

# APA Newsletters

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## NEWSLETTER ON PHILOSOPHY AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

FROM THE EDITORS, JOHN McCLENDON & GEORGE YANCY

### ARTICLES

JOHN H. McCLENDON, III

“The African American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy:  
On the Problem of Historical Interpretation”

GEORGE YANCY

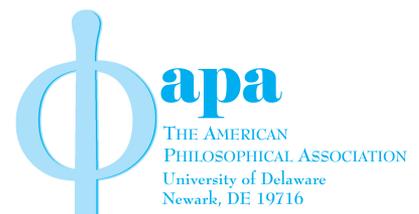
“W.E.B. Du Bois on Whiteness and the Pathology of Black Double Consciousness”

### BOOK REVIEW

George Yancy (ed.): *What White Looks Like: African-American  
Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*

REVIEWED BY AUDREY THOMPSON

### CONTRIBUTORS





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APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy and the Black Experience

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John McClendon & George Yancy, Co-Editors

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## FROM THE EDITORS

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This Fall 2004 issue of our *Newsletter* comes not only at the beginning of a new academic year but also marks a new beginning in the distribution and format of the *Newsletter*. We will now be an online newsletter and available to all members of the APA. We welcome having a wider audience and look forward to your response and contributions. The success of our publication depends on the contributions of many diverse voices and viewpoints. Your submission of articles, book reviews, class syllabi, teaching aids, bibliographies, and announcements are most welcome. As we embark on both a new year and format, we also have a new chair of our Committee on Blacks in Philosophy. Frank Kirkland of Hunter College is now on board and we welcome him as we go forward on the journey to advance the understanding and appreciation for the philosophy of the Black experience.

This issue has two articles and one book review essay covering a wide range of topics within the philosophy of the Black experience. John H. McClendon's essay, "The African American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy: On the Problem of Historical Interpretation," addresses the question of the how the history of African American philosophy is more than an exercise restricted to nonacademic philosophers engaging in philosophical deliberation. The empirical facts of the case point to a history where academic (professional) philosophers have tremendously contributed to the progression of African-American philosophy. McClendon contends there is a trend among contemporary scholars of African American philosophy to neglect this vital tradition of academic African American philosophers. George Yancy's essay, "W.E.B. Du Bois on Whiteness and the Pathology of Black Double Consciousness," explores W.E.B. Du Bois' conception of whiteness. The author maintains that Du Bois's conception of whiteness is not grounded within racial essentialism, but structured along an axis of imperialistic hegemony and social, interpersonal hierarchies based upon historical myths and norms. Yancy improvises his work on the fictional character Pecola Breedlove within the framework of Du Bois's "double consciousness" construct. Audrey Thompson, professor of philosophy of education and gender studies in the Department of Education, Culture, and Society and an adjunct professor in Ethnic Studies at the University of Utah, provides a critical and comprehensive review of *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, edited by George Yancy. She brings her own critical and historical knowledge of whiteness studies to complement the many significant observations and theorizations made in *What White Looks Like*, while providing a positive assessment of the book's value and uniqueness within the context of the panopoly of

whiteness studies literature. Of course, Thompson also insightfully interrogates the text, suggesting ways in which the text may have been philosophically and historically enhanced.

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## ARTICLES

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### ***The African American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy: On the Problem of Historical Interpretation***

**John H. McClendon, III**

*Bates College*

Although presently we are witnessing the production of an array of books on African- American philosophy, to date there have not been any texts devoted strictly to the history of African- American philosophy. I think that solid texts in the history of African- American philosophy can emerge only when certain core questions are meaningfully and adequately addressed as matters of theory and method in the historical account of philosophy. Now let us systematically interrogate this matter of the history of philosophy. I submit the following questions only as a brief sampling of possible interrogations. The first set of questions is empirical in nature and the second is more conceptual in tone.

In the first set we have: Who are the African-American thinkers who have grappled with philosophical questions and problems over the course of history of the African-American philosophy? What type of training/education did they receive? What were the venues (institutional settings) available for their work? Were such outlets academic or nonacademic in makeup or did both come into play? Which mattered most in terms of philosophical work (teaching or research) for the earlier generations of African- American philosophers? What audience did they seek to address? And what means were at their disposal for reaching an audience? What subfields in philosophy did they explore and what schools of thought captured their allegiance? It is apparent that all of the above questions require empirical research for us to obtain answers.

The second set includes: Does theory demand that the history of philosophy pose perennial questions—such as the mind/body problem—and of which we witness changes only in form, while what remains as consistently true is an essential content that lasts over time? Is historical method a matter of knowing how to demarcate the past from the present via some method of periodization? How does one weigh the philosophical merit of ideas or issues in philosophy's history

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from more general notions concerning intellectual history in the broader nonphilosophical sense of the term? In other words, what are (properly) considered to be philosophical questions, issues, and problems? Do we need the past as a yardstick for measuring the current level of philosophical attainment? Obviously this second set of interrogations involves conceptual examination in contrast to empirical investigation for the former set.

We can readily see that these theoretical and methodological problems (affixed to the history of African-American philosophy) could possibly be one of the causes for the contemporary absence of texts on the topic. The lack of texts nevertheless does not mean that important preconceptions about the history of African-American philosophy are completely absent from books dealing with more general aspects of African-American philosophy. Fundamental notions about the nature of African-American philosophy often implicitly contain preconceived notions about its historical context and character. Certain anthologies of African-American philosophy, especially those designed to function as introductory texts, often attempt to address the historical context of various philosophical problems. And, subsequently, these problems are critical in shaping the contours of the study of African-American philosophy. For those teachers and students with little or no knowledge of the history of African-American philosophy, these anthologies on many occasions take on a canonical veneer and they often shape basic conceptions about the very definition and interpretation of African-American philosophy.

Our fundamental notions about the nature of African-American philosophy are grounded in the definitions and interpretations adjoined to the practice of philosophizing. Moreover, they direct us toward metaphilosophical deliberation and the unending question of ‘what is philosophy?’ And when we ask the question ‘what is philosophy’ we are actually approaching our more broadly conceived perspectives regarding philosophical inquiry. Two key aspects of metaphilosophy are the formulations and elaborations we make about the tasks of philosophical definition and interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

Most philosophers presume that philosophical inquiry—definition and interpretation—are essentially matters that are more conceptual—rather than empirical—in nature. I think that, for the most part, this presumption holds true. For example, when philosophers ask the question of “what counts as belonging in the world?” or “what constitutes the furniture of the universe” it is generally taken as given that an empirical accounting of all the items of the universe is not the intent. Instead, philosophers are governed by the conceptual imperative to grapple with the ontological task of outlining what it means to exist in the world. An explanation of the nature of reality becomes paramount and an empirical description of various forms of matter in their lawful motion, for example, takes a backseat to philosophical perspectives grounded in abstract reflection and consideration.

Ontological ordering establishes the primacy of some entities over others and, consequently, descriptive accounts—however exhaustive—are validly deemed (if not unnecessary) at least serving as a minimal requirement to the process. In fact, some very significant phenomena from the standpoint of scientific (empirical) inquiry may be completely overlooked in a philosophical account about the nature of reality. The empirical reality of molecules, atoms, and quarks, while crucial in the physicist account of the world, subsequently may not be a matter of concern for philosophical discussion about the nature of being and reality.

The rule of thumb about the essentially conceptual nature of philosophical inquiry and interpretation sets philosophy apart from the physical, natural, and even the social and behavioral sciences. This is because empirical investigation is crucial to the very notion of scientific research and this continues regardless of the particular field of science. With that said, we cannot conclude that philosophy is completely bereft of an empirical dimension. Although definition and interpretation are paradigmatically conceptual, we observe that from the standpoint of cognitive progression they are both grounded on the manner in which we offer description(s), and we recognize that description of phenomena is categorically an empirical exercise. An ontological ordering that is consistent with the findings of science must take into account the restrictions attached to the results of empirical investigation. In addition, the predisposition to ground our philosophic definitions and interpretations within the realm of the possibility of empirical boundaries is a helpful safeguard against rampant idealist speculation and arid metaphysical contemplation. (Undoubtedly, this is one of Kant’s most salient points in his *The Critique of Pure Reason*.)

We must not overlook the fact that even some subfields of philosophy are innately connected to empirical inquiry. The history of philosophy is both a matter of philosophy and history and where beforehand we acknowledged that philosophy is quintessentially conceptual; we must also be cognizant that history, in turn, is preeminently an empirical undertaking. The history of philosophy (more a subfield of philosophy than history per se) nonetheless must consider the facts of the case, i.e., the empirical reality which our philosophical interpretation depends upon and derives from.

The historical interpretation of African-American philosophy must be grounded in a factual framework and its affixed descriptive accounts. I contend that the empirical side adjoined to philosophy’s history has monumentally significant implications for conceptualizing African-American philosophy. The set of empirical questions (outlined above) concerning the history of African-American philosophy amplifies this point. Moreover, all talk about what constitutes an African-American philosophy is decidedly intertwined with how we understand what makes up the history (formation) of African-American philosophy.

The interpretation of the history of African-American philosophy has specific methodological problems attached to it that differ from how we often tackle philosophical issues per se via conceptualization. Namely we are keenly concerned with how framing certain questions preclude what amounts to the historical mode of thinking; wherein philosophical questions are viewed in abstraction from the historical consideration of philosophical traditions. This method of ahistorical framing gains legitimacy precisely due to the epistemological task of the logical reproduction of the object in thought. Certain historical aspects of a given problem are deleted in view of accenting what is considered the essence of a given problem. The logical reproduction of the object stands as the opposite pole to chronological reproduction, for chronological reproduction, which is the substance behind the exercise of the historical method, is focused on the process (or the formation) of given entity.

So we observe that a philosophical interest in the nature of whiteness need not involve referencing or reflecting on previous traditions and other historical currents among African-American philosophers. Of course, there are historical prototypes such as W. E. B. Du Bois’s “The Souls of White Folk” (which George Yancy addresses in this issue of the *Newsletter*) that have contemporary relevance.<sup>2</sup> Yet the previous

encounters with this problem are not necessary for our own philosophical perspectives and judgments on whiteness today. Although we can take prior explorations into account, we are not faced with an imperative to do so. Put simply contemporary inquiry into the issue of whiteness can legitimately take place and be removed from any concerns about the historical context for and traditions in African-American philosophy.

Just as a mathematician need not know the history of mathematical thought in order to solve specific problems in the disciplines of geometry or calculus, so it is that the contemporary philosopher is not obligated to know the history of African-American philosophical thought on the question of whiteness to obtain an adequate answer to the problem of whiteness and other such philosophical issues. In this sense philosophical inquiry is very much an “ahistorical” encounter. Here my use of the concept of ‘ahistorical’ does not mean that there is no need for any reference to history as such, only that the *history of African-American philosophy* (antecedent philosophical tradition) is not operative in our deliberations.<sup>3</sup>

Although there are valid grounds for justifying the pursuit of philosophical investigation sans historical context and traditions, the notion of a *general conception* of an African-American philosophy with its ancillary meaning(s) and import cannot be established without basic presumptions about the history of African-American philosophy i.e., its process of motion, change, and development. Here is where the empirical aspect of the history of African-American philosophy proves to be decisive. If one presupposes that a particular approach to a philosophical issue is novel in some way then that assumption must be established on the basis of historical facts. What may be thought of as novel could actually be no more than the replication of an earlier idea or even a rehash of a rather long tradition of philosophic thinking. There is always the possibility that the original idea or previous tradition might have already have proven to be misguided or off the mark. Hence, the replication and rehashing of old ideas could amount to falling into a trap that had already been uncovered and avoided by preceding philosophers. Also, having some knowledge about previous philosophical traditions can help to inform our contemporary research and provide insight into the complexities we are facing today.

A case where knowledge of the history of a determinate philosophic approach would have radically improved the contemporary examination of European thought—by an African American thinker—is Marimba Ani’s claims in *Yurugu*.<sup>4</sup> Ani offers a critique of European philosophy and particularly Plato and Greek philosophy. Her major thesis is that European and African philosophies are fundamentally opposed and are, in fact, basically antagonistic. At the root of European racism, chauvinism, and white supremacy, Ani claims, is the classical Greek tradition in European philosophy of which Plato is the chief progenitor. Today, we know that Ani is a leading proponent of Afrocentricity and her text has gained canonical authority among many in the Afrocentricity camp. The publisher of her text has even indicated it is his top selling book. So a number of people are influenced by Ani’s thesis about the antithetical nature of European and African thought and how it originates in Greek philosophy and ancient African philosophy.<sup>5</sup> This thesis quite evidently rests on a preconception about the history of both European and African philosophy.

However, in contrast to Ani, the Guyanese born philosopher George G. M. James presents a historical account of Greek philosophy that concludes that it is African (Egyptian) in its essential make up. Far from there being an opposition between Greek and African philosophy, Greek philosophy reduces to plagiarized African philosophy. James’s controversial

magnum opus *Stolen Legacy*, published in 1954, has captured the attention of a number of Afrocentric advocates, including the historian of Africa and African peoples Yosef ben-Jochannan, who in turn pronounces strongly on behalf of James. Also the pioneering historian of ancient Africa, William Leo Hansberry of Howard University, thought so highly of James’s contribution to the history of ancient philosophy that he wrote a favorable book review of it in 1955 for the *Journal of Negro Education*.<sup>6</sup>

James is one of those academic philosophers whose career emerges within the historically Black college and university (HBCU) institutional network. He taught at several historically Black colleges and universities and this also includes a position as Professor of Logic and Greek at Livingston College, Professor of Languages and Philosophy at Johnson C. Smith, Professor of Mathematics and Dean of Men at Georgia State College, Professor of Social Science at Alabama A. & M. College and as Professor of Social Sciences at Arkansas A. M. & N. at Pine Bluff. He was on faculty at the latter institution when he wrote *The Stolen Legacy*.<sup>7</sup>

James’s thesis amounts to the claim that what is traditionally considered to be Greek philosophy is no more than African philosophy. Greek philosophy is actually philosophy which was stolen from Africa. One can readily see that James’s position is diametrically the opposite of Ani’s. However, he is not the first in the history of African-American philosophy to write and publish on this topic. *The Stolen Legacy* stands as the second text written by an African-American philosopher that deals with the history of Greek philosophy. Rufus Perry’s *Sketch of Philosophical Systems*, published in 1889, was the first book by an African American philosopher on Greek philosophy.<sup>8</sup> (More will be said about Perry later.) What is most significant here is that there are sources, by African-American philosophers, to which a serious contemporary scholar can turn to gauge the history of Greek philosophy. Furthermore, given Ani’s commitment to the African-centered approach, it would seem that, if she did not know about Perry’s seminal book, she could have drawn on James when formulating her own position.

Nevertheless, Ani only briefly cites James and fails to address the basic point of contention between her work and James’s study. Unlike the aforementioned ben-Jochannan and Hansberry, who as historians grasp the import of James’s interpretation, Ani makes little use of James’s work as historian of Greek philosophy. Ironically, Mary Lefkowitz and Stephen Howe, both of whom are leading critics of Afrocentricity, devote more attention to James’s text than does Ani, a fellow Afrocentric thinker.<sup>9</sup>

The reason they challenge James’s position is, in part, that their own stance is quite akin to Ani’s premise about the vast distinction between Greek and Egyptian philosophy. In their opinion, if one assumes no connection between Greece and Egypt (Kemet) then these two histories of philosophy are fundamentally different and the autonomy of Greek development is preserved. Yet if James is correct, then not only does the view about Greek philosophy’s autonomy from Africa—as a working hypothesis—stand as false but also we discover that the Ani thesis about mutual antagonism is equally false in light of James’s presupposition about there being a common heritage. Whatever the merits of James’s history, and I think there many demerits, Ani’s arguments would have been seriously challenged if she had offered a detailed response to James’s historical interpretation.<sup>10</sup>

### **Empirical Description, Philosophical Definition and Historical Interpretation**

Any and all basic presumptions about African-American philosophy's history should be grounded in a solid comprehension of this history, one which is based on empirically acquired facts. When it comes to our assumptions about the history of African-American philosophy, the use of imagination, creative thinking, and speculation may have a place in our examination; however, they all must be anchored in sound empirical investigation of the evidence. This is why description is foundational in the cognitive process and hence anchors definition and interpretation in the history of philosophy. Description is a composite rendering that is only possible given the factual groundings of observation. Hence, inadequate and incorrect descriptions, linked to a historical account, can result only in weak definitions and misguided interpretations.

Unfortunately, some scholars of African-American philosophy have a view of its history which is not founded on the rigorous empirical assessment of actual historical evidence. Their presumptive context for the very idea of what constitutes African-American philosophy is often grounded in implied and preconceived notions about its history, rather than in the results of explicit research projects directed specifically at history. One prevailing and dominant preconception is that the history of African-American philosophy is essentially one that derives from nonacademic (rather than with academic) intellectuals. In fact, nonphilosophers are often given priority over those actually trained as philosophers. This preconception is especially evident in two recent anthologies that are designed to function as introductory text in African-American philosophy.

By nonacademic sources or basis, I do not mean nonscholarly or even nonphilosophical work, rather I mean to point to philosophical works and philosophers who are not in or connected to the academy. Nonacademic philosophers are people who were not formally trained in philosophy or who do not teach and do philosophical research at academic institutions. Some very important philosophical works by nonacademic thinkers (from Maria Stewart and Martin Delaney to more contemporary thinkers such as Malcolm X) form a crucial part of the history of African-American philosophy. Yet this does not preclude that African American academic philosophers have also played a critical role in the history of African-American philosophy.

