The Double Politics of Double Consciousness: Nationalism and Globalism in *The Souls of Black Folk*

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During the course of his impressively long life, W. E. B. Du Bois occupied a bewildering range of positions, both on the domestic front of African American politics and on the international front of the anticolonial politics of the emergent Third World. As the recent and widely commemorated centennial of his masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) reminds us, the most influential and ubiquitous African American intellectual and political figure of the twentieth century was also its most penetrating, prescient, and—to this day—haunting anatomist of racial subjectivity. The striking simultaneity with which the outer territories of domestic and world politics converge with the inner territories of psychic life in Du Bois's writings, or with which the evocation of racial nationalism coincides with the invocation of racial globalism, imposes, as few other bodies of work do, the necessity of learning to think doubly about the scene of political identification. Double consciousness, as Du Bois terms the iconic state of

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"unreconciled strivings" that is both the curse and the gift of African American being, is a case in point: both contemporaneous with what is often characterized as Du Bois's nationalist phase and philosophically coterminous with his career-long effort to think outside the space and time of the nation.[1] Time and again, Du Bois's writings construct nationalism and globalism as neither philosophical antitheses nor chronological others but rather as secret sharers, mutually sustaining conditions of being in whose agonistic embrace lies a quite different story of political evolution than the one we have been accustomed to tell.

Critical studies have narrated a certain passage, even progression, from Du Bois's science to his politics, from his art to his ideology, and from his nationalism to the various globalisms of his pan-Africanism, socialism, communism, Third-Worldism, diasporic consciousness, and most recently what Ross Posnock terms his "cosmopolitan universalism."[2] Conversion narratives, though blessed

1. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 5. Further references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

2. Charles U. Smith and Lewis Killian read Du Bois's 1910 departure from Atlanta University and academic sociology for an executive position at the NAACP as the moment when "Du Bois the sociologist had become Du Bois the ideologist of social protest." See Smith and Killian, "Black Sociologists and Social Protest," in *Black Sociologists: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. James E. Blackwell and Morris Janowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 195. For a related argument, see Elliot Rudwick, "W. E. B. Du Bois as Sociologist," in *Black Sociologists*; and Rudwick, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Voice of the Black Protest Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Another version of this chronological narrative organizes Arnold Rampersad's study *The Art and Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), which traces the "vocational tension" between Du Bois's three careers as "historian and sociologist, poet and novelist, and propagandist" (47).

Eric J. Sundquist's comprehensive examination of Du Bois in *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) updates the narrative, identifying not only a division within Du Bois's writing but also a link, in the form of later works' "completion" of the earlier works' vision (550). In yet another variation on this theme, Cynthia D. Schrager describes the tension and ultimate transition between Du Bois's positivistic social science and his messianic mysticism rooted in late-nineteenth-century spiritualism in "Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W. E. B. Du Bois," *American Quarterly* 48 (1996): 551–86. Probing the postfoundationalist dimensions of Du Bois's intellectual shifts, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) credits Du Bois with a diasporic cultural politics that resists and even "transcend[s]" the narrow particularisms of racial, ethnic, and national "absolutism" (121). In a similar vein, Ross Posnock's *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) reads Du Bois as the advocate of a "cosmopolitan universalism" that offers a necessary alternative to cultural studies and its guiding "ideology of 'authenticity' " (21). Thomas C. Holt provides a notable exception to the chronological plot in observing that "Du Bois's paradoxical positions may be taken as somehow emblematic of the African-American experience generally" and by arguing for the "necessarily interactive" relationship of those positions. See Holt's "The Political Uses of Alienation: W. E. B. Du Bois on Politics, Race, and Culture, 1903–1940," *American Quarterly* 42 (1990): 305–6.

with a certain thematic tidiness and chronological certitude, bifurcate at their peril. For as a close reading of Du Bois's writings reveals, he was shaped not just by the transition from one intellectual or political framework to another but also, and possibly more so, by their ongoing contention, collusion, and coexistence. This is the intellectual equivalent of living with double consciousness: sustaining two opposed allegiances, choosing neither, thinking through both. What I want to signal in *Souls*, and Du Bois's work more generally, is a distinct form of national and racial thinking that finds its expressive medium and its oppositional force in a certain kind of globalism. Rather than asserting that Du Bois is more global than national, that his globalism succeeds, transcends, or sublates his nationalism, I suggest, with double consciousness as my model and postcolonial and psychoanalytic theory as my method, that it is only because he is one that he can also be the other.

