of people want to create something for themselves that was not under the gaze of white America. And while historical moments like slave rebellions demonstrate anger regarding the control of white Americans over the destinies of ethnic and racial minority groups, never has a group chosen to self-determine identity in favor of the health the identities might bring their communities until the Black Pride and Chicano Movements.

Power to the People demonstrates the urgency the revolutionaries of the 60s and 70s sensed beyond the nonviolent movements that begged for civil rights. At some point, the authors discussed in *Power to the People* realized that access to civil rights would not release white American perspective's control of their minds, consciousnesses, and,

consequently, identities. These activists recognized self-determined identities as a worthy cause that would ultimately bring power back to the people.

Complete Bibliography

Introduction

Acosta, Oscar Zeta. *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*. 1973. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. Print

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 1987. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. Print.

Bruce, Dickson D., Jr. "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 64.2 (1992): 299-309. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* Ed. Brooks Atkinson. New York: Modern Library, 1950. Print.

Goethe, J. W. *Faust*. Trans. C. E. Passage. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965. Print.

Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race.* New York: Henry Holt, 1993. Print.

Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. "Brown Power to Brown People: Radical Ethnic Nationalism, the Black Panther and Latino Radicalism." *In Search of the Black Panther Party:*

New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement. Eds. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

Sanchez, Marta. *"Shakin' Up" Race and Gender: Intercultural Connections in Puetro Rico, African American, and Chicano Narratives and Cultures (1965-1995).* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. Print.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.

Vasconcelos, Jose. *The Cosmic Race: a Bilingual Edition*. Trans. Didier T. Jaen. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Print.

Chapter One

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

_____. *Dark Princess.* 1928. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

Gregg, Robert and Madhavi Kale. "*The Negro* and the *Dark Princess*: Two Legacies of the Universal Races Congress." *Radical History Review* 92 (2005): 133-152. Print.

Harris, Shanette M. "Constructing a Psychological Perspective: The Observer and the Observed in *The Souls of Black Folk*." *The Souls of Black Folk: One Hundred Years Later.* Ed. Dolan Hubbard. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. 218-250. Print.

Kohli, Amor. "But That's Just Mad! Reading the Utopian Impulse in *Dark Princess* and *Black Empire*." *African Identities* 7.2 (2009): 161-175. Print.

Korang, Kwaku. "As I face America: Race and Africanity in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk." W. E. B. Du Bois and Race: Essays Celebrating the Centennial Publication of* The Souls of Black Folk. Eds. Chester J. Fontenot and Mary Alice Morgan with Sarah Gardner. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001. 166-186. Print.

Lahiri, Madhumita. ""World Romance: Genre, Internationalism, and W. E. B. Du Bois." *Callalloo* 33.2 (2010): 537-552. Print.

Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race.* New York: Henry Holt, 1993. Print.

Mullen, Bill V. "Du Bois, Dark *Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International"

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.

Wald, Priscilla. *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form.* Durham: Duke University Press. 1995. Print.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. "Reproducing Racial Globality: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Sexual Politics of Black Nationalism." *Social Text* 19.2 (2001): 15-41. Print.

Chapter 2

Alurista. "Acosta's *Revolt of the Cockroach People*: The Case, the Novel, and History." *Contemporary Chicano Fiction.* Ed. Vernon E. Lattin. Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1986. Print.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* 1987. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999. Print.

Armitage, Susan, Patricia Hart and Yolanda Flores Niemann, eds. *Chicana Leadership: the Frontiers Reader*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print.

Bascom, William. "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives." *The Journal of American Folklore* 78.307 (1965): 3-20. Print.

Baraka, Imamu Amiri. "Black Art." *Black Magic: Sabotage, Target Study, Black Art; Collected Poetry 1961-1967*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969. Print.

_____."The Revolutionary Theatre." *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004. 1960-1963. Print.

Bellafante, Gina. "'60s Prejudice and Capitalism as a Big Blond Metaphor." *The New York Times*. N. pag. Web. 14 June 2009. http://theater.nytimes.com/2007/01/24/theater/reviews/24dutc.html.

Benston, Kimberly W. "*Dutchman*: Theatrical Ghost of a Future Politics." *Political Stages: Plays that Shaped a Century.* Eds. Emily Mann and David Roessel. New York, NY: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002. 133-136. Print.

Bruce-Novoa. "Fear and Loathing on the Buffalo Trail." *MELUS* 6.4 (1979): 39-50. Print.

Carrasquillo, Marci L. "Oscar 'Zeta' Acosta's American Odyssey." *MELUS* 35.1 (2010): 77-97. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Flood, Christopher. *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction.* New York: Garland Publications, Inc., 1996. Print.

Jones, LeRoi. *Dutchman and The Slave*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964. Print.

Kumar, Nita N. "The Logic of Retribution: Amiri Baraka's Dutchman." *African American Review* 37.2/3 (2003): 271-279. Print.