But on reading certain recent anthologies on African-American philosophy, particularly those that purport to be comprehensive introductory texts on the subject, African American academic philosophers—especially on or before the year 1965—are conspicuously absent. The year 1965 is employed as a marker for three reasons. First, most philosophers who earned their doctorates in philosophy or who taught philosophy before or beginning in that year are more than likely no longer formally in the academy; we have the example of Dr. Joyce Mitchell Cooke—the first African American woman to obtain a doctorate in philosophy (from Yale in 1965)—is now retired from the academy. Second, there some academic philosophers still active in the academy that earned their doctorates shortly after 1965 and are a part of the contemporary scene of African American philosophers. Third, Malcolm X remains a prominent nonacademic philosopher and his death in 1965 mark a significant turning point in the emergence of the distinctive subfield of the Philosophy of the Black Experience. So we have a scenario where the African American philosophers in the academy (pre-1965), with the possible exception of Alain Locke, has virtually disappeared from view in general accounts of African-American philosophy.

For example, we have James Montmarquet and William Hardy's text *Reflections: An Anthology of African-American Philosophy*, published by Wadsworth Publishing (2000), and Tommy Lott's, *African-American Philosophy: Selected Readings* (Prentice Hall 2001), which accentuate how the historical character of African-American philosophy is primarily non-academic. They do so by including nonacademic African American philosophers in the historical (noncontemporary) parts of their respective books and simultaneously they exclude academic African-American philosophers. Not a single African-American philosopher who was an active academic philosopher before 1965 is presented in either text. The African American philosophers who are included are all contemporary philosophers (post-1965 intellectuals). As a result, we are left with the impression that the advent of academic-oriented African-American philosophers is more a recent matter tied to contemporary concerns, not something emerging from the concrete historical development of African-American philosophy. Since these works are not texts specifically on the history of African-American philosophy, then all of the assumptions concerning the history of African-American philosophy are implicit, thus resting primarily as presuppositions that are embedded in the very organization of the texts and reflecting the authors' underlying conception of African-American philosophy. Each book is conceived as a comprehensive introductory text on African-American philosophy that includes both historical and contemporary dimensions of the subject.

Now, given the racist character of academic philosophy over the last two centuries, there is certainly justification for calling attention to the nonacademic sources of African-American philosophy. Undoubtedly, the full measure of the historical sweep of African-American philosophical work cannot be confined to just academic philosophers and philosophy. After all, there were few opportunities for African Americans to enter the academy. This was first due to slavery and then to segregation and racial quotas. However, the very exclusion of Black people, for the most part, from the academy does not in any way point to the lack of philosophical traditions among African Americans. Given the racist nature of the white academy in this country, the alternatives that African Americans pursued in their quest for carrying out philosophical work involved academic as well as nonacademic avenues.

So when we see that the Montmarquet and Hardy text includes Martin R. Delaney, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth, and the Lott book has Maria Stewart, Mary Ann Shadd Carey, Edward Blyden, and Booker T. Washington, among others, there are reasonable and considerable grounds for their inclusion in the respective works. But what happened to the academic philosophers of the nineteenth century and even the twentieth century before 1965?

Lott, unlike Montmarquet and Hardy, refreshingly has a section on Marxism. Yet Lott gives a nod to Cornel West, who is openly anti-Marxist-Leninist, and leaves out Eugene C. Holmes. You may wonder, "who was Eugene C. Holmes?" Before Angela Davis came onto the academic scene, Holmes, for many years, was the only African American Marxist philosopher in the academy. Lott's section entitled "Marxism and Social Progress" could have drawn from the numerous articles Holmes published in this area. Of particular note is a paper Holmes gave before the APA titled, "A General Theory of the Freedom Cause of Negro People." Holmes's various essays on African-American social/political philosophy, the aesthetics of Black art, Black education, biographical sketches on Locke, Langston Hughes, and Du Bois, as well as his works in the materialist conception in the philosophy of science,

could have offered invaluable insights into the philosophy of Marxism via the Black experience. Moreover, not only are there at least two published bibliographies of Holmes's publications, but as recently as Yancy's interview with Albert Mosely in *17 Conversations* (in 1998), Mosely talks explicitly about Holmes as the Marxist philosopher at Howard University.<sup>11</sup>

In my estimation, there is real danger with the historical interpretation of African-American philosophers and philosophy where the prevailing assumption is that nonacademic philosophy remained the limit of African-American philosophical contributions. The presupposition that somehow only during our contemporary time do we find that African American philosophers make real (first) strides in academic philosophy is patently ahistorical and grossly inaccurate. In this sense, the aforementioned anthologies are considerably lacking in the historical depth ancillary with the African American philosophical tradition in academic philosophy as was demonstrated in (and especially with the 1983 first edition of) Leonard Harris's *Philosophy Born of Struggle*.<sup>12</sup>

All the available options were not restricted to working outside of academia. African-American philosophers exercised the options to leave the country and undertake the study of philosophy elsewhere. Some even taught philosophy at institutions outside of the country. Moreover, the white academy was not the sole option for working in academic philosophy within this country. Most academic African-American philosophers studied and taught at historically Black colleges and universities.

To ignore the rich history of Black educational institutions in this country is to neglect the essential role and scholarly progress of African American academic philosophers. Historically, Black colleges and universities were not only the primary academic setting where African-American philosophers conducted their work, but also they additionally gave formal recognition to Black achievements in the field of philosophy. This was of particular import since white educational institutions virtually fail to hire Black philosophers, let alone publicly acknowledge African-American philosophical accomplishments. It wasn't until the 1940s that Cornelius Golightly became the first African American philosopher to teach at a predominantly white college (after Patrick Healy) when he joined the faculty at Olivet College. Golightly was hired after the Rosenwald Fund offered an incentive for Olivet to hire Black faculty. He later became Dean of Liberal Arts at Wayne State University.<sup>13</sup>

One shining example of how Black educational institutions celebrated Black philosophers involves the case of Rufus Lewis Perry. Perry was a former slave who graduated from Kalamazoo Seminary in 1861, where he studied both philosophy and theology and eventually became an ordained minister. Perry's role as a philosopher was intimately linked to his position as a Baptist clergyman. Reverend Perry served on various Baptist educational boards, and he was also active in journalistic endeavors with the Church. An outstanding orator, Perry was widely sought after as a public lecturer. Furthermore, it was his work as a journalist and a lecturer that provided the means for him to teach philosophy in the Black community to both academic and nonacademic audiences. In many ways, he was a precursor to today's Black public intellectual. Consequently, we discover that due to his efforts as a public intellectual in the field of philosophy, Perry received the honorary Doctorate of Philosophy in 1887 from the State University of Louisville, Kentucky. In the words of William Simmons, the president of the Baptist affiliated school for Black people, Perry was honored for "his many valuable attainments in letters and deep philosophical research."<sup>14</sup>

Shortly thereafter, in 1889, Perry published a book, *Sketch of Philosophical Systems*. With this particular work Perry became the first African American to author a book on the history of philosophy. Four years later he published his book, *The Cushite, or the Descendants of Ham as Found in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Writings of Ancient Historians and Poets from Noah to the Christian Era*, which traced the ancient history of Black people.<sup>15</sup> Given Perry's work in the history of philosophy and the ancient history of African people he (along with George G. M. James) would undoubtedly be a good source for conceptualizing an approach to the problem of historical interpretation in philosophy.

Unfortunately, while Perry gained recognition from his contemporaries, he and many others like him have not been afforded requisite historical notice from today's scholars of African-American philosophy. Alain Locke remains the only African American academic philosophy to receive substantial scholarly attention. Perhaps the reason why Alain Locke has not fallen upon this fate and instead has garnered the lion share of scholarly attention is due to the fact that Howard University is considered by many as the most influential school among Black higher education institutions. Additionally, Alain Locke was the first Black person to become a Rhodes Scholar. Along with the formation of the scholarly association called the Alain Locke Society, a considerable number of contemporary philosophers have carried out research on Locke.

The list includes Johnny Washington's *Alain Locke and Philosophy: A Quest for Cultural Pluralism* (1986) and his *A Journey into the Philosophy of Alain Locke* (1994), Blanche Radford-Curry, "Values, Imperatives, and the Imperative of Democratic Values" (1999); Leonard Harris's "Identity: Alain Locke Atavism" (1988); *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (1989); and *The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke* (1999). We also have the late Ernest Mason's doctoral dissertation, *Alain Locke's Philosophy of Value: An Introduction* (1975) and his article *Alain Locke's Philosophy of Value* (1982), Tommy Lee Lott's "*Nationalism and Pluralism in Alain Locke's Social Philosophy*" (1994); Clevis Headley's "Instrumental Relativism and Cultivated Pluralism" (1999); and, more recently, Rudolph Alexander Kofi Cain has published his book *Alain Leroy Locke: Race, Culture, and the Education of African American Adults* (2003), a book on the educational philosophy of Locke.

However, besides Alain Locke's presence at Howard University, there is a long roll of academic philosophers who were either students or on the philosophy faculty at the "Capstone" of Black higher education. Outstanding philosophers from varying philosophical schools of thought at Howard were as diverse as Lewis Baxter Moore, Forest Oran Wiggins, Eugene C. Holmes, Winston K. McAlister, Joyce Mitchell Cooke, William R. Jones, and William Banner, to name only a few. Yet if all of the articles (that were ever written by African American philosophers) on all of the above philosophers at Howard were combined into one bibliography, it would not even amount to one quarter of the aforesaid cited list of publications on Locke. For example, Eugene C. Holmes, who followed Locke as the Chair of the Philosophy Department at Howard University, has garnered only two African American philosophers to publish three works devoted to examining his contributions.<sup>16</sup>

More starkly, Winston K. McAlister, the next in the line after Holmes as Chair, goes virtually without notice. With the exception of William Banner's memorial tribute in the Proceedings of the APA, there are no articles from African-American philosophers pertaining to McAlister and his work.<sup>17</sup>

Yet McAlister is one of the few African American philosophers to specialize in philosophical psychology. In the history of African-American philosophy, not since Gilbert Haven Jones (in manner similar to William James) who paved the way in both philosophy and psychology, did another philosopher emerge before McAlister to work in this subfield of philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

The historically black colleges and universities formed the intellectual foundation for the sustained development of the academic African-American philosophers. The relationship of African American philosophers to Black schools was reciprocal in character, the institutions nurtured the development of philosophical work, and a number of these philosophers were more than just faculty members at Black institutions. Some philosophers such as Locke, Holmes, McAlister, and Banner at Howard and Samuel W. Williams at Morehouse, Francis Thomas at Central State in Ohio, and Richard McKinney at Morgan State were chairs of their respective departments. In that capacity they carried out vital administrative duties, advised students, majors and nonmajors, and found ways for the department and the institution to survive. Thomas at Central State even assumed duties as both chair and Director of Audio Visuals.

Others became presidents at historically black colleges and universities, while all along functioning as active teaching members of the philosophy faculty and some, even serving as ministers in churches within the Black community. The significance of this three-fold attack with regard to philosophy is that the administrative goals of curriculum development were linked to teaching in both an academic and nonacademic setting of the Black community. African-American philosophers not only taught philosophy but also trained leaders to serve the Black community.

Before assuming the chair at Morgan State, Richard McKinney was the President of Storer College in West Virginia and thus became the first African American to do so. Before receiving his doctorate from Yale (1942), he did undergraduate work at Morehouse and graduate study at Andover Newton Theological School, where he earned a B.D. degree (1934) and the S.T.M. (1937) specializing in the philosophy of religion. A Baptist minister and scholar in the philosophy and history of religion, McKinney most recent work is *Mordecai—The Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson* (1998).<sup>19</sup>

Marquis Lafayette Harris was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in philosophy from The Ohio State University (1933). During the course of his doctoral work, he was also engaged as the minister of a Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbus. Highly trained in physics, his doctoral dissertation (*Some Conceptions of God in the Gifford Lectures, 1927-1929*) addressed questions about the Theory of Relativity. Harris was preceded by Robert T. Browne as an African American philosopher of science doing work on Einstein's theory. Brown's 1919 book, *The Mystery of Space*, and Harris's dissertation share a common dialectical idealist approach. Eventually, Harris not only taught philosophy of science, he also served as President of Philander Smith from 1938 to 1961.<sup>20</sup>

And at Wilberforce we find that Gilbert Haven Jones and Charles Leander Hill both held the post of president and philosophy professor. Jones, the third African American to earn a doctorate in philosophy, received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Jena (1909). After a number of administrative positions at several historically black colleges and universities, Jones held the chair in the Philosophy Department at St. Augustine College, and later he assumed the Presidency of Wilberforce University in 1924.<sup>21</sup>

Charles Leander Hill, who followed Marquis Harris in earning a doctorate in philosophy from the Ohio State University (1938), was president at Wilberforce from 1947 to 1956. As for the history of philosophy, Hill was the first African American to publish a history of Western philosophy during the modern era. His translation of William Anthony Amo's work on apathy into English was the very first such translation, and Amo was also the first African to gain a doctorate in philosophy. Both Jones and Hill were ministers and leaders in the A. M. E. Church. Hill was a strong advocate of not only civil rights but also civil liberties, the struggle for world peace, and ending nuclear weapons.<sup>22</sup>

At Morehouse, Samuel W. Williams, who was chair of philosophy and religion from 1947 to 1870, taught philosophy to a young Martin Luther King. King subsequently received a 'C' during the first semester in Introduction to philosophy from Williams. And also mentoring King at Morehouse was George Kelsey who taught philosophy and theology there. Kelsey (1946 Yale doctorate) was at Morehouse from 1938 to 1945. In contrast, while Williams gave King a 'C' in introduction to philosophy, Kelsey gave King his only 'A' at Morehouse in theology.<sup>23</sup>

Williams and Kelsey were mentors to King and helped him to cultivate his understanding of the civil rights movement and the philosophy of nonviolence. In addition to them, we have William Stuart Nelson of Howard University whose counsel on the philosophy of nonviolence for King came directly in the very conditions of civil rights campaigns. In addition to meeting Gandhi and starting the Gandhi Memorial Series, Nelson was the first person to teach a formal course in the philosophy of nonviolence on a college campus. It was also Nelson who started the academic journal, *The Journal of Religious Thought*.<sup>24</sup> What is most evident is that the African American academic philosophers adjoined to the historically black colleges and universities were not ivory tower intellectuals but rather people engaged in social change initiatives and as well as bringing philosophy to the broader African-American community. An African-American philosophy reader designed to present an introduction to the field would be hard pressed to think it has covered the bases, from the standpoint of history, and leave out not just some but all of the above. And the above list leaves out so many other African American academic philosophers with the Ph.D. The names of Marc Moreland, John Milton Smith, Francis Hammon, Albert Dunham, Roy Morrison, Berkley Eddins, and Broadus Butler have not been afforded treatment in articles or books exclusively devoted to them.

Even before the Black institutions were viable alternatives to following the course of academic philosophy, a few African Americans boldly departed from this country to engage in academic philosophy. We discover, for example, that antebellum philosophers such as Alexander Crummell and Patrick Francis Healy left the United States to gain a higher education in philosophy. Crummell, an 1853 graduate of Cambridge University, studied with the Cambridge Platonist, William Whewell. Furthermore, Crummell's teaching career in philosophy was also outside of the United States. Crummell taught philosophy in Liberia, where he was a Professor of Mental and Moral Science. After his return to this country, he advanced the institutional development of the African American academic life. For Crummell, the crowning intellectual achievement was perhaps his founding of the American Negro Academy in March of 1897. This first attempt at founding a national Black think tank included scholars of the caliber of W. E. B. Du Bois and artists of the stature of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the esteem poet from Dayton, Ohio.<sup>25</sup>

Although Crummell formally pursued the study of philosophy, Patrick Francis Healy progressed even further along this path and became the first African American to earn a doctorate in philosophy. Like Crummell before him, he left this country and received his terminal degree from the University of Louvain in 1865. Healy taught philosophy at both Holy Cross College and Georgetown University. He later became the President of Georgetown in 1874, making him the first African American to head a white higher education institution.<sup>26</sup>

Given the legacy of slavery, it should be no surprise that some of the most powerful philosophical treatise were nonacademic tracts against slavery. The examples of Frederick Douglass, Martin Delaney, David Walker, Sojourner Truth, and Maria Stewart in the nineteenth century bring into bold relief the great degree of philosophical richness, complexity, and sophistication via the African American intellectual traditions that originated outside of the academy. Slavery, nevertheless, also had its direct mark on African-American academic philosophers.