I take the imbrication of the national and the global to be a hallmark of the analysis we have come to call "postcolonial," an analysis that finds its central method, as the late Edward Said elegantly instructed, in "contrapuntality"—the uncovering of "intertwined and overlapping histories" precisely where there seems to be only a single one; only empire, say, or only resistance, only the national or only the global.[3] I take as another hallmark of the postcolonial a certain temporal disquietude signaled in the much debated "pastness" of the term itself, which prematurely announces the passing of something that remains in forms both residual and resurgent. Just such overlapping of spaces, just such intertwining and haunting of times, distinguish Du Bois's long career. To understand Du Bois through the problematic of the postcolonial is thus not only to hear his thundering voice on the world stage of anti-imperialism, decolonization, and new nationhood; not only to place him in the company of a worldwide revolutionary cadre of black intellectuals like C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral who instantiated the postcolonial era; but equally to detect beneath the surface of Du Bois's global politics the ghostly traces of other affiliations (nation, race) that refuse to die and continually rise to haunt—even where, especially where, they seem no longer to belong. If such palimpsestic work mirrors postcolonial criticism's imperative to read the residues of an imperialism it claims to have bypassed, it equally responds to psychoanalysis's spectral discourse of a past that always returns.[4] This essay

3. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 18.

4. In contrast to Keith Byerman's assessment of Du Bois as "the wronged son" in his *Seizing the Word: History, Art, and Self in the Work of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) and Claudia Tate's survey of Du Bois's overdetermined mothers in her *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), I suggest a psychoanalytical approach to Du Bois rooted in the rhetoric of psychic temporality.

seeks to reveal how Du Boisian double consciousness overlaps and intertwines with the identificatory politics of nationalism and globalism; how it deploys distinct ideologies of racial history, racial memory, and the racial psyche to suture nationalism to globalism; and finally, how it enlists certain strategies of narration, especially literary allegory, in order to create a contrapuntal or dialectical formalism that yokes opposites together at the scene of psychopolitical desire.

What Does a Black Man Want? The Double Form of Double Consciousness

First published in the August 1897 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* under the title "Strivings of the Negro People," reprinted in the first chapter of *Souls*, and famous for a century for its description of the "two warring ideals" of Americanism and Africanism, Du Bois's description of double consciousness can also be read as an account of two contending notions of race. In the broadly evolutionist description with which the well-known passage begins, the Negro comes "after the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian," a "sort of seventh son" whose fate it is to fall last on the progressive line of Hegelian world history (5). The line of seven coexists here with the agon of two as Du Bois immediately recasts blacks as the possessors of a uniquely double identity, "born with a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American world." Two is in this sense far more than seven, for where seven fixes the meaning of race through apposition, positioning the Negro either as civilization's origin or afterthought, two opens it through opposition to other orders of space, time, and meaning. For all its tragic splitting of the black subject into "an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals," the oscillating mode of racial twoness refuses to accept their subsequent placing at opposite ends of evolution's line and in separate realms of national life. Double consciousness divides the black subject precisely in order to imagine his eventual "merg[ing]" into a "better and truer self" in which neither half is lost and both coexist: "This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia the Shadowy and of Egypt the Sphinx" (5–6).

The proleptic time of national belonging, in which it will be "possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" (5), goes hand in hand with the analeptic time of global longing, in the form of a racial memory that links blacks in America to blacks in Africa. Against the historical depredations of social, spatial,

and temporal dislocation (waste, dispersal, forgetting), Du Boisian double consciousness offers a different politics of location, one that restores, reconnects, and remembers in order to lay a different kind of claim to all kinds of territories, both inner and outer. Memory thus functions as a subjective mode of the migrancy that has lately become a defining feature of what might be characterized as the deterritorialized Du Bois—a Du Bois who reaches out to cosmopolitan, diasporic, pan-Africanist, and internationalist affiliations precisely to the extent that he is understood to disassociate himself from particularist and bounded forms of identity, first and foremost national and racial belonging. As migrancy, however, memory directs us not so much *away* from the national-racial particular as out of it and then back again. This is a psychic politics of location in which being national can never be altogether disentangled from feeling global. Reaching outward to Ethiopia and Egypt, the black subject reaches inward into America; accessing a global racial memory, he envisions a different national racial future. Memory's movement readily shuttles the warp of time and the woof of space between the domains of past and future, national and global, individual and collective, in order to weave a new conceptualization and textualization of black identity.

The full force of this model is best grasped in contrast to then-dominant social-scientific discourse, which customarily thought racial identity in terms of evolution. For American sociology in its formative period in the last decades of the nineteenth century and through World War I, social evolutionism's doctrine of progress provided a framework within which to plot the specifically American circumstances of emancipation and urbanization, immigration and assimilation, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Widespread acceptance of Herbert Spencer's stagist model of racial development and the Lamarckian tenets he favored, including environmental adaptation and the biological inheritance of acquired characteristics, underwrote calls to restrict the immigration and integration of those ethnic, racial, and national groups considered incapable of adapting to America, progressing beyond "arrested" levels of social and mental development, or ultimately approximating