Lindberg, John. "*Dutchman* and *The Slave*: Companions in Revolution." *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 141-147. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* New York: Vintage Books, 1992. Print.

Nelson, Hugh. "LeRoi Jones' *Dutchman*: A Brief Ride on a Doomed Ship." *Educational Theatre Journal* 20 (1968): 53-59. Print.

Peavy, Charles D. "Myth, Magic, and Manhood in LeRoi Jones' *Madheart*." *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 167-173. Print.

Smethurst, James. "The Figure of the *Vato Loco* and the Representation of Ethnicity in the Narratives of Oscar Z. Acosta." *MELUS* 20.2 (1995) 119-132. Print.

Smith, Norman D. "Buffalos and Cockroaches: Acosta's Siege at Aztlan." *Contemporary Chicano Fiction.* Ed. Vernon E. Lattin. Binghampton, NY: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, 1986. Print.

Stavans, Ilan, Ed. *Oscar "Zeta" Acosta: The Uncollected Works.* Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1996. Print.

Tudor, Henry. *Political Myth.* New York: Praeger, 1972. Print.

Williams, Sherley Anne. "The Search for Identity in Baraka's *Dutchman.*" *Imamu Amiri Baraka(LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W. Benston. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978. 135-140. Print.

Chapter 3

Christian, Barbara. "An Angle of Seeing: Motherhood in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*." *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency.* Eds. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey. New York: Routledge, 1994. 95-120. Print.

_____. "Novels for Everyday Use." *Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives Past and Present.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993. 50-104. Print.

_____. *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Collier-Thomas, Bettye and V.P. Franklin, Eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement.* New York: New York University Press, 2001. Print.

Danielson, Susan. "Alice Walker's *Meridian,* Feminism, and the 'Movement.'" *MELUS* 19.3 (1994): 317-330. Print.

Dewey, Janice. "Dona Josefa: Bloodpulse of Transition and Change." *Breaking Boundaries: Latina Writing and Critical Readings*. Eds. Asuncion Horno-Delgado, Eliana Ortega, Nina M. Scott, and Nancy Saporta Sternbach. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989. 39-47. Print.

Downey, Anne M. "'A Broken and Bloody Hoop': The Intertextuality of *Black Elk Speaks* and Alice Walker's *Meridian*." *MELUS* 19.3 (1994): 37-45. Print.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961. Print.

Dubey, Madhu. *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. Print.

Harris, Norman. *Connecting Times: The Sixties in Afro-American Fiction*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.

Harvel, Valeria G. "Afrocentric Humanism and African American Women's Humanizing Activism." *Journal of Black Studies* 40(2010): 1052-1075. Print.

Ikas, Karin Rosa. "Estela Portillo-Trambley: Playright, Fiction Writer, Poet, Actress." *Chicana Ways*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002. Print.

Marcus, Greil. Rev. of *Meridian. Alice Walker: Critical Perspectives and Present.* Eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993. Print.

Portillo, Estela. *Day of the Swallows.* 1971. *Contemporary Chicano Theatre*. Ed. Roberto J. Garza. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976. 205-245. Print.

Stein, Karen F. "Meridian: Alice Walker's Critique of Revolution." *Black American Literature Forum* 20.1/2 (1986): 129-141. Print.

Vowell, Faye Nell. "A MELUS Interview: Estela Portillo-Trambley." *MELUS* 9.4 (1982): 59-66. Print.

Walker, Alice. *Meridian.* 1976. Orlando: Harcourt, 2003. Print.

_____. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983. Print

Chapter 4

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1963. Print.

Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. "'Puerto Rican Negro': Defining Race in Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets*." *MELUS* 29:2 (Summer, 2004): 205-226. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason.* 1965. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. Print.

Lane, James B. "Beating the Barrio: Piri Thomas and *Down These Mean Streets*." *The English Journal* 61:6 (September, 1972): 814-823. Print.

Sanchez, Marta E. "La Malinche at the Intersection: Race and Gender in *Down These Mean Streets*." *PMLA* 113:1 (January, 1998): 117-128. Print.

Santiago, Charles R. Venator. "Race, Space, and the Puerto Rican Citizenship." *Denver University Law Review* 78:4 (2001): 907-920. Print.

Smith, Rogers M. *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History.* New Haven: Yale University, 1997. Print.

Sosa-Velasco, Alfredo J. "Gerald and Thomas: The Subtext within the Text in *Down These Mean Streets*." *Romance Notes* 49:3 (2009): 287-299. Print.

Stavans, Ilan. "Race and Mercy: A Conversation with Piri Thomas." *Massachusetts Review* 37:3 (1995): 344-355. Print.

Thomas, Piri. *Down These Mean Streets*. 1967. New York: Vintage Books, 1997. Print.