The first two African Americans to earn doctorates in philosophy were born in slavery. Healy, the son of a slaveholder and slave mistress, was given his freedom and sent to Massachusetts for a formal education, where he gained an undergraduate degree from Holy Cross in 1850. Healy taught at three higher educational institutions, St. Joseph's College, Holy Cross, and Georgetown. So fair in complexion, he passed for white and therefore during his tenure as President of Georgetown, he had the dubious distinction to be the first African American (1874) to hold such a position precisely when Georgetown did not admit African-American students into the student body.<sup>27</sup>

Our second African American to covet the Ph.D. in philosophy was Thomas Nelson Baker. Born only five years before Healy got his doctorate and seven years after Crummell graduated from Cambridge, Baker received his doctorate from Yale in 1903. Baker was 33 years old when he received his first degree from Boston University and ten years later he earned his terminal degree. Prior to his doctorate, Baker obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from Yale. Born on a slave plantation in Eastville Virginia, his formal education included studying at Hampton Institute, Mt. Hermon in Northfield, Massachusetts, as well as Yale. Both men were ordained ministers, as well as, academic philosophers; Healy was a Catholic priest and Baker was a Congregational minister.<sup>28</sup>

Baker's doctorate from Yale came some thirty years after Edward Alexander Bouchet received his Ph.D. from the same institution. He was not a philosopher but rather a physicist. After earning his undergraduate degree from Yale in 1874, he coveted the doctorate in 1876. Not only did Bouchet earn his doctorate in just two years, he was the sixth person in this country to get a doctorate in physics and the first African American to get the Ph.D. from any institution in the US. He was selected as a member of Phi Beta Kappa in 1884, and became the second Black person admitted into this academic honor society.<sup>29</sup>

The first Black member of Phi Beta Kappa was George Washington Henderson of the University of Vermont. He was inducted in 1877, which was two years before his school mate John Dewey. Additionally, Henderson and Dewey belonged to the Delta Psi fraternity. Henderson was also the head of his class and presented a commencement address in 1877 entitled "The Economy of Moral Forces in History." Henderson's path from his classical education was toward theology and philosophy of religion. And previous to Thomas Nelson Baker, he received the Bachelor of Divinity from Yale. He eventually

ended his teaching career at Wilberforce University as a Professor of Classics and Theology, where he taught theology and classical languages from 1909 to 1932.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to note that academic philosophy, at this time, was not confined to those exclusively holding the terminal degree in philosophy. African-American academic philosophers without the doctorate in philosophy, as Crummell did before them, taught philosophy within the academy. The key here is that a strong classical education served as the basis to continue as an academic in philosophy. John H. Burrus, who in 1883 became the President of Alcorn A&M, was a Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy. He held an M.A. from Fisk (1879), and he was also qualified to teach Constitutional history, having passed the Tennessee bar examination in 1881.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph C. Price was another Black college president that undertook doing philosophy based on training in classics. A graduate of Lincoln University (PA), he was the valedictorian of his 1879 class, where he majored in Classics. Price also completed a degree in theology two years later. He was the Founder and President of Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina, and he published philosophical essays including his article, "The Value of Soul" in 1895.<sup>32</sup>

Another one of Lincoln University's graduates, and as well as a prior valedictorian (the class of 1868), was William Decker Johnson. Johnson served as the Secretary of Education of the AME Church. He lectured widely and one of his topics was precisely on the subject of "Philosophy." Johnson's 1893 address before the Scientific and Literary Institute of the Georgia Conferences in Bethel A. M. E. Church, Atlanta, Georgia, was later published in 1895. Not only did he take up the topics of the definition of philosophy, the philosophical method, and the field of philosophy, but he also discussed how philosophy related to the plight of African Americans.<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Richard T. Greener, he became a Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of South Carolina in 1873. How could this bastion of segregation in the 1950s and 1960s have a Black person teaching philosophy? Well, the Reconstruction Period resulted in Black enrollment and employment and white flight in its wake. USC became a traditionally white school that had a predominantly African American student body. Three years earlier, Greener had graduated from Harvard, becoming the first Black person to do so. In addition to teaching philosophy at the University of South Carolina, he was a librarian and had teaching duties in the Departments of Mathematics, Latin and Greek, as well as in Constitutional History. Later in 1875, Greener became the first African American to become a member of the American Philological Association.<sup>34</sup> Before the Ph.D. in philosophy became the hallmark of academic philosophy, classical education was the benchmark and Greener's position at USC is not the only testimony that lends support to this fact.

Another scholar was Lewis Baxter Moore, a pioneer African American academic philosopher who held his doctorate in classics. In 1896, the same year as the infamous *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision, Lewis Baxter Moore became the first African American to earn his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and his doctoral dissertation was entitled *The Stage in Sophocles' Plays*. In addition to teaching Latin, pedagogy, psychology, and education, Moore taught philosophy and established the philosophy department at Howard University, which we previously acknowledged as one of the prime institutions for the continuation of African American academic philosophy. From Baxter's efforts we get the rich tradition of philosophy at Howard from Locke to Cooke.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, the latter part of this essay on the empirical description of the various philosophers and their historical context can make real sense only in light of the host of empirical and conceptual questions posed at the onset. Herein is the raw material, the factual foundation of the descriptive stage. It is from here that we can move to definition and interpretation, knowing full well that the limits of our inquiry into the history of African-American philosophy is empirical research.

Rather than presume there is no academic philosophical traditions of value, let us dig long and deep into the empirical treasure chest and build on that. For when we integrate the academic with the nonacademic philosophers of the past, we will come closer to grasping and reconstructing the history that can aid us in our contemporary needs. The measure of our progress will be our comprehension of the past, especially from the standpoint of our present realities and future ambitions.

### Endnotes

1. One of the early efforts in metaphilosophy is William D. Johnson, "Philosophy," in James T. Haley, ed., *Afro-American Encyclopedia* (Nashville: Haley and Florida, 1895). I will say more about Johnson later on.
2. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," in David Levering Lewis, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995).
3. In my own essay on whiteness, I do not reference prior African American philosophers' treatment of this issue. I do speak to the historical context for the emergence of race and whiteness as concepts. See John H. McClendon III, "On the Nature of Whiteness and the Ontology of Race: Toward a Dialectical Materialist Analysis," in George Yancy, ed., *What White Looks Like* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
4. Marimba Ani, *Yurugu* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1994).
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8. Rufus Lewis Perry, *Sketch of Philosophical Systems* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Wiley and Co., 1889).
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12. Leonard Harris, ed., *Philosophy Born of Struggle* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt, 1983).
13. Olivet College hired Golightly in philosophy and his wife in the English Department. A. Gilbert Belles, "The College Faculty, the Negro Scholar, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund" *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 54, No. 4. (Oct., 1969), p. 387. Reginald Wilson, "Why the Shortage of Black Professors? Slack Enforcement," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 1. (Autumn, 1993): 25.
14. William J. Simmons, *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland: George M. Rewell Co., 1887), 621.
15. Rufus Lewis Perry, *Sketch of Philosophical Systems* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Wiley and Co., 1889) and Rufus Lewis Perry, *The Cushite, or the Descendants of Ham as Found in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Writings of Ancient Historians and Poets from Noah to the Christian Era* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Wiley and Co., 1893).
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## **W.E.B. Du Bois on Whiteness and the Pathology of Black Double Consciousness**

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High in the tower, where I sit above the loud  
complaining of the human sea, I know many souls  
that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that  
intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk.

—W.E.B. Du Bois (1920)

Snow-blindness. White solipsism: To think, imagine,  
and speak as if whiteness described the world.

—Adrienne Rich (1979)

### **Introduction**

In such areas as philosophy of race, feminist theory, critical whiteness studies, critical pedagogy, post-colonial studies, and critical multiculturalism, a growing number of white scholars have created a critical discursive space within which to come to terms with what it means to be white. Through a process of critical self-reflexive consciousness, these scholars have been able to render whiteness visible, trace its socio-historical trajectory, map its political and economic power, and demonstrate how it constitutes itself as the transcendental signified, that which is said to *determine* difference, but is not itself defined by difference or seen as different. In other words, whiteness constitutes itself as the core of normativity, the standard against which nonwhite people are constructed as Other, alien, savage, different, strange, rude, uncivilized, evil, inferior, ugly, stupid, exotic, and *infra*-human. Theorizing whiteness can function as a powerful means in terms of which the invisibility of whiteness is rendered visible. The invisibility of whiteness is a function of its status as normative. Part of the function of critical whiteness studies is to show, genealogically, how whiteness is a value-creating site of power, a site that is deeply invested in maintaining white power and control. Hence, critical whiteness studies attempts to show how whiteness is an expression of historical and cultural particularity. On this score, whiteness is not a metaphysical (ahistorical) essence, but a socio-historical construction. It is important that we do not forget, through a process of historical elision, that Blacks, within the context of the so-called New World, have long had to theorize the meaning of whiteness. Granted that the Middle Passage or the Black Atlantic can be understood as a transitional space of identity and cultural hybridization, as Paul Gilroy argues,<sup>1</sup> we should keep in mind that the Black Atlantic was also a transitional matrix that led to the creation of a destructive doubleness in the psychic structure of Black people.

The point here is that the attempt to call into question the normativity of whiteness did not begin with whites, particularly academic white males. From David Walker, Nat Turner, W.E.B. Du Bois, Thomas N. Baker, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs to

James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Frantz Fanon, Toni Morrison, and bell hooks, Blacks have not only theorized whiteness, but have lost their lives fighting against it. For Black people, struggling against whiteness was/is a question of existential survival. There was nothing “chic” about the importance of subjecting the normative structure of whiteness to critique. Unlike Blacks, critical whiteness theorists who are white can critique whiteness, while still maintaining the color-coded value of their white flesh. Their whiteness continues to possess value. Like many men who refer to themselves as “feminists,” while continuing to benefit from the pervasive norms of patriarchy, anti-whiteness whites, despite their critical discourse aimed at dislocating and dismantling the power of whiteness, continue to benefit from being white within a social and cultural context within which whiteness continues to maintain hegemony.

Critical whiteness theorists should guard against making a fetish of theorizing whiteness and thereby re-inscribing whiteness as center. Critical whiteness theorists must remain open to those nonwhite voices (African American, Latino, Asian, and others) that continue to suffer under what bell hooks refers to as the “terror” of whiteness. She notes: “All black people in the United States, irrespective of their class status or politics, live with the possibility that they will be terrorized by whiteness.”<sup>2</sup> To make a fetish of *theorizing* whiteness will vitiate any serious attempt to engage whiteness at the level of political praxis. Du Bois knew that theory (and education) was not sufficient to engage whiteness. In “Of the Coming of John,” he writes of John Jones who, after being educated, comes to feel his two-ness in a white world that saw him as a threat to the white order of things, a social order of white power within which John was expected to rest content or be tortured and lynched by white power.<sup>3</sup> Du Bois also knew of Sam Hose who was cut into bits of Black flesh for white visual consumption. Du Bois knew about Hose’s charred knucklebones in an Atlantic shop window. Perhaps it was the result of seeing the consequences of white terror that shook the grounds of Du Bois’s Enlightenment sensibilities and positivist tendencies. He writes:

There cut across this plan which I had as a scientist, a red ray which could not be ignored ... a poor Negro in central Georgia, Sam Hose, had killed his landlord’s wife. I wrote out a careful and reasoned statement concerning the evident facts and started down to the Atlanta *Constitution* office ... I did not get there. On the way news met me: Sam Hose had been lynched, and they said that his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store farther down on Mitchell Street, along which I was walking ... I turned back to the University. I began to turn aside from my work.<sup>4</sup>

Could it be that this process of “turning aside” suggests turning toward a more radical form of praxis, a moment of doubt regarding the sufficiency of the social sciences to address the *nonrational* performances of whiteness, white supremacy, white brutality? The Sam Hose case revealed to Du Bois that dealing effectively with white racism required more than the accumulation of knowledge. White racism exists on the far side of *episteme* and *logos*. Of the many characteristics of white racism (solipsism, myopia, xenophobia, narcissism), passionate hatred—the unapologetic cruel hostility shown toward Black people—is a powerful, destructive emotion that destroys the fruits of knowledge and reason. Du Bois looked into the souls of white folk and saw profound levels of bad faith, hatred, terror, and rationalization. Du Bois:

And yet as they [white folk] preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rages

of facts and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever stripped—ugly, human.<sup>5</sup>

This article is divided into two sections. First, I will explore Du Bois’s characterization of whiteness, particularly as this theme is developed in “The Souls of White Folk.” My sense is that Du Bois does not understand whiteness within the context of biological essentialism, but sees whiteness as a social performance that occurs within the interstices of the web of social interaction between whites and Blacks. Moreover, for Du Bois, whiteness is a structural and material site of power that expresses itself through imperialist power and hegemony. Second, I will explore, through an analysis of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, how whiteness is fundamentally linked to double consciousness as pathology. Despite Du Bois’s variegated ways of talking about double consciousness and two-ness, I will focus on the motif of double consciousness as pathology.

### A Du Boisian Reading of Whiteness

What, then, does Du Bois say about whiteness? What is it that he claims to see with his “tired eyes” as he looks upon whiteness “ever stripped”? Du Bois describes himself as sitting high in his tower watching white folk.<sup>6</sup> The metaphor suggests an angular position that provides for greater clarity. He even claims to be clairvoyant with respect to the souls of white people.<sup>7</sup> Already, Du Bois is hinting at the invisible structure of whiteness, for to be clairvoyant is to be able to see beyond what is present to the senses. Hence, Du Bois sees through the social and historical maintenance of so-called white superiority. Du Bois claims to be able to “see the working of their entrails.”<sup>8</sup> On this view, white folk are “open” to clear view. There is no hiding behind pseudo-scientific rationalizations and historical falsifications and erasures regarding Black people. Historically contextualizing the whiteness of Pan-Europeanism, Du Bois writes: “Today...the world in a sudden, emotional conversion has discovered that it is white and by token, wonderful!”<sup>9</sup> He adds: “This assumption that of all the hues of God whiteness alone is inherently and obviously better than brownness or tan leads to curious acts.”<sup>10</sup> The reader will note that Du Bois says “this assumption” and refers to “curious acts.”

Buttressing his position is the argument that whiteness is founded upon *mythos*, narrative white myths and assumptions that form an *episteme* within which whites attempt to define and control what is *known* and what *is* regarding themselves and Black people. On this score, white supremacy is shaped by a (white) racist and racist epistemology and ontology. Du Bois does not say that whiteness is by nature evil or good; rather, he says that certain “curious acts” follow from the assumption that whiteness is “better.” This places whiteness within the space of “acts” or performativity. Du Bois moves whiteness to a relational space of social ontology. It is an issue of how whites constitute the meaning of whiteness vis-à-vis Blackness. Hence, on a Du Boisian reading, whiteness does not belong to a realm of ontological substances, but to a realm of social ontological constitutionality. Returning to the idea of mythopoetic white constructions, Black folk were believed to be the dark inhabitants of the curse of Ham or the curse of Canaan. Historian George M. Fredrickson, elaborating on the work of white racist Samuel A. Cartwright’s work, observes:

Cartwright wrote a book to show how the anatomical evidence of Negro inferiority could be correlated with the Biblical description of “the curse on Canaan”—God’s condemnation of Canaan and his allegedly black descendants to be “servants unto servants.”<sup>11</sup>

Blacks were not deemed part of the human community (read: white community). Such an ideological and political space of whiteness formed a racially closed community that constituted a white *Herrenvolk* democracy. Sure, Blacks were “allowed” into this community, but only as inferior servants, as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Du Bois was cognizant of how these mythopoetic constructions functioned, how they theologically sanctioned Black people as inferior. On this score, Black people were not believed to be inferior because of circumstances; rather, Black people, in their very souls, were *ontologically* inferior, born this way by nature.

Du Bois draws attention to those “curious acts” of whiteness, those performances that attempt to conceal themselves behind ordinary, everyday encounters and conversations with Black people. He refers to an “obligato of tune and tone” that can be heard with his power and gift of clairvoyance. Even the “sweeter souls,” as Du Bois says, of whites folk, speak with a kind of “doubleness” or duplicity. As a Black, some whites greet you with a certain sweet comportment. They talk with you about the weather, while all along performing hidden racist scripts:

My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born—white!<sup>12</sup>

The idea here of being born white, a kind of re-birth, in relationship to Blackness, has deep theological, moral, and psychological implications. Theologically, the idea is that perhaps when Blacks get to heaven, assuming that this is even possible given the white assumption that Black people lacked immortal souls, perhaps they might be transformed into beings of whiteness, entities of light. Blackness, as a cursed hue, will perhaps supernaturally fade away, giving way to a blessed and pure whiteness, moving from the margin of darkness (impurity) to the center of whiteness (purity). The theological implications are clear. Within the Western theological paradigm, with its white iconography, God is white, angelic beings are white, and heaven is pictured as “a place” of tremendous luminosity.

Morally, whiteness or light is that which is deemed good, beautiful, and pleasant to look upon, without blemish. “To be white is to have expunged all dirt,” as Richard Dyer says, “faecal or otherwise, from oneself: to look white is to look clean.”<sup>13</sup> Dyer traces whiteness not only to the beginning of European expansionism, but specifically to the Crusades. Although Dyer is not critical of Christianity in its entirety, he notes the significance of the Manichean dualism regarding lightness and darkness, and indicates how these binary terms are framed by certain axiological assumptions:

Christianity brought a tradition of black: white moral dualism to bear on an enemy [the dark Islamic powers] that could itself be perceived as black. The Crusades were thus part of a heightening awareness of skin colour difference which they further inflected in terms of moral attributes.<sup>14</sup>

Pulling from contemporary examples of technological uses of light, Dyer argues that light is used as a medium that calls forth, as it were, individuation. Keep in mind that Black people were believed to be devoid of subjectivity, interiority, individuation, and autonomy; they were beings of heteronomy, controlled by animal instincts and the external environment. And, of course, when one links the significance of autonomy to

Immanuel Kant’s ethical theory, that is, his emphasis upon the autonomy of the will as the indispensable condition of moral agential praxis, it is not difficult to call into question the moral status of Black people. Blacks were not individuals so much as they constituted an undifferentiated mass of usable raw material, all meant for one aim and one purpose: to serve white people. Dyer notes:

It is at least arguable that white society has found it hard to see non-white people as individuals; the very notion of the individual, of the freely developing, autonomous human person, is only applicable to those who are seen to be free and autonomous, who are not slaves or subject peoples. Movie lighting discriminates against non-white people because it is used in a cinema and a culture that finds it hard to recognize them as appropriate subjects for such lighting, that is, as individuals.<sup>15</sup>

He further argues:

What is at issue here is not how white is shown and seen, so much as the assumptions at work in the way that movie lighting disposes people in space. Movie lighting relates people to each other and to setting according to notions of the human that have historically excluded non-white people.<sup>16</sup>

Not only theologically and morally, but psychologically the obligato of white tunes and tones take their toll. Black folk, under this “religion of whiteness,”<sup>17</sup> as Du Bois says, come to see themselves as inferior, often resulting in a powerful form of psychological deformation. Although I will say more about this shortly in reference to at least one of Du Bois’ interpretations of double consciousness, Blacks, within the context of white power and brutality, white racist lies, myths, and assumptions, begin to internalize a negative self-understanding. Aware of how myths harden into “empirical truths,” Du Bois writes:

How easy, then, by emphasis and omission to make children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white man’s soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white man’s thought; that every great dream the world ever sang was a white man’s dream.<sup>18</sup>

Many Blacks, through white “emphasis and omission,” came to internalize the myth, at their own psychological peril, that whiteness is supreme.

Du Bois did not have to look far for philosophical support for the dictum that everything white is superior and great. Prominent European philosophers helped to buttress such a myth. In his “Of National Characters,” Scottish philosopher David Hume maintained:

I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. In Jamaica indeed they talk of one Negro as a man of learning; but ‘tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.<sup>19</sup>

Kant relied on Hume's views as gospel:

Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a simple example in which a negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of men, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color.<sup>20</sup>

And it was the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel who explicitly reduced African people to physical land. They are without spirit (or *Geist*). As such, since there is no distinction between the land and African people, African people are to be dominated just as the land is to be subjected to white exploitation and serve the interests of white power. Reduced to land, raw material, the Black is to be used to *serve*; for Black people are devoid of agency. And concerning aesthetics, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes:

We venture, however,...to assert that the white man, that is, he whose surface varies from white to reddish, yellowish, brownish, in short, whose surface appears most neutral in hue and least inclines to any particular and positive colour, is the most beautiful.<sup>21</sup>

It would appear that it is Blackness that functions as an aberration, that which sullies the purity of whiteness. All is beautiful without Blackness; all is rational without Blackness; all, indeed, is perfect without Blackness. "In fine," Du Bois writes, "that if from the world were dropped everything that could not fairly be attributed to White Folk, the world would, if anything, be even greater, truer, better than now."<sup>22</sup>

Du Bois' "tired eyes" have seen even more. As long as Blacks assume their "naturally" assigned stations in life, white folk are content to provide them with gifts for minimal sustainability. As long as Blacks remain docile and thankful to whites for "barrels of old clothes from lordly and generous whites, there is much mental peace and moral satisfaction."<sup>23</sup> However, as soon as Blacks begin to question the entitlement of whiteness to the best things that life has to offer, and when their "attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity,"<sup>24</sup> whites charge Blacks with impudence, they say "that the South is right, and that Japan wants to fight America."<sup>25</sup> The reader will note that Du Bois was aware of the imperialist and paternalist tendencies of white America vis-à-vis non-white countries. Whiteness, within this context, functions as a trope of capitalist domination and exploitation.

Du Bois notes that as whites begin to think that Blacks are insisting upon their right to human dignity, as John Jones did, and as whites subsequently begin an unapologetic wage of brutality and oppression against Black people, "the descent to Hell is easy."<sup>26</sup> This "descent to Hell" is a powerful image. For up in his tower, Du Bois sees whiteness as a form of misanthropy, a form of hatred that lusts for Black blood. Du Bois:

I have seen a man—an educated gentleman—grow livid with anger because a little, silent, black woman was sitting by herself in a Pullman car. He was a white man. I have seen a great, grown man curse a little child, who had wandered into the wrong waiting-room, searching for its mother: "Here, you damned

black—" He was white. In Central Park I have seen the upper lip of a quiet, peaceful man curl back in a tigerish snarl of rage because black folk rode by in a motor car. He was a white man.<sup>27</sup>

The reader will note the refrain: "He was a white man." Du Bois uses this refrain to establish a deepening and deafening portrayal of anti-Black hatred embedded in whiteness. This hatred has historically expressed itself in the form of lynching, that spectacle of white fear, anxiety, and sexual psychopathology, with its attendant pleasure reserved for the white racist scopophilic. Within this context, Du Bois speaks of the "lust of blood"<sup>28</sup> that fuels the madness of lynching Black bodies, that "strange fruit" about which Billie Holiday sang. The point is that Du Bois was aware of how it really did not matter whether or not the person lynched did anything wrong. All that mattered was that some Black, any Black, had to pay. Blood had to be spilled to satisfy and appease the white demigods. With deep psychological insight into the "entrails" of whiteness, Du Bois is worth quoting in full:

We have seen, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood; mad with murder, destroying, killing, and cursing; torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! We have seen—Merciful God! in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood—what have we not seen, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent."<sup>29</sup>

As I have noted above, one of the objectives of critical whiteness studies is to get whites to examine what it means to be white, to begin to explore how whiteness is concealed through processes of denial. Du Bois places the responsibility on white folk to be honest about their anti-Black hatred. He writes: "Ask your own soul what it would say if the next census were to report that half of black America was dead and the other half dying."<sup>30</sup> And although Du Bois admits that he too suffers from the weight of white hatred, he questions whether he, in his Blackness, is the sole sufferer. He writes:

I suffer. And yet, somehow, above the suffering, above the shackled anger that beats the bars, above the hurt that crazes there surges in me a vast pity—pity for a people imprisoned and enthralled, hampered and made miserable for such a cause, for such a phantasy!<sup>31</sup>

One might object: "But Du Bois, white people cannot possibly suffer under the weight of their own whiteness. After all, being white in America is highly valued." While it is true that whiteness is valued like property, even providing poor whites with a "public and psychological wage,"<sup>32</sup> it is important to focus on Du Bois' use of such terms as "imprisoned," "enthralled," "hampered," "miserable," and "phantasy." Du Bois feels pity for those who are white, because they have to live with the lie of white supremacy; they have to live lives of self-deception; they are inculcated to feel hatred for Black people; they are afraid to move within that uncertain space of acceptance of those who are not white; they must remain within the imaginative space of wishing that all Black people were dead; they are imprisoned within their own feelings of white solipsism. In Levinasian terms, the white would rather remain imprisoned within the ontology of sameness, not willing to sacrifice its own false security for the call of the Black Other. Implicit in what Du Bois is arguing is that white folk prevent the possibility of the development of a new form of relationality

vis-à-vis Black people, for they prefer to remain locked within their own sense of (white) enthrallment. As a result, they suffer. They suffer from their lack of ethical performativity; for it is within the process of sacrificing one's self-certitude that one is able to ethically reach across the chasm of (non-hierarchical) difference and embrace the Black Other in his/her Otherness. As long as whiteness is deemed the most valuable property to possess, white people will continue to be prisoners of the white imaginary. "A true and worthy ideal," as Du Bois says, "frees and uplifts a people."<sup>33</sup> He adds, "But say to a people: 'The one virtue is to be white,' and people rush to the inevitable conclusion, 'Kill the 'nigger!'" Of course, on this score, the idea that "the one virtue is white" is a false ideal, for it "imprisons and lowers."<sup>34</sup>

White folk, in their imperialist drive to demonstrate to the non-white world the power of white supremacy and imprisoned within the false ideal of whiteness, failed to listen to Black voices. Du Bois writes, "These super-men and world-mastering demi-gods listened, however, to no low tongues of ours, even when we pointed silently to their feet of clay."<sup>35</sup> Whiteness is that "transcendent universality" that is beyond the realm of particularity. It is Black people who embody particularity, who have "feet of clay." Kant, Hume, Hegel and Goethe cannot possibly be mistaken: Blacks are inferior, ugly, dark; they are people of the ground, autochthonous. After all, Kant, Hume, Hegel and Goethe are just some of the (white) super-men, geniuses *par excellence*, that Europe has produced. White plantation owners cannot be mistaken. Black folk work like mules, complain little, and want for nothing. They are "happy darkies." The white "sciences" of phrenology and physiognomy cannot be mistaken. The white anthropologist says: "Just look at the prognathous jaw of the Negro!" D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* cannot have been incorrect in its cinematic portrayal of Black buffoonery and ignorance. Little Shirley Temple and Audrey Hepburn have shown us what feminine whiteness looks like. Feminine whiteness is that which is diametrically opposed to the Black Mammy, the Black Jezebel, and the Black Sapphire. It is to be a little lady, a white princess. And Fay Wray showed us what it meant to embody white purity and innocence as she played opposite that huge *Black* beast, King Kong. The imaginary white interlocutor in Du Bois's "The Superior Race," says proudly, "I prefer the colors of heaven and day: sunlight hair and blue eyes, and straight noses and thin lips, and that incomparable air of haughty aloofness and aristocracy."<sup>36</sup> The reader will note Du Bois's interlocutor's analysis along the axis of both race and class.

The above are only fragments of the historical, epistemological, and semiotic field within which whiteness has been/is communicated. The above instantiations of whiteness are perpetuated through value-laden (white) interests, aims, and purposes. At times, strangely enough, Blacks have had to remind whites of the latter's "superior" status. In *The Matrix*, for example, it is Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) who has unflinching faith in the white man, Neo or the "One" (Keanu Reeves). As James Snead has noted: "Mythification is the replacement of history with a surrogate ideology of elevation or demotion along a scale of human value."<sup>37</sup> Du Bois was aware of how historical reality can be falsified through ideology, that is, *white ideology*. What is clear is that despite the essentialism in Du Bois's conception of race, he understands white supremacy as historically constructed. Du Bois writes:

This theory of human culture and its aims has worked itself through warp and woof of our daily thought with a thoroughness that few realize. Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is "white";

everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is "yellow"; a bad taste is "brown"; and the devil is "black." The changes of this theme are continually rung in picture and story, in newspaper heading and movie-picture, in sermon and school book, until, of course, the King can do no wrong—a White Man is always right and a Black Man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.<sup>38</sup>

The last line in this quote is an explicit reference to the famous Dred Scott decision in which (white) Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that Dred Scott and his wife, Harriet, who had petitioned to be freed, would remain slaves.

As stated earlier, for Du Bois, whiteness does not belong to a realm of ontological substances, but to a realm of social ontological constitutionality; he realizes that so-called white superiority is a sham designed to be taken as "natural," a hoax around which both Black and white people are supposed to organize and live their lives. Du Bois:

If we take even that doubtful but widely heralded test, the frequency of individual creative genius (when a real racial test should be the frequency of ordinary common sense)—if we take the Genius as the savior of mankind, it is only possible for the white race to prove its own incontestable superiority by appointing both judge and jury and summoning only its own witnesses.<sup>39</sup>

In short, the stage is set. The results are in already. Whiteness has long ago made its preemptive strike against all that is nonwhite. Whiteness has already set the stage upon which Black folk are expected to play (low and degraded) scripted roles written by whites themselves. And many Blacks have played these roles. Some have rejected them in the face of death. Others have used such scripts as forms of mimicry, and, hence, as forms of resistance. While others, those more unfortunate Black souls, have internalized such white lies, resulting in a massive split, a pathological double consciousness.

### Double Consciousness as Pathology

What has Du Bois shown thus far? He has made a strong case that whiteness deems itself the transcendental signified. Whiteness is that axiological standard against which all nonwhites are to be judged and assessed. Du Bois also recognizes the flexibility of whiteness, how certain people can *become white*, which, again, points to the social constitutionality of whiteness. In this way, he realizes that whiteness is parasitic upon Blackness. Many white immigrants who came from Europe began with very little power. Once in America, however, they learned how to negotiate their new ("white") identities vis-à-vis Black people. Du Bois notes that America "trains her immigrants to this despising of 'niggers' from the day of their landing, and they carry and send the news back to the submerged classes in the fatherlands."<sup>40</sup> They soon learn about the deep cultural dimensions of America's color-line. Because Blackness is ugly, whiteness is beautiful. Because Blackness is stupid, whiteness is intelligent. Because Blackness is impure, whiteness is pure. Because Blackness is criminal, whiteness is innocent. Concerning this last point regarding the "criminal" nature of Blackness, Du Bois writes:

Murder may swagger, theft may rule and prostitution may flourish and the nation gives but spasmodic, intermittent and lukewarm attention. But let the murderer be black or the thief brown or the violator of womanhood have a drop of Negro blood, and the righteousness of the indignation sweeps the world.<sup>41</sup>

Du Bois's point here is that *Blackness*, from the perspective of white mythopoetic constructions, is *the problem*, not the crime committed.

The connection between Blackness and the concept of "being a problem" is central to Du Bois's understanding of what it means to be Black in white America. Du Bois' reference to that obbligate of tune and tone will prove to be helpful. As was argued earlier, Du Bois shows that white folk engage in a process of duplicity while speaking to Blacks. They often approach the Black in a hesitant fashion, saying "I know an excellent coloured man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil?"<sup>42</sup> Du Bois maintains that the real question that whites want to ask is: "How does it feel to be a problem?"<sup>43</sup> Notice that they do not ask, "How does it feel to *have* problems?" The question is raised to the level of the ontological: "How does it feel to *be* a problem?" Also, note that the structure of this question does not apply to people who have at some point in their lives felt themselves to be a problem (as in "Johnny is a problem child"). In such cases, feeling like a problem is a contingent disposition that is relatively finite and transitory. When Black people are asked the same question by white America, the relationship between being Black and being a problem is noncontingent. It is a necessary relation. The idea of outgrowing this ontological state of being a problem is believed impossible. Hence, regarding one's "existence as problematic," temporality is frozen. One is a problem *forever*. It is from within the white imaginary that the question "How does it feel to be a problem?" is given birth.

Frantz Fanon writes about the Black body and how it can be changed, deformed, and made into an ontological problem vis-à-vis the white gaze. He describes a scene where a young white boy sees a Black man and screams, "Look at the Negro!... Mommy, a Negro!"<sup>44</sup> Fanon:

My body was coming back to me flattened out, disjointed, destroyed, mourning on that white winter day. The Negro is a beast, the Negro is evil, the Negro is mischievous, the Negro is ugly; look, a Negro, it is cold outside, the Negro is shaking because he is cold, the boy is shaking because he is afraid of the Negro, the Negro is shaking with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome boy is shaking because he thinks the Negro is shaking with anger, the white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mommy the Negro is going to eat me.<sup>45</sup>

The white imagery of the Black as a savage beast, a primitive and uncivilized animal, is clearly expressed in the boy's fear that he will be eaten by the "cannibalistic" Negro. Notice that Fanon talks about the experience of having his body "come back to him." What does this mean? After all, Fanon's body is forever with him. It never leaves. So, how can it return? Ralph Ellison's invisible man also experiences a kind of "return of the Black body." He knows himself as embodied flesh and blood, but yet he is invisible. His body is, and yet he is not. The invisible man observes:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allen Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people [in this case white people] refuse to see me.<sup>46</sup>

The reader will note that in Fanon's example, the Black body is hyper-visible, while for Ellison the Black body is rendered invisible. In either case, though, the Black body "returns" in some distorted form. There appears to be a slippage between one's *own* understanding of the Black body and how others (whites) understand that same Black body. Moreover, this is a lived experience that takes place within a space of transactional meaning constitution and constructivity. Du Bois also writes about his own lived experience of a slippage of sorts. He writes:

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.<sup>47</sup>

In this example, Du Bois suggests that he was in some sense similar to the other (white) children. In "heart," "life," and "longing" he felt a kindred relationship. But something happened. There was this sudden self-doubt, which presumably did not exist prior to this encounter. Hence, Du Bois undergoes a distinctive *process*. He moves from a sense of the familiar to the unfamiliar. He feels *different*. He was, as it were, taken outside of himself and *returned*. Surely, Du Bois is the same self that he was prior to the glance enacted by the tall white girl. But is he? After all, he does feel different. As with Ellison's invisible man and Fanon, there is a sense of disjointedness in terms of being one thing as opposed to another. It is as if there is an extrinsic social transactional process that throws the self outside of itself, only to return to itself with a different feeling, resulting from now seeing the self through the eyes of another. Even Ellison's invisible man needs light. He, too, has been invaded by some extrinsic power not of himself. It is this extrinsic power that makes him feel invisible. This is why he says that "light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form."<sup>48</sup>

At the heart of each of these experiences emerges a question. The question is posed from within what Du Bois calls the "veil." Whether interpreted as a figure of speech indicating systemic racism/structural segregation or as that which "indicates, rhetorically, a knowledge of difference that is itself discursively based,"<sup>49</sup> the rich metaphor is, at bottom, fundamentally linked to the hegemonic performances of whiteness, performances that can lead to external societal fissures or internal psychological fractures. It is the latter that is emphasized within the present context. So what is this question? It is not a question born of quiet solitude (think here of Rene Descartes), but of racial, embodied struggle. It is not intellectual struggle, thinking through some academic conundrum, but an existential and ontological struggle, though some form of cognition is always present. It is not born of hyperbolic doubt, a questioning of all things that fail the test of epistemological indubitability, though it may involve, as Du Bois says, "incessant self-questioning and the hesitation that arises from it."<sup>50</sup> The question is: "What, after all, am I?"<sup>51</sup> Unlike Descartes, who asked a similar question—"But what then am I?"—after arriving at the indubitable *Cogito* argument ("I think therefore I am"), and who reaches the eventual conclusion that he is a *thing* that thinks,<sup>52</sup> Du Bois's question is linked to his sudden (embodied) feeling that he was different from the white children. Whereas Descartes moves in a methodical way, questioning all things previously held to be true, Du Bois is traumatically (and non-methodically) shaken out of a space

of psychosocial familiarity. He was not prepared to have his flesh and blood identity thrown back to him as something to be questioned. It is his Black body schema that he is forced to come to terms with, a schema that he was forced to thematize in ways not typically required. When the girl refused his card, young Du Bois was no doubt thrown into a state of incessant questioning. Indeed, from what has been developed thus far, one plausible answer to the question might be: “I am a problem! Who I am as a Black body/self is a problem!” As the tall white girl refused him, she sent a semiotic message, a message whose meaning was immediately registered in the consciousness of the young Du Bois. Her body language, her refusal, involved a ritual. The ritual took place within an interpreted space of racial meaning. Du Bois’s Black body was already coded as different, as a problem, as that which should be avoided. Though young, the tall white newcomer had already become hampered and imprisoned by the myths of whiteness vis-à-vis the Black body. Through the performative act of refusal, though words were presumably never spoken, Du Bois became, even if unknowingly, “a damn nigger.” Through her glance and her refusal, she reduced Du Bois to his Blackness, a mere surface, a *thing of no particular importance*, though important enough to reject and avoid. Du Bois was no longer within the group, but outside of it, left looking upon himself through the eyes of the newcomer. In short, he underwent a process of double consciousness. Du Bois:

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. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.<sup>53</sup>

There are many ways to interpret the Du Boisian concept of double consciousness. Indeed, from the above quote, it is not clear that Du Bois had a single meaning in mind. Black people have lived within the existential and social identity spaces of “hyphenation,” attempting to join various tension-laden aspects of their identity. Living within white America, the Black is forced to ask, “What, after all, am I?” This question is indicative of a crisis in Black identity created by a society governed by white supremacy. The Black experiences two thoughts and two strivings. White America has created the conditions not only for an unhealthy form of Black cognitive dissonance, but it has created the extreme polarization of Black will. American or Negro? African or American? Two thoughts: “Should I drop my bucket where I stand or should I fight for equality and the right to vote.” Two ideals: “Should I rest content to assume the role of softening ‘the whiteness of the Teutonic to-day’ or should I align myself with the ‘mad money-getting plutocracy.’”<sup>54</sup> Two souls: A soul (blood?) whose message to the world is filled with spiritual values, music, sorrow songs, dance, unselfishness, and the strength “to live and suffer in patience and humility” or a soul that forsakes the spiritual and joins the ranks of the materialistic, the builders of that “vast Frankenstein monster known as the “White Imperial Industry.”<sup>55</sup> What should be clear is that Du Bois’s conception of double consciousness, like his use of the “veil” metaphor, does not yield a meaning that is univocal. Also, transcending double consciousness suggests a number of possibilities. Concerning this issue, Ernest Allen, Jr. argues:

It would seem that elimination of negative ‘twoness’ signified a number of things: the abolishing of existential otherness as a negative category applied to people of African descent, the consequent

recognition of their humanity; the establishing of an inclusive, American civic identity (that is, the suppression of the distinction between legal citizenship and unofficial ‘second-class citizenship’); and the corresponding elimination of segregated institutions and public places, racially-segregated economic structures, and double legal standards applied to blacks.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, it is not always clear that Du Bois sees “twoness” as a split to be overcome.<sup>57</sup> He writes:

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 simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.<sup>58</sup>

And there are other times that Du Bois appears to define the state of unhappiness felt within the “veil” in terms that are empowering.<sup>59</sup>

Given what has been explored regarding the epistemological and ontological lens through which whiteness constructs Blackness, focus will be limited to the notion of double consciousness that involves measuring and judging one’s soul by the tape of a white world that gazes upon the Black in contempt and pity. In the case of Du Bois, his feeling of difference, and perhaps his sudden lived experience of being a problem, was the result of the internalization of the perspective of the white newcomer. For Du Bois, this internalization resulted in the experience of twoness, a double consciousness, which yields “him no true self-consciousness.”<sup>60</sup> Bracketing the issue of what “true self-consciousness” means, particularly in terms of an authentic, true “racial” self-consciousness, a paradigm case of the interpretation of Du Boisian double consciousness as a manifestation of pathology can be demonstrated within Toni Morrison’s rich, fictional text, *The Bluest Eye*.<sup>61</sup> As I have shown, for Du Bois, whiteness associates Blackness with evil. Blackness is ugly. It is dirty. It is uncivilized. Within the *episteme* of whiteness, “Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer, cheaper stuff.”<sup>62</sup> Although a fictional character in Morrison’s text, Pecola Breedlove has fully internalized the myths of whiteness, particularly the white image of beauty. She has come to see her dark skin, her non-blue eyes, as composed of “cheaper stuff.” In Morrison’s text, within the semiotic space of whiteness, blue eyes signify universal beauty. Blue eyes signify perfect descent, giving one the feeling of being proud in body and in spirit. Pecola, unlike Ellison’s invisible man, has so internalized the standard of whiteness that her twoness, her doubleness, no longer appears to be something that she can recognize. The internalized “different voice,” as it were, that speaks to Pecola as being a dark problem, as something aesthetically disgusting, does not appear to take place within a soul of “two warring ideals.” There appears to be only one voice, the voice of the white demi-god. When she looks inside herself, there appears to be only one soul, one thought, a single striving, one ideal: To be white, to possess blue eyes. However, beneath this apparent “singleness,” the doubleness continues to exist, for she is still Black. She engages in a whitening of her soul that is so profound that it results in insanity. Hence, doubleness can lead to profound psychological rupture. The invisible man at least knows that he is invisible vis-à-vis “those eyes with which they [white folk] look through their physical eyes upon

reality.”<sup>63</sup> Pecola only sees herself “through the revelation of the other [white] world.”<sup>64</sup> Like the contemporary skin bleaching that is so prevalent in parts of Africa, which involves the obsessive desire to look white, resulting from the hegemonic image policing power of America and Europe, Pecola has become seduced by whiteness. She has looked upon Venus de Milo, measured herself by the bright eyes and white pure innocence of little Shirley Temple, internalized all the cultural images that visually speak to her of her degradation, and she has found her Black body/self seriously wanting. Within the process of becoming “double,” her fragile psyche could not sustain the constant warring, so her little dark body was “torn asunder.” Concerning the issue of beauty, George Fredrickson writes:

The neoclassical conceptions of beauty that prevailed in eighteenth-century Europe and America were based primarily on Greek and Roman statuary. The milky whiteness of marble and the facial features and bodily form of the Apollos and Venuses that were coming to light during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created a standard from which Africans were bound to deviate.<sup>65</sup>

As will be shown, Pecola is a tragic figure. In the text, she never recovers from having bleached her “Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism.”<sup>66</sup> Unlike Emma Lou Brown, the Black female protagonist in Wallace Thurman’s *The Blacker the Berry*, Pecola never gains a sense of “mental independence.”<sup>67</sup> Emma came to feel that her Black complexion was a liability, not an asset. Indeed, she thought of her Black skin as a curse. The reader will recall the narrative of the curse of Ham or the curse of Canaan. As Thurman writes: “Not that she minded being black, being a Negro necessitated having a colored skin, but she did mind being too black.”<sup>68</sup> From the perspective of whiteness, even if someone only has one-drop of “Black blood,” one is still *too* Black. And although Emma insisted upon using “an excess of rouge and powder”<sup>69</sup> to whiten her *too* Black face, at the end of the text she does come to accept her Black skin, ceases trying to be what she is not, and learns how to fight “not so much for acceptance by other people, but for acceptance of herself by herself.”<sup>70</sup> Pecola, however, never comes to accept “herself by herself.” She finds salvation in blue eyes.

For critical whiteness theorists, it is important to keep in mind that before Toni Morrison’s seminal text *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, from which they frequently quote, where Morrison explores how the literary white imagination is parasitic upon various literary configurations of Blackness, there was *The Bluest Eye*. Although written over thirty years ago, the text is powerful in terms of its location and interrogation of the semiotic spaces of whiteness. It is a crucial text that clearly demonstrates the psychological price to be paid by bleaching, according to Du Bois’s imagery, the Negro soul in a flood of Americanism/whiteness.

Although the textual foreground of *The Bluest Eye* explicitly portrays the body/self deformation of Pecola, the text “pecks away,” according to Morrison, “at the [white] gaze that condemned her.”<sup>71</sup> In short, Morrison demands that we uncover the secret of Pecola’s “ugliness,” her psychopathology, by turning our critical gaze toward the constituting activities, and discursive field, of whiteness.<sup>72</sup> Examining whiteness as a force of constituting activities is important. Whiteness is not restricted to an ideological realm; it involves certain actions as well, what Du Bois refers to as “darker deeds.”<sup>73</sup> Pecola did not ask to be born within a society that held up a mirror to her that exclaimed, “You are ugly and of ‘lower grade.’” Du Bois: “The preservation of the white family depended on the degradation

and insult of black women; and that unless black girls could be seduced without penalty, white civilization was in danger.”<sup>74</sup> It is Pecola as embodied, as negatively epidermalized, who is subject to the weight of white power and the white racist gaze. It is her *dark* body, objectified and negatively configured by the normalizing white gaze, which is the indelible and indubitable mark of her existential and ontological contemptibility. This is the same gaze that profoundly impacted Ellison, Fanon and Du Bois. Morrison characterizes the structure of the white gaze, revealing its powers of racial objectification, during a moment in the text where Pecola goes into Mr. Yacobowki’s Fresh Veg. Meat and Sundries Store to buy some candy. Mr. Yacobowki is one of those whites who was, as Du Bois writes, taught “to believe that white people were so inherently and eternally superior to blacks, that to eat, sit, live or learn beside them [or even to sell them candy] was absolute degradation.”<sup>75</sup> Mr. Yacobowki’s gaze, his surveillance of Pecola, is a case of gazing through the all-powerful white imaginary, which is linked to the power to define. Morrison writes:

She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition the glazed separateness. She does not know what keeps his glance suspended. Perhaps because he is grown, or a man, and she a little girl. But she has seen rest, disgust, even anger in grown male eyes. Yet this vacuum is not new to her. It has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So. The distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes.<sup>76</sup>

Carrying the weight of internalized white racism and the white gaze, Pecola has come to “know” the deficits of her Black “lived body” all too well. As will be shown, moving in and out of such white racist semiotic spaces, Pecola comes to relate to herself as inferior, limited, and somatically uglified. Encountering Pecola Breedlove for the first time within *The Bluest Eye*, narrated by the character Claudia, the reader becomes immediately aware of significant familial and ontological fractures in her life:

Cholly Breedlove [Pecola’s father], then, a renting black, having put his family outdoors, had catapulted himself beyond the reaches of human consideration. He had joined the animals; was, indeed, an old dog, a snake, a ratty nigger. Mrs. Breedlove was staying with the woman she worked for; the boy, Sammy, was with some other family; and Pecola was to stay with us. Cholly was in jail.<sup>77</sup>

Adding to an already dismal set of circumstances, Claudia adds, “She came with nothing.”<sup>78</sup> Existentially, Pecola is just *there*, solitary and destitute. And like the flowers that Claudia later describes as having failed to grow, Pecola is also unyielding and barren. But what is also significant is the reality that Pecola had been put “outdoors.” Within the text, being put outdoors signals a profound sense of ostracization. Indeed, it constitutes “the real terror of life.”<sup>79</sup>

Capturing the finality of being outdoors, Claudia says: “But the concreteness of being outdoors was another matter—like the difference between the concept of death and being, in fact, dead. Dead doesn’t change, and outdoors is here to stay.”<sup>80</sup> So, the sense of being outdoors is not just a spatial relationship; it also connotes an ontological stasis, a sense of nothingness. Hence, Claudia’s observation that Pecola came with nothing is

itself rich with existential themes of dread and meaninglessness. Claudia goes on to say: “Knowing that there was such a thing as outdoors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership.”<sup>81</sup> In other words, in her state of “nothingness,” which acts as a trope signifying both race and class, Pecola is desperate for something of value, something that she can own, a piece of property. She hungers for something that will provide her with a sense of being, belonging, and self-value. However, as Pecola fully comes to accept, being Black does not confer value; indeed, Blackness is tantamount to being property-less. Concerning the point that whiteness is a form of property, the reader will recall that Du Bois understood whiteness as a form of property, a wage that paid handsomely in terms of public deference, psychological uplift, protection from harm, access to public parks, and better schools.<sup>82</sup>

Within the context of white greed, Du Bois asks himself why whiteness is so desirable and answers: “Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!”<sup>83</sup> So, too, with descriptive clarity, indicating the degree to which Blacks were subject to the greedy ways of white landlords, Morrison provides the reader with a view of the depressive physical environment within which Pecola lived. The Breedlove family is described as “nestled together in the storefront. Festering together in the debris of a realtor’s whim.”<sup>84</sup> The furniture itself invokes a sense of aesthetic disgust:

In the center of the bedroom, for the even distribution of heat, stood a coal stove. Trunks, chairs, a small end table, and a cardboard “wardrobe” closet were placed around the walls. The kitchen was in the back of this apartment, a separate room. There were no bath facilities. Only a toilet bowl, inaccessible to the eye, if not the ear, of the tenants.<sup>85</sup>

Having received a damaged sofa, which occurred during delivery, Cholly, Pecola’s father, argues with one of the white movers:

“Looka here, buddy. It was O.K. when I put it on the truck. The store can’t do anything about it once it’s on the truck...” Listerine and Lucky Strike breath.

“But I don’t want no tore couch if ’n it’s bought new.” Pleading eyes and tightened testicles.

“Tough shit, buddy. *Your* tough shit.”<sup>86</sup>

The reader will note the implied reference to Blackness as something dirty, as feces. But this is how whiteness fortifies its purity. Whiteness involves “the all-pervading desire to inculcate,” as Du Bois says, “disdain for everything black, from Toussaint to the devil.”<sup>87</sup> Combining elements of class, race and fundamental dimensions of internalized (white) selfsurveillance, Morrison writes:

The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. *They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly* (My emphasis)...Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy Breedlove, and Pecola Breedlove—wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them.<sup>88</sup>

What is the source of this ugliness? What has created in them the “conviction,” as Morrison says, that they are ugly? What is it about their Black bodies (like Ellison’s invisible man, Fanon, and Du Bois) that get “returned” in some distorted form? If the

ugliness does not belong to them, then to whom does it belong? In a passage rich with figurative language, Morrison provides a glimpse into the origins of this conviction. It is here that the argument that the self is *not* prior to the effects of discourse becomes relevant. Morrison:

It was as though some mysterious allknowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, “You are ugly people.” They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. “Yes,” they had said. “You are right”” And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it.<sup>89</sup>

In other words, the Breedloves are trapped within a semiotic space of white aesthetical ideals. They appear unable to cast off the white imposed cloak or veil. They have been split, doubled, through the measurement of their souls by the tape of a world where whiteness is deemed ontologically and aesthetically supreme. Invoking the image of a master, Morrison is aware of the crippling impact of the institution of American slavery. She is cognizant of how deep white colonialism impacts the (dark) colonized, creating a double consciousness in their very souls through the construction of a semiotic space designed to “confirm” their colonized status. Morrison is clearly aware of the mutual reinforcement of power and knowledge. “You are ugly people,” when applied to Black people, carries an epistemic truthvalue within a white discursive field that already comes replete with its own stipulated criteria for what constitutes beauty. As Du Bois said earlier, whiteness supplies its own judge and jury and summons its own witnesses.

The mesmerizing power of whiteness, the sheer weight of its normativity, is clear where Frieda, Claudia’s older sister, brings Pecola a snack:

Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blueandwhite Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple’s dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cute Shirley Temple was.<sup>90</sup>

Why is Pecola so obsessed with Shirley Temple? What does she see in her? What does Pecola *not* see in herself? Indeed, why does Pecola feel a deep sense of internal vacuity when looking at Shirley Temple? On the view developed thus far, Shirley Temple represents what Pecola is not. Indeed, Pecola’s difference is defined relative to Shirley Temple’s *whiteness* (as transcendental signifier). Pecola’s Black body/self is “returned” to her, reconfigured as ugly vis-à-vis the way in which Shirley Temple’s body has been constructed as intrinsically beautiful (read: white). As Richard Dyer notes:

In Western tradition, white is beautiful because it is the colour of virtue. This remarkable equation relates to a particular definition of goodness. All lists of the moral connotations of white as symbol in Western culture are the same: purity, spirituality, transcendence, cleanliness, virtue, simplicity, chastity.<sup>91</sup>

Whiteness is the standard against which difference and Otherness are constructed. But it is not just the image of Shirley Temple that holds Pecola’s attention, it is also the white substance inside the cup. It is only later in the narrative that we are told that Pecola drank three quarts of milk. Milk is

symbolic of whiteness. It is not out of greediness, as believed by Claudia's mother, that Pecola consumes so much milk; rather, it is out of her need to *become* white through the very act of consuming the milk. Perhaps the whiteness in the milk will create a metamorphosis, changing her from Black to white, from absent to present, from nothing to something, from ugly to beautiful. This theme involving the ingestion of whiteness is clear where Pecola goes to buy some Mary Janes. Even the innocent act of buying candy becomes an opportunity for racial self-resentment and self-denigration. Something as presumably benign as a candy wrapper functions as a site of white cultural semiosis. Morrison writes:

Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in gentle disarray, *blue eyes* looking at her out of a world of *clean comfort*. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply *pretty*. To eat the candy is somehow *to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane* [my emphasis].<sup>92</sup>

Like the whiteness of the milk, the piece of candy is believed to have the power to produce a genuine state of ontological change in Pecola, a change from Black to white, from doubleness to singleness, from a state of dirtiness to *clean comfort*.

Through a process of blurring reality and fiction, which nurtures her double consciousness, Pecola's mother, Pauline, is caught within a world of white filmic hyper reality. Pauline:

The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show. Every time I got, I went. I'd go early, before the show started. They'd cut off the lights, and everything be black. Then the screen would light up, and I'd move right on in them pictures...Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard. I don't know. I 'member one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine. A part on the side, with one little curl on my forehead. It looked just like her. Well, almost just like.<sup>93</sup>

Like Pecola, Pauline has internalized the fiction that whiteness is supremely beautiful. While at the picture show, she is able to imaginatively inhabit the filmic space of whiteness. She is able *to be* the luminescent Jean Harlow. As has been argued through the work of Richard Dyer, it is also the cultural uses of light, through technology, that constructs white people as individuals. Pauline is elevated by the medium of light used to enhance the whiteness of the characters on the screen; she partakes of the humanizing [read: white] and privileging powers of white light.

Living her life through cinematic white images, it is no wonder that Pauline, when Pecola was born, describes Pecola as "a black ball of hair."<sup>94</sup> Pauline adds, "But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly."<sup>95</sup> But even that pretty hair will eventually give way to "tangled black puffs of rough wool to comb."<sup>96</sup> As an ideal servant of whiteness (after all, she does work as a housemaid for a white family), Pauline plays the part impeccably, superimposing upon Pecola her own self-hatred. This is why Pecola sits for hours "trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike."<sup>97</sup> And even when she is "recognized," this only further reinforces her status as Other:

She also knew that when one of the girls at school wanted to be particularly insulting to a boy, or wanted to get an immediate response from him, she could say, "Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove! Bobby Loves Pecola Breedlove!" and never fail to get peals of laughter from those in earshot, and mock anger from the accused.<sup>98</sup>

The reader will note the similarity between the name "Pecola" and "Peola," who played the self-hating mulatto in the 1934 film *Imitation of Life*. Peola, like Pecola, desires to run away from her Blackness, to be humanized by whiteness, treated as "normal" (read: white), and to be accepted. Both are enthralled with whiteness. Through the act of giving her daughter a name that phonetically sounds like "Peola," Pauline has discursively marked her daughter as *a problem*. Pecola believes in the redeeming powers of whiteness. She believes that if she were white she would not be teased. Indeed, she believes that the poor relationship that she has with her mother and father would improve if she were only white. Whiteness, on this score, is believed to possess a talismanic function. Claudia narrates, "If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, 'Why, look at prettyeyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes.'"<sup>99</sup> Pecola firmly believes that she, that is, her *Blackness*, is responsible for the irascible and violent behavior of her parents. However, it is the internalization of "epistemic violence" that leads her to believe this. Feminist philosopher Susan Bordo's contention that anorexia nervosa is linked to androcentric disciplinary technologies of the body is key here. For like many who suffer from this condition, Pecola is also subjected to her own "white ghosts" who speak and confirm her wretchedness and ugliness.<sup>100</sup> She *knows* herself as the degraded Other, she *knows* herself as a problem. This knowledge causes her to wish for her own disappearance: "Please, God," she whispered into the palm of her hand, "please let me disappear."<sup>101</sup> This is Pecola's way of attempting to escape her Blackness, to extricate herself from the space of being ontologically a problem.

Pecola, however, did not receive affection from her mother. Pauline's relationship with her children is evident given her requirement that they refer to her as "Mrs. Breedlove." However, the white Fisher family, who describes Pauline as "the ideal servant," was allowed to call her "Polly." It is whiteness that humanizes Pauline. And the only time that Pauline appears to be most happy is when she is either under the control of filmic white images or being sexually objectified by Cholly. In either situation, Pauline undergoes a form of erasure.<sup>102</sup> Cholly's affections are also hermetically sealed off from his children: "Having no idea of how to raise children, and having never watched any parent raise himself, he could not even comprehend what a relationship should be."<sup>103</sup> Cholly spends most of his time in a drunken stupor, reflecting the pangs of racism and feelings of rejection: "Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose."<sup>104</sup> Instead of directing his anger toward the larger white social structure partly responsible for what he has become, Cholly's anger becomes implosive, impacting all those closest to him.

Was it not Frantz Fanon who reminded us of how implosive anger can become under the duress of white colonial oppression? "So it was," as Claudia sadly narrates, "on a Saturday afternoon, in the thin light of spring, he staggered home reeling drunk and saw his daughter [Pecola] in the kitchen."<sup>105</sup> Reeking with self-doubt, a sense of self-hatred, feeling like a failure in the white man's world, discarded by his biological parents, Cholly undergoes a process of implosion, a process which

expresses itself inward as well as outward: He rapes Pecola. The reader will note that earlier in the text Pecola wonders about the meaning and feeling of love:

Into her eyes came the picture of Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove in bed. He makes sounds as though he were in pain, as though something had him by the throat and wouldn't let go. Terrible as his noises were, they were not nearly as bad as the no noise at all from her mother. It was as though she was not even there. Maybe that was love. Choking sounds and silence.<sup>106</sup>

Having been racially Othered, rejected, uglified, put outdoors and taught to hate herself, Pecola's rape and subsequent impregnation by Cholly, decisively broke her fragile spirit, forcing a complete split in the fabric of her psyche. After seeking out a character named Soaphead, who is capable of helping the unfortunate to "overcome Spells, Bad Luck, [read: *Blackness*] and Evil Influences," Pecola successfully performs the necessary task that will grant her blue eyes.<sup>107</sup> When the reader encounters Pecola again she is happily engaged in a lively conversation with herself about her new blue eyes:

Sure it is. Can you imagine? Something like that happening to a person, and nobody but nobody saying anything about it? They all try to pretend they don't see them. Isn't that funny?...I said, isn't that funny? Yes. You are the only one who tells me how pretty they are. Yes. You are a real friend. I'm sorry about picking on you before. I mean, saying you are jealous and all. *That's all right*. No. Really. You are my very best friend. Why didn't I know you before. *You didn't need me before*. Didn't need you? *I mean...you were so unhappy before*. I guess you didn't notice me before. I guess you're right. And I was so lonely for friends. And you were right here. Right before my eyes. *No, honey*. *Right after your eyes*.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, Pecola has completely undergone a process of psychological transmogrification. She has completely measured herself by a white world that only sees ugliness and inferiority in Black people. Unlike Pauline and Pecola, Du Bois's fictional Black character in "The Superior Race," sees through the subterfuge of blue eyes, white skin, and thin lips. Du Bois:

And I, on the contrary, am the child of twilight and night, and choose intricately curly hair, black eyes, full and luscious features, and that air of humility and wonder which streams from moonlight. Add to this, voices that caress instead of rasp, glances that appeal rather than repel, and a sinuous litheness of movement to replace Anglo-Saxon stalking—there you have my ideal.<sup>109</sup>

In other words, Blacks can avoid certain psychological manifestations of double consciousness. It is not necessary that Black people become prisoners of measuring their souls by the tape of a world that looks upon them with contempt, pity, and hatred.

Similarly, unlike John Jones, in Du Bois's "Of the Coming of John," Pecola presumably never even comes to feel the veil. Through a process of education, John came to see with painful clarity what was previously invisible. He came to "feel almost for the first time the Veil that lay between him and the white world."<sup>110</sup> It is not clear that Pecola ever really becomes self-aware of the social and psychological devastation resulting from living within the veil. Like a bird longing to fly high and envelope itself within the blueness of the sky, Pecola can be observed "beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach—could not even see—but

which filled the valleys of the mind."<sup>111</sup> After Du Bois's encounter with the tall white newcomer, he also found himself living within a region of blue sky, but it was not "the blueness of the sky" that indicates the fanciful flight of insanity. Moreover, Du Bois very consciously *decided* not to tear down the veil. So, he still remained empowered. Du Bois: "I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky, and great wandering shadows."<sup>112</sup> Pecola did not hold what was beyond the veil in contempt. To have done so would imply a certain level of indignation, a certain level of resistance to white power. In her soul, Pecola *became* white. She was not only an effect of white ideological power, but she became its vehicle of expression.

But in Pecola's agony and sorrow, where were the Sorrow Songs, as Du Bois says, that inspired hope? Where were those comforting cadences that should have enabled her to see that there is an ultimate justice? There was no release from existential angst and despair that resulted in victory, triumph, or confidence marked by inner peace. Du Bois asks: "Do the Sorrow Songs sing true?"<sup>113</sup> Answer: For Pecola, not in this world. *Not in this world!*

#### Endnotes

1. See Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
2. bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination" in David R. Roediger (Ed.) *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 50.
3. "The Coming of John" is a story of John Jones who left his hometown in Altamaha, Georgia, to be educated. He was always known as an excellent worker in the fields. His mother, Peggy, wanted him to be educated. Hence, he subsequently went away to school and passionately embraced the areas of astronomy, history, and ethics. Upon his arrival back home, he wanted to open a school for Black folk, but was told that he must only teach them how to be submissive. John had higher aspirations. He taught them about the French Revolution. Whites in the small town were furious, particularly a white racist magistrate, Judge Henderson. The school was closed and the children forced to leave. As the story progresses, Judge Henderson's son, whose name is also John, attempts to force himself physically upon John Jones's sister, Jennie. John sees this, and kills Judge Henderson's son. The story ends with John looking bravely toward the sea, as the Judge and a white lynch mob ride toward him.
4. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York, 1940), 51, 58, 67.
5. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk" in David Levering Lewis (Ed.) *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 453.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

11. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 87.
12. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 454.
13. Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 76
14. *Ibid.*, 67
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 102.
17. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 454.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Quoted in Cornel West, "Race and Modernity," in *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 83.
20. Quoted in West (1999), 83-84.
21. Quoted in Dyer (1997), 70
22. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 454.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, 455.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in David R. Roediger (Ed.) *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 115.
33. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 456.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Superior Race," in David Levering Lewis (Ed.) *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 471.
37. James Snead, (edited posthumously by Colin MacCabe and Cornel West), *White Screens, Black Images: Hollywood From the Dark Side* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.
38. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 461.
39. Du Bois, "The Superior Race," 472.
40. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 465.
41. *Ibid.*, 456.
42. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 43-44.
43. *Ibid.*, 43.
44. Frantz Fanon, "The lived experience of the Black," in Robert Bernasconi (Ed.) *Race* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 186.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 3.
47. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 44.
48. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 6.
49. Kirt H. Wilson, "Towards a Discursive Theory of Racial Identity: *The Souls of Black Folk* as a response to Nineteenth-Century Biological Determinism," in *Western Journal of Communication*, 63 (2), (1999), 205.
50. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of the Races," in David Levering Lewis (Ed.) *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 24.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 20.
53. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45.
54. Du Bois, "The Conservation of the Races," 24-25.
55. Du Bois, "The Superior Race," 474-475.
56. Earnest Allen, Jr., "Ever-Feeling One's Twoness: 'Double Ideals' and 'Double Consciousness' in the Souls of Black Folk," in *The Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 12, no. 3, 272.
57. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45.
58. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45-46.
59. Wilson, "Towards a Discursive Theory of Racial Identity," p. 208. Wilson makes the insightful point that knowledge of the veil is far more important than not knowing about the veil. After all, one can exist within the veil and live the life of happiness, all along not being the wiser concerning one's oppression. Or, one can exist within the veil in a state of unhappiness, realizing that one is oppressed. It is this state of unhappiness that is preferable to the state of happiness, for at least one is to some extent more empowered precisely through one's knowledge of the veil. This knowledge could conceivably lead to resistance. Wilson argues: "If a person does not see herself through the eyes of the oppressor then she will be trapped without the knowledge of that imprisonment. If she does not see the veil and embrace double-consciousness, then she misses an opportunity to resist the social forces that shape her subjectivity."
60. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45. Du Bois's gendered-specific language aside, it is clear that he believes that Black folk can remain "who they are," and yet thrive and flourish within the body politic of America. The question begged here is, "Who are Black folk?" Although this question goes beyond the primary focus of this article, there are interesting philosophical issues to be raised in terms of true self-consciousness and Black identity with respect to what Du Bois thinks about such issues and how such issues might apply to Toni Morrison's character Pecola Breedlove. For example, if Pecola had not been a prisoner to whiteness "who" would she be? Does her "true" identity exist beyond the veil or within the veil? Or, perhaps her "trueness" resides in limbo, somewhere in the fabric of the veil, a *place* of identity articulated by voices that are always in tension. If Pecola had not been duped by whiteness, would she possess what Du Bois refers to as "true self-consciousness"? And what is true self-consciousness? What is the nature of the "self" in relationship to which one would be truly conscious? One might infer that for Du Bois, Pecola might be described as possessing a *false* self-consciousness. After all, whiteness might be said to form the ideology that prevented her from realizing that whiteness was the source of her oppression. The rub here is that it is difficult to separate what Du Bois meant by "true self-consciousness" from his essentialist understanding of race. On this score, to possess

a “true” self-consciousness is to see the real nature of the self (Black self?) as it exists beyond the distortional dimensions of the veil. Does possessing “true (racialized) self-consciousness” mean that one is authentically Black? Was Pecola an inauthentic Black, at least in her consciousness? Does “true” self-consciousness mean that one lives one’s Black flesh in celebration? Indeed, given the racialist philosophical and scientific presuppositions that influenced Du Bois, one is tempted to say that answering the question “Who am I?” has to do with tracing one’s life along a racial (biological?) narrative. To possess “true” self-consciousness would suggest that one aligns one’s identity to the correct narrative, perhaps even the meta-narrative. And what is the meta-narrative that renders intelligible the “who” that Black people are? Given Du Bois’s discourse regarding such things as “Black blood,” Negro ideals, aims, habits of thought, (natural) spiritual and psychical dispositions in *The Conservation of the Races* (p. 22) one is led to believe that Black people have identities that are governed by some inner racial *telos*. (For a very insightful analysis of Black identity within the context of postmodernism see Clevis Headley’s “Postmodernism, Narrative, and the Question of Black Identity,” in Robert Birt (Ed.) *The Quest for Community and Identity: Critical Essays in Africana Social Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002).) Indeed, it is as if Black identity is inextricably tied to a racially Black habitus? If so, how flexible is the structure of this habitus? Since we are historically contingent, and identity exists within a field of possibilities, how is such discourse as “true” self-consciousness impacted?—unless, of course, we are prepared to talk about pragmatic identities that are “true” relative to certain cultural objectives, historical pressures, and political goals. Would Du Bois be prepared to embrace the implications of this meta-stability in self-consciousness? Beneath Du Bois’ question about identity, is there room for a post-metaphysical Black self, a self that is hermeneutic? In a world dominated by white supremacy, is there not some danger associated with imagining the Black self beyond its Blackness? And are selves that are said to be the effects of discourse strong enough to weather the storm of white hatred? Should we not be concerned with those extra-discursive dimensions of the Black body.

61. For those readers who have come across my analysis of Pecola Breedlove in other contexts, I would ask them to continue reading. Because Pecola is such a tragic figure, though fictional, I have been looking for different ways of thinking about her tragedy. She has become dear to me; a subject who needs to be rescued and fully explored. Think of my going over the same text as a structural framework in a jazz piece. In a previous analysis, I improvised Pecola in a Foucauldian framework. Within this piece, I improvise Pecola within a Du Boisian framework, hoping to see if Du Bois might add another improvisatory dimension to understanding her life vis-à-vis the perniciousness of whiteness.
62. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk,” 460.
63. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3.
64. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45.
65. George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 59-60.
66. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 45.
67. Wallace Thurman, *The Blacker the Berry* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 217.
68. *Ibid.*, 21.
69. *Ibid.*, 210.
70. *Ibid.*, 217.
71. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: A Plume Book, 1970), 210. For a genealogical reading of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* within a Foucauldian framework, see my “A Foucauldian (Genealogical) Reading of Whiteness: The Production of the Black Body/Self and the Racial Pathology of Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*,” in *Radical Philosophy Review*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1 and 2, (2001), 1-29).
72. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 90.
73. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk,” 454.
74. W.E.B. Du Bois, “Sex and Racism,” in David Levering Lewis (Ed.) *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 313.
75. *Ibid.*, 313-314.
76. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 48-49.
77. *Ibid.*, 18.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*, 17.
80. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
81. *Ibid.*, 17.
82. Roediger, *White*, 116.
83. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk,” 454.
84. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 34.
85. *Ibid.*, 35.
86. *Ibid.*, 36.
87. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 50.
88. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 38.
89. *Ibid.*, 39.
90. *Ibid.*, 19.
91. Dyer, *White*, 72.
92. *Ibid.*, 50.
93. *Ibid.*, 123.
94. Gary Schwartz, “Toni Morrison at the Movies: Theorizing Race Through *Imitation of Life*,” in Lewis R. Gordon (Ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 123.
95. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 126.
96. *Ibid.*, 127.
97. *Ibid.*, 45.
98. *Ibid.*, 46.
99. *Ibid.*
100. Jana Sawicki, “Foucault, Feminism and Questions of Identity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 292.
101. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 45.

102. I would like to thank philosopher Linda Alcoff for a counter reading of Pauline's relationship with Cholly. In a personal communication, she writes, "In the description of Pauline's sex with Cholly, I wonder if you read this too negatively. She is getting attention, after all, and a kind of positive valuation in his desire for her. Being sexually objectified is not equivalent to rape. Here is where Sartre's characterization of sexual activity lacks complexity."
103. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 160.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., 161.
106. Ibid., 57.
107. Ibid., 173.
108. Ibid., 196.
109. Du Bois, "The superior Race," 471-472.
110. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 250.
111. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 204.
112. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 44
113. Ibid., 274.

supremacy as an organizing value be rendered invisible: whiteness then is treated not only as normal (as under formal white supremacy) but as neutral and universal. Although the U.S., since the end of the Civil War, "is no longer a nation-state explicitly organized as a venture devoted to White Supremacy," as Lucius Outlaw observes, that is not to say that there are not plenty of whites "fighting to preserve white racial hegemony in the absence of white supremacy" (p. 165). Many whites fear, resent, and blame people of color for perceived incursions into white territories. Taking for granted the right to control particular jobs or access to higher education, many whites insist that the presence of people of color in previously all-white enclaves represents a lowering of standards. If even only one or two faculty members in a large academic department are scholars of color, there may be rumblings of "we've gone politically correct" —white code for "in letting in people of color, we have abandoned objective, meritocratic standards." The white assumption in such cases is that, if merit alone were consulted, the department would be all white.

As Outlaw notes, many of the values associated with white supremacy continue to be widely assumed and practiced, but because "white predominance is no longer legitimated by a public philosophy," white entitlements must be rationalized under the coded terms of colorblindness. Through mechanisms such as outright denial, willed ignorance, color-blind etiquette, disciplinary standards, and exclusionary institutional practices, "whiteness *has made itself invisible*" in particular cases, Taylor observes (p. 236). The result of this manufactured invisibility, says Outlaw, is an "especially insidious," unacknowledged version of white supremacy. "The lack of public legitimacy has simply thrust it deeper, to be insinuated in life-world convictions and practices," denied and masked by the rhetoric of color blindness, but still vital. The commitment to white supremacy can be measured by its consequences. The "predominant public philosophy of antiracism and fair equality of opportunity" continues to yield "unequal outcomes—acceptable as long as these outcomes are to the advantage of white folks" (p. 166).

In Paget Henry's Hegelian analysis, "the white supremacist core of the Western master self has remained largely intact," despite significant challenges to its power. The Black Civil Rights movement, economic challenges from the Pacific Rim, and the U.S. defeat in Vietnam have "wounded the master self" without "transform[ing] or overthrow[ing] it." Thus challenged, "the Western master self felt its grip on itself slipping as the resurgent humanity of racialized and colonized subothers began signaling equality rather than the confirmation of its desired white supremacy." Pressed, "this now embattled self was forced to make concessions and to try to conceal more effectively its delegitimized supremacist needs" (p. 206). Reforms such as the white acknowledgment of multiculturalism and acceptance of policies of affirmative action stopped well short of any transformation of race relations, however, and Henry observes that before long even these modest reforms came under attack, as whites blamed affirmative action for a newly discovered rash of incompetence in the workplace. When I ask my students, over two thirds of whom are white, whether they have ever had an incompetent boss or co-worker, most say that they have; when I ask them the percentage of whites in this group, the answer is close to a hundred percent. Yet incompetence in whites is never attributed to race, let alone to centuries of affirmative action for whites. Whereas the incompetence of black or brown workers often will be explained solely by their race, the incompetence of white workers is infinitely variable, attributable to immaturity, old age, personal laziness, neurosis, charm unaccompanied by skill, an overweening ego, lack of application or commitment, selfishness, boss-pleasing looks

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## REVIEW

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### ***What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question.* George Yancy (ed.) New York: Routledge, 2004. xvi + 279 pp.**

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Whether to call whiteness "invisible" has been a source of some contention in critical whiteness studies. As Paul Taylor observes in his fine chapter in the collection, *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, academic debates about whiteness may become contentious in part because the terms are ill defined. Despite considerable consensus as to what is at stake in whiteness theory and which anti-racist moves such theorizing supports, "the fuzziness of the central claims sometimes obscures this consensus" (p. 237). What whiteness looks like and whether it is invisible depend not only on what whiteness is taken to be but on who is doing the looking. From a black, brown, or other designated non-white perspective, whiteness and its power, privileges, and violences are far from invisible.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, "the nonwhites to whom whiteness was quite visible had to invent programs like Asian American studies" so as to counteract "the implicit white bias of mainstream academic disciplines" found in assumptions such as the still-common view that history *means* white history (p. 230). Here, whiteness of a particular kind is invisible in the sense that it is unmarked, unnamed (standard history texts do not refer to Andrew Jackson as "the seventh white, male, heterosexual U.S. president," for example), but taken for granted as the point of reference and standard of value.

Under conditions of legal, overt white supremacy, there is no need for whiteness to be invisible. Only under conditions of nominal pluralism and democratic inclusion must white

or smarminess, creeping insanity, or a blood relation to the company owner. Because competence is implicitly white, the whiteness of incompetence is invisible.

Whereas blackness and brownness either need to be explained or are themselves invoked to explain particular situations, whiteness in Western racial hierarchies is a taken-for-granted operating condition that serves no officially recognized explanatory function. As the socially enforced norm, white is merely the way things are unless “we” say otherwise. Thus, it goes without saying that when we say “president,” we mean a white, male, heterosexual president. Invisible in the sense that it is unmarked, whiteness is taken for granted by whites as the normal state of affairs. Partly this is a matter of white solipsism—what Adrienne Rich defines as “a tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term continuing momentum or political usefulness.”<sup>2</sup> More than irresponsible and anti-relational self-preoccupation, though, whiteness often means an active, willed form of ignorance. Because Western democracy is nominally impartial, the racial contract that grants whites power and privilege at the expense of people of color must be masked by what Charles Mills calls an epistemological contract. Prescribing an “epistemology of ignorance,” the epistemological contract mandates that whites “learn to see the world wrongly but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority.” As a result, “whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made.”<sup>3</sup>

Because commitments to white supremacy must be masked, whiteness is recoded in neutral terms. When an academic department says, “We’re looking for the most qualified scholar, regardless of race or gender,” “most qualified” usually means “white and male”; it does not necessarily mean “most qualified.” Whiteness, then, is a suppressed and in that sense invisible hiring criterion. But while often invisible, whiteness is usually restored to visibility when whites perceive their privilege or dominance to be under threat. Not only white supremacists but mainstream whites who feel injured by so-called reverse racism may then explicitly name themselves as white.<sup>4</sup> In his introduction to *What White Looks Like*, editor George Yancy recalls the white philosophy student who remarked “that because he was the only privileged white male in the class,” he was bound to receive a lower grade than the other students in the class (p. 2). In meetings and at conferences and awards banquets, white, male, heterosexual professors may refer to themselves jocularly as “that vanishing species, the white male” or, less jocularly, may demand attention to the “neglected” experiences of white men. In such namings of whiteness, whiteness is visible primarily as an identity under siege. It is not visible as a system of intellectual, aesthetic, relational, and political values, a set of privileges, or organized dominance.

What whiteness looks like, then, depends on the context and the observer. To many whites, it looks like virtue and righteousness, the so-called Protestant work ethic, patriotism, legal and scientific neutrality, competence, innocence, beauty, and self-reliance. To many African Americans and African Canadians, American Indians and First Nations peoples, Latina/os, Asian Americans, Asian Canadians, and other people of color and Third World peoples, whiteness looks like greed, malice, deception, foolish ignorance, theft, dishonor, and disinformation.<sup>5</sup> In whiteness studies, the term has been given a variety of meanings. As Taylor notes, it is at times a slippery concept. For a great many contemporary researchers, the term “whiteness” is shorthand for white privilege. Following Peggy McIntosh’s lead in referring to white privilege as the “invisible

package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day,” these scholars focus primarily on the “tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, ...and blank checks” that allow whites to move about their worlds more or less freely.<sup>6</sup> For example, McIntosh writes, “I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed or harassed by store detectives.”<sup>7</sup>

Although McIntosh also notes that “other privileging factors” having to do with “class, religion, ethnic status, or geographical location” are “intertwined” with her particular experience of race privilege, many current discussions drawing from her framing of white privilege assume a more generic approach.<sup>8</sup> Some progressive scholars treat white privilege as independent of gender, sexuality, language, ethnicity, nationality, age, class, (dis)ability, region, or religion, while a few insist that white privilege does not really apply to gays, women, Sicilians, or the working class, say. Apart from defensiveness, the rejection of the concept of white privilege may be owed to a mistaken assumption that there is a finite, timeless set of privileges on which all whites are said to rely. Clearly, however, a homeless white man does not enjoy the same privileges as a New England blueblood, nor does a white lesbian mother have the same privileges that a married white heterosexual mother does. Nor are all forms of privilege material. Some forms of white privilege may be largely psychological: as Yancy suggests, poor whites may “deem themselves more important, valued, and powerful” than Oprah Winfrey, “if only because they are white and she is not” (p. 7). In some cases, white privilege may be little more than a never-to-be-realized expectation—the expectation, for example, that one could some day become president.

Even for those who are undoubtedly richly privileged, not all of the “blank checks” associated with whiteness can be cashed. Since the increase in airport security measures following September 11, 2001, Muslims, Arabs, and people of color have overwhelmingly been targeted in “random” searches for weapons, yet whites have not enjoyed the straightforward exemption from suspicion that some regard as their due. Newspaper columnist Kathleen Parker was outraged that she, “a smallish, middle-aged, Anglo-Saxon, 14th-generation American mother/wife/journalist,” was subjected to intrusive anti-terrorist airline security measures. Given her “race, sex, creed, [and] nationality,” Parker wrote, any “thinking human” would not have bothered to consider her as a possible risk. Although her convoluted flight plans and recent ticket purchase indicated that she might fit a possible *statistical* profile for terrorism, her *racial* profile ought to have placed her above suspicion, Parker insisted. Only “to prove a cultural point,” she believed, would anyone indulge in such a waste of her time and others’ resources. “It’s like assigning 50 cops to suburban traffic duty in the midst of inner-city rioting and looting.”<sup>9</sup> As in Parker’s case, white privilege may be a mindset, a set of expectations (tied to a particular social location) that may or may not pan out.

McIntosh’s famous list of racial privileges “is not intended to be generalizable” but is explicitly drawn from her own life; she invites others to “make their own lists from within their own life circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, her list is often treated as canonical. One sees few alternative personal or professional lists.<sup>11</sup> What might a list look like of the privileges enjoyed by a young white lesbian Ivy League-educated environmental lawyer? Those of a single white woman who lives and teaches in an inner-city neighborhood? Of a white, gay factory worker? Of a straight white male associate professor of philosophy? What Yancy calls the “*philosophical* performativity of whiteness” (p. 117)—for example, treating the Western, white, male, academic literature on ethics and epistemology as

canonical, defining pragmatism or phenomenology exclusively in terms of their white, male founders, or equating highly abstract discussions of justice with intellectual rigor—involves specifically academic privileges that many other whites will neither share nor be interested in sharing.

Not all so-called white privileges are best understood as privileges. Although they may function as privileges under the terms of a racialized social order, many forms of white privilege ought instead to be universally available human rights, as Lewis Gordon points out. Physical safety, access to food and shelter, “education through which each generation can achieve its potential,” and “positive aesthetic imagery to transform spaces into places” are not privileges but rights, “imperatives that apply to and for *all human beings*” (p. 175). Other privileges, as McIntosh observes, cannot in good conscience be described in the positive terms that “privilege” connotes, for they refer to forms of control and exclusion that represent violence to others. For example, she notes, whites have the option of not listening to people of color. “Such privilege simply *confers dominance*, gives permission to control, because of one’s race or sex.”<sup>12</sup>

Defining whiteness as dominance shifts the emphasis away from unearned privilege to systemic power. Society is organized to provide institutional support for certain groups at the expense of others. Whereas the oppressed “lack...institutional backing” for their intended actions, María Lugones writes, members of dominant groups can rely on *back up* for their seemingly individual agency.<sup>13</sup> Whiteness, together with other dimensions of institutionalized power, can be understood as the backing given to exclusionary white interests. George Lipsitz points out that the Federal Housing Act that “brought home ownership within reach of millions of citizens by placing the credit of the federal government behind private lending to home buyers...channeled almost all of the loan money toward whites and away from communities of color.”<sup>14</sup> Whether framed as white supremacy, investments in whiteness, or whiteness as property, the characterization of whiteness as dominance insists on the historical, global, systemic, and institutionalized character of hierarchical race relations.<sup>15</sup> Racism thus understood is neither an unfortunate but correctable obliviousness to others nor a vestige of past inequalities and prejudices (as assumed in liberal approaches to race relations), but a boldly protected entitlement.

White entitlement means that preference for whites is taken “as a baseline,” Taylor observes. “Racial privilege becomes a natural right, and establishes the starting point for deliberations about distributive justice. The result, of course, is that proposals to distribute social goods in ways that deviate from the old, asymmetric, racist distributions strike whitely perceivers as *unjust*” (p. 230). Whites’ “fair share” is whatever is best and most. When economist and journalist Julianne Malveaux asked a well-to-do white man “what it was that he wanted,” he replied, “My fair share...I worked hard for it, and now you are asking that I take less.” She objected that he already had almost everything:

“You have more than 90 percent of the city contracts, and more than 80 percent of the police and fire employees. You dominate far more than you should. What else could you possibly want,” I asked in frustration. Without missing a beat the man responded, “All of it.”<sup>16</sup>

With a nod to religiously inflected white righteousness, Du Bois put it thus: “Whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!”<sup>17</sup>

Arguing for the abandonment of “the mainstream liberal ‘anomaly’ framing of race” in favor of theories that interrogate white supremacy, Mills points out that, “unlike the currently more fashionable ‘white privilege,’ *white supremacy* implies the existence of a system that not only privileges whites but is run by whites, for white benefit” (p. 31). Shifting attention away from questions of individual white motivation and access to privilege, the focus on the systemic character of white dominance “capture[s] the crucial reality that the *normal* workings of the social system continue to disadvantage blacks in large measure *independently* of racist feeling” (p. 32). “Although individuals within an oppressed group can at times acquire a great deal of power,” as Gordon observes, the power of a Colin Powell “rarely translates into [power for] the group.” Indeed, the existence of such exceptional figures provides a “further rationalization of the supposed absence of limits” (p. 180).

Oppression as Gordon defines it is not tied to absolute exclusion from the forms of success enjoyed by the dominant group, but refers to “inequality over the conditions by which everyday life can be lived” (p. 178). Oppression, then, does not mean that some members of oppressed groups cannot rise to positions of individual power, but rather that they cannot alter the system or set the terms on which they and others like them may succeed. Whiteness, says Gordon, is “a system of meaning” (p. 182). In such a system of meaning, white assumptions are never interrogated but are taken for granted, treated as normal and obvious. Although social goods in the U.S. are distributed unequally, with black and brown people suffering disproportionately from poverty and poor working conditions, environmental pollution, ill health, crime, police violence, incarceration, premature death, and inferior schooling, the dominant ideology treats these patterns as aberrations. If whites do not have these problems to anything like the same degree, goes the dominant thinking, then the problem must be that people of color do not know how to negotiate the world—do not know how to take care of their health, how to choose a good school, how to avoid trouble. In Taylor’s words, the way that whites “see the world just is the way the world is, and the way they get around in the world just is the right way to get around” (p. 230). The ease of white movement, however, depends on forms of institutional back up not available to others. As Lugones observes, “The successful agent reasons practically . . . within social, political, and economic institutions that back him up.” Not only is he able to form “intentions that are not subservient to the plans of others,” but “he shares in some measure in the control of the context in which he forms his intentions.” He is “a shareholder in power.”<sup>18</sup>

Both whiteness as privilege and whiteness as dominance turn upon the normalizing of whiteness and white values as the taken-for-granted point of reference. As Clevis Headley puts it, “whiteness serves as the norm for social acceptability or what is considered to be naturally human” (p. 94). Further, as Gordon points out, white normativity smuggles in the assumption that whites *exemplify* humanness (p. 181). The conflation of whiteness with normalcy underwrites whites’ assumption that what is common sense for them is common sense for all—so that the adoption of alternative views counts as a clear violation of common (and civic) sense. For example, many whites assume that blacks want full integration with whites, socially as well as economically. When blacks reject this vision in favor of voluntary segregated spaces, whites have a hard time grasping that what they see as inclusive is only inclusive on white terms. Predominantly white social spaces, schools, workplaces, and philosophy departments are safe, friendly environments for *whites*. From a white normalizing

perspective, Headley observes, it is only predominantly white, mainstream institutions—institutions “historically structured on the basis of white privilege and black exclusion” —that count as “beyond race, grounded on rational Enlightenment principles,” and therefore capable of full inclusion. In contrast to particularistic black (or womanist or Latina/o, or queer) settings, these supposedly neutral and culture-free “institutions can readily accommodate any group, regardless of its cultural heritage” (p. 95). Indeed, whites intent upon promoting integration may pride themselves on fostering a welcoming climate for all, failing to realize that the very framing of inclusion as “welcoming” means identifying this space as “our” space, inscribing those who are “included” as outsiders. Welcome to our world: we want you to feel *as if* you belong.

Several of the contributions to *What White Looks Like* take on the liberal insistence that, since race is a social construction, it is not real and should be ignored. This debate is referenced to philosophy more than to critical race and whiteness theories, for in the latter it is understood that to call whiteness a social construct is not to say that it is unreal. As Mills observes, “the standard answer” that critical race theorists give to the objection that “races do not exist” is that races have a “social rather than biological efficacy” that, in a “racialized world,” has real effects (p. 36). Headley, Outlaw, and John McClendon variously point out that to argue that race is not biological or not rooted in eternal essences is not to argue that race is not real; on the contrary, it has countless material health, economic, political, and educational among other consequences. Taking a somewhat different tack, Gordon argues that “much contemporary race theory” treats race reductively, making “the social world into *all there is*” (p. 184). Such theorizing falsely concludes that “there is no material, historical difference prior to these constructions” (p. 185). Yet “if race is [merely] a social construction, why is it that when members of the same designated race pair with each other, they don’t produce children of or who look like the other designated race?” he asks (p. 183). Gordon’s point is not that race is *not* importantly a social construction, but that in privileging the social sciences over the natural and medical sciences, race theorists have developed an overly simple theory of race.

Headley suggests abandoning the metaphor of construction for that of conjuring. Conjuring, he writes, allows us to focus not only on “the making of reality but also the idea of the radical transformation of social reality through immaterial means” (p. 90). The metaphor of social construction is architectural, implying “that there is no world until it is constituted” (p. 91). By contrast, conjuring, an Africana metaphor connoting magic, creativity, and healing, offers us a way to think about “mapping and managing the world in the form of signs,” as Theophus Smith explains.<sup>19</sup> Echoing this language, Yancy speaks of “the mesmerizing power of whiteness” (p. 128) and its “talismanic” character (p. 132), while, elsewhere, Gordon notes the countervailing power of Africana philosophy to create possibilities of freedom. “Like Caliban,” writes Lewis Gordon, “modern Africana thinkers’ use of Prospero’s language is infused with forces of magic: They represent disruptions and rupture.”<sup>20</sup>

Conjuring “implies both that we conjure up the world in the sense of constituting it, but also that we transform a previously constituted world,” Headley writes (p. 91). Whereas the language of construction invites the response of deconstruction, as if whiteness could be dismantled through the rational exposure of its contradictions, the language of conjuring invites skepticism about rational control. Suspicious of the Western philosophical reliance on rational knowledge to guide action, Headley observes that “there is no direct and

rationaly persuasive way of linguistically describing the urgency of this cause,” for the languages of law, politics, and rationality are “infected with the project of whiteness” (p. 103). Our categories and concepts are organized to serve white forms of power. If the role of conjuration largely has been that of “summoning whiteness into the world” (p. 92), argues Headley, it can also be the means of suspending whiteness. “Whiteness cannot be dismantled through rational or analytical means. Its suspension must come in the form of a continuously affirmed refusal to prolong the ontological and existential project of whiteness” (p. 103).

Headley’s focus on a “continuously affirmed refusal to prolong the ontological and existential project of whiteness” stands as an important challenge to several existing approaches to whiteness theory. Some versions of whiteness theory seek to develop critical intellectual tools of deconstruction; others seek to help whites achieve new, anti-racist (or, in some constructions, non-racist) identities; still others attempt to undermine white hegemony by interrupting racist business as usual. Framing whiteness as a *project*—a framing that Outlaw also adopts, albeit in a somewhat different vein, characterizing “racialized White Supremacy as a nation-state project” (p. 166)—emphasizes the elements of lived commitment, ongoing adaptability, and institutional back up that characterize whiteness as not merely an involuntary inheritance of race privileges but, as Yancy says, a “*productive*” exercise of power (p. 114). Thinking of whiteness as a project is helpful in addressing the question raised in Outlaw’s title, as to whether whiteness can be rehabilitated.<sup>21</sup> It also speaks to a number of other important concerns raised by the contributors to *What White Looks Like*: Robert Birt’s question, “Can a white person be authentic? Or must his whiteness condemn him inexorably to the prisons of bad faith?” (p. 55), Blanche Radford Curry’s examination of the possibilities for a “liberating discourse” between the “new African-American womanists and new white feminists” (pp. 255, 259), and Janine Jones’s question, “What does a heart of whiteness *really* desire? What does goodwill desire?” (p. 79).

Jones begins her chapter with a story about Mary, the adopted African-American daughter of Sharon Rush, a white woman. In Rush’s book, *Living across the Color Line*, says Jones, Rush “recalls a scene in which her daughter, Mary, raced with a little white girl. Twice, the two girls tied.” Despite some resistance from the parents, the coach insisted “that the girls race a third time.” This time, the little white girl won; while she was being congratulated, “Mary said to the coach ‘Why did you hold me that way?’ certain that she could have tied the other girl a third time if she had not been held back.” When Rush challenged the coach, he became defensive, demanding, “But *why* should I hold your daughter back?” while the other white parents waited for Rush to make Mary apologize (p. 66).<sup>22</sup> Before she had Mary in her life, Rush tells the reader, she herself—despite a longstanding belief in racial equality—would not have understood the pervasiveness of racism, would have resisted believing that a basically decent white person could enact racism. “Like Rush in her past life,” comments Jones, goodwill whites do not see racism as explaining any events involving other goodwill whites. Either they do not want to “or simply *cannot believe*—evidence to the contrary—that race is relevant to the kind of situation that arose with the coach” (p. 67).

Pondering “the impairment of empathy in goodwill whites,” Jones asks how we are to explain the notable failure of empathy in whites for African Americans. Surely, she writes, we cannot say that the goodwill white who refuses empathy is being rational—“that her way of *not* understanding you is, after all, serving her practical purposes” (pp. 78–79). In Jones’s

view, “it cannot serve her practical purposes to deliberately misunderstand the people around her, as long as they really do exist independently of her and have goals and values and emotions of their own” (p. 79). What this analysis assumes, though, is that such a person is motivated relationally. It assumes that it could never be worth it to her to win if winning meant forfeiting others’ good opinion and affection, let alone if it meant cheating, lying, and being known to have cheated and lied. Unfortunately, we do not have to look far to recognize that people in positions of relative power often are motivated specifically by winning, having the last word—even if that requires refusing to see how others see one.

The project of whiteness all too often involves an insistence on winning at any price, while being given the benefit of the doubt and being assumed to be innocent. It means being heard by others while refusing to listen in turn. The longstanding pattern of white feminists ignoring the voices of womanists and feminists of color, as Curry notes, has meant that “by choice, white race privilege remains invisible in the work of white feminists” (p. 257). Indeed some white feminist philosophers have hotly and self-righteously defended such a choice in the name of pluralism. Because whites do not have to listen to people of color and have an investment in not doing so, they often don’t. “As the ‘unequals’ of whites, blacks are spoken to, not listened to or *communicated with*,” as Yancy observes (p. 111).

Even in the academy, nominally dedicated to free and open inquiry, whites rarely have to listen to people of color if they don’t want to. Often, of course, there are no people of color. But even when there are, the terms of listening and speaking usually are set by whites (the exceptions being departments in which white paradigms specifically are called into question, as in African American studies programs), in the form of supposedly neutral policies, curricula, etiquettes, pedagogies, and standards. Not only is writing and reading as if whiteness were neutral the standard, expected approach in the academy, it is likely to be treated as a moral-intellectual stance. To call attention to white patterns of sense-making is to challenge the standards of objectivity, rigor, and neutrality upon which the disciplines pride themselves. It is to render explicit a racial economy that so thoroughly organizes meaning that, to many scholars, it is invisible. According to mainstream scholarship, whiteness is the absence of color; to bring up race is to *introduce* color where there was none before. The past decade’s outpouring of critical whiteness scholarship has called the normativity of whiteness into question in a number of academic fields, perhaps most notably history, cultural studies, and literature. Many fields of study, however—among them philosophy, psychology, religious studies, and children’s literature—have remained largely untouched by the emergent scholarship on whiteness and critical race theory.<sup>23</sup> Despite the important critiques of whiteness mounted by a number of philosophers, philosophy as a discipline has remained resolutely white.

The challenges to the philosophical and epistemological norming of whiteness date back at least as far as W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Carter G. Woodson, with James Baldwin and Audre Lorde figuring centrally in the later part of the twentieth century. In the past two decades or so, Charles Mills, María Lugones, Lucius Outlaw, Cornel West, Laurence Thomas, Elizabeth Spelman, Linda Martín Alcoff, Marilyn Frye, Sarah Hoagland, Lewis Gordon, Sandra Harding, Alison Bailey, and George Yancy, among many others, have mounted powerful challenges to philosophical business as usual, calling attention to the variety of ways in which the discipline is invested in whiteness. Yet, as Mills has pointed out, mainstream philosophy continues to ignore the issues of imperialism, colonization,

racism, and reparations that “have been central to the political struggles of the majority of the world’s population. Their absence from what is considered serious philosophy,” he argues, “is a reflection not of their lack of seriousness but of the color of the vast majority of Western academic philosophers (and perhaps *their* lack of seriousness).”<sup>24</sup>

Challenging the proclaimed universalism of mainstream philosophy, Arnold Farr observes that “philosophy’s universal claims about the human condition systemically, systematically, and persistently omit the experience of oppressed social groups, especially those of African descent” (p. 145). Rationality and consciousness, for example, are explained “without considering the ways consciousness develops in the oppressed” (p. 145). Philosophy as a discipline holds that “there is no white perspective but only the universal, impartial, disinterested view from nowhere. However, for those who have been and are victims of racism and its long-term effects,” Farr points out, “the whiteness of these interpreters is quite visible. Whiteness becomes visible in the very absence of a serious consideration of the problem of race in philosophy” (p. 154).

*What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* is the first collection of essays that explicitly takes up contemporary African-American challenges to philosophical whiteness. Providing a number of powerful challenges to the carefully maintained invisibility of whiteness in philosophy, the contributors take on Rawls, Hegel, Kant, Dewey, Zack, Appiah, and Gutman, along with anonymous white feminists. For the time being, the whiteness of Marx, Heidegger, Levinas, Habermas, Richard Rorty, Martha Nussbaum, and Charles Taylor is left unexamined. So too, for the most part, is the reflexive question as to how the whiteness of the discipline affects the work of philosophers of color. Insofar as the disciplines perform a disciplining function—teaching us how to ground our work in the literature, how to mount an argument, and how to cite, for example—they shape the kinds of meanings we make.<sup>25</sup> While a number of the contributors to this volume do speak to this issue, primarily by calling upon the Africana tradition in philosophy, perhaps the most intriguing analysis of the personal consequences of disciplinary whiteness is that offered in Joy James’s chapter, “The Academic Addict,” in which she uses the trope of white supremacy as addiction to destabilize the familiarity of ordinary academic practices.

“Syllabi and bibliographies are paraphernalia,” she writes. “Addiction makes you convoluted, hiding in words” (p. 264). In her academic writing, James tries to “remember the ancestors,” but has to work to learn to be faithful. “It is opportunistic to call them only in prefaces, and immature to run to them only in crises” (p. 266). Here, I think, James speaks to a pattern that is unfortunately common to most whiteness theorizing, including my own and including that found in the present volume. Other than the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Toni Morrison (as well as that of a number of contributors to the volume, such as Mills and Outlaw), substantive references to generative black and brown theorists do not play a large part in these analyses—Baldwin, Woodson, and Lorde, for example, are not cited, work by critical race theorists such as Kendall Thomas and Mari Matsuda is not consulted, and indeed most work by black and brown feminists, womanists, and queer theorists is notable by its absence. My point is not that particular scholars of color should have been cited, but rather that even when we challenge whiteness and patriarchy, we tend to privilege whiteness and patriarchy. Grounding the present discussions of whiteness in some of the generative work by queer theorists and feminists of color might have tempered the tendency in these chapters to treat

whiteness in sweeping terms without addressing the ways in which particular forms of whiteness are caught up with heteronormativity and patriarchy. (Many of the authors do acknowledge the class and national interests that intersect with whiteness.) Finally, drawing upon Latin American, African, and other Third World philosophical work, as well as work outside of traditional philosophy, would have helped to call into question mainstream philosophy's claims to map the world. As Outlaw pointed out recently, it is granting too much to philosophy to allow the discipline to exclude work from other countries and other traditions, work that asks similar questions about meaning and value, just because it does not conform to the standards or does not consult the canon authorized by generations of white men.<sup>26</sup>

Despite these caveats, the contributions of the book are extraordinary; the collection offers rich and resonant engagements with the questions that grip many of us—questions about bad faith, relationality, justice, and the nature of knowledge. I have only been able to suggest, here, some of the ways in which the book speaks to these questions. The chapters themselves far outstrip anything that I have been able to say about them (and I have sadly neglected some of my favorite chapters). This book is a gift as well as a challenge to white philosophers such as myself, who seek to engage in a multiracial dialogue about the whiteness of our discipline, our judgments, our perceptions, and our assumptions. “The real work of whiteness studies,” writes Taylor, lies not in any further theorizing of whiteness but “in cashing out, in concrete terms, the social realities that the epistemic reorientation...is supposed to uncover” (p. 238). Although I am not certain that all the necessary work in whiteness theorizing is behind us, I agree that the most important work that such theorizing does is to inform concrete analyses—analyses of our institutions, our policies, our practices. *What White Looks Like* cashes out some of the important ways in which whiteness is performed in the academy, leaving us with vital challenges regarding the work yet to be done.

I would like to end with a challenge of my own. Those of us who are white often rely on our colleagues of color to enhance the diversity of our departmental offerings and to bring students of color into our disciplinary programs. We congratulate ourselves on making our own contribution by including three or four scholars of color in the syllabus—a syllabus which otherwise clings tightly to the comfort and familiarity of white academic narratives. As Adrienne Rich has written, “white feminists are not going to transcend the past through careful ‘inclusion’ of one or more black women in our projects and imaginings; nor through false accountability to some shadowy ‘other,’ the Black Woman, the myth.”<sup>27</sup> What I want to ask, and to have us think honestly and profoundly about, is: What are we—white philosophers and other academics—doing to move beyond an imaginary or abstract “accountability” to blackness and brownness? What do we need to learn and what practices must we change, if we are to embrace an actual accountability, based in meaningful intellectual, pedagogical, civic, and personal relationships, to the black and brown people we know and those we have neglected to listen to, neglected to know?

#### Endnotes

1. I resort to the phrase “designated non-white” because racial color is not necessarily a matter of personal identification. Some who regard themselves as white may not be viewed as white by the dominant society in the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. What counts as white in Iran, for example, does not at present count as white in the U.S. For the most part, in this review, I rely on the terms “black”

and “brown” to refer to people of colors other than white. Although by no means unproblematic, this decision reflects the most common current usage. (Other usage specifies red and yellow in addition to brown, black, and white. This once-familiar practice seems likely to become common again in the future; however, it has not thus far been taken up widely by the groups so named.)

2. Adrienne Rich, “Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynophobia,” in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966–1978* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979), 306.
3. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18. Italics removed. Mills’s work has been enormously influential in philosophical work on whiteness. In addition to informing much of the recent literature in the field, including *What White Looks Like*, it was the centerpiece for the Rock Ethics Institute’s *Ethics and Epistemologies of Ignorance* conference, March 26–27, 2004 at Penn State University, organized by Nancy Tuana and Shannon Sullivan.
4. For example, see the discussions of resentment-based whiteness in Howard Winant, “Behind Blue Eyes: Whiteness and Contemporary US Racial Politics,” *New Left Review* no. 225 (Sept./Oct. 1997): 73–88; and Charles A. Gallagher, “White Reconstruction in the University,” *Socialist Review* 94, nos. 1 & 2 (1995): 165–87.
5. A small sampling of the literature in this area would include Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990); James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948–1985* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1985); Keith H. Basso, *Portraits of “The Whiteman”: Linguistic Play and Cultural Symbols among the Western Apache*, illus. Vincent Craig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992); John Henrik Clarke, *Africans at the Crossroads: Notes for an African World Revolution* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1991); Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1983); Vine Deloria, Jr., *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); W. E. B. Du Bois, *An ABC of Color* (New York: International Publishers, 1989); W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folk,” in *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*, ed. David Levering Lewis (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1995), 453–65 [orig. 1920]; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks: The Experiences of a Black Man in a White World*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Alma M. García, ed., *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997); John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New York: Vintage, 1980); bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1982); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984); María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1981/1983); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage: Random

- House, 1992); Sherene H. Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978); Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches by Malcolm X*, ed. Benjamin Goodman (New York: Merlin House/Monthly Review Press, 1971); and Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1933/1972).
6. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1995), 76, 77. This influential piece first appeared as Working Paper No. 189 (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1988).
  7. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 79.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. Kathleen Parker, "Airline Security Inspires No Confidence," *The Salt Lake Tribune* (February 10, 2002): AA1. This explicit appeal to "common sense" brackets together inner-city residents, young men "of Middle-Eastern descent," foreigners, and, implicitly, Muslims, as security risks who should not be extended the exemptions due to a middle-class white woman.
  10. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 77.
  11. The only published account I have seen that takes up McIntosh's challenge to name one's own set of privileges is Ruth Anne Olson, "White Privilege in Schools," in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*, ed. Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart, and Margo Okazawa-Rey (Washington, DC: Teaching for Change, 1998/2002), 81-82. No doubt most such lists remain private. When I ask my students to generate their own lists, they are able to do so, but of course their lists are never published.
  12. McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege," 83.
  13. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 211.
  14. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 5.
  15. See, for example, Mills, *Racial Contract*; Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1707-91; and Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*.
  16. Julianne Malveaux, *Sex Lies and Stereotypes: Perspectives of a Mad Economist* (Los Angeles: Pines One Publishing, 1994), 15.
  17. Du Bois, "Souls of White Folk," 454.
  18. Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, 211.
  19. Theophus Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). p. 4. [Quoted in Headley, p. 91.]
  20. Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.
  21. In "Behind Blue Eyes," Winant characterizes whiteness in terms of several different projects, with a view to understanding how whiteness might be rearticulated.
  22. Sharon Rush, *Living across the Color Line: A White Adoptive Mother Learns about Race* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).
  23. Although whiteness theory (or, more often, other critical race-based analyses) may be taken up in these fields, such approaches are treated as marginal to the dominant scholarship in the area. By contrast, whiteness in historical scholarship represents a burgeoning (if nevertheless controversial) area of research.
  24. Mills, *Racial Contract*, 4.
  25. See Mari Matsuda, "Affirmative Action and Legal Knowledge: Planting Seeds in Plowed-Up Ground," *Harvard Women's Law Journal* 11 (Spring 1988): 1-17; Ann duCille, "The Occult of True Black Womanhood: Critical Demeanor and Black Feminist Studies," *Signs* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 591-629; Hazel V. Carby, "The Multicultural Wars," in *Black Popular Culture: A Project by Michele Wallace*, ed. Gina Dent (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), 187-99; and Audrey Thompson, "Gentlemanly Orthodoxy: Critical Race Feminism, Whiteness Theory, and the *APA Manual*," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 27-57.
  26. Lucius Outlaw, "Social Ordering and the Systematic Production of Ignorance," keynote paper at the *Ethics and Epistemologies of Ignorance* conference, March 26-27, 2004 at Penn State University.
  27. Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization," 307.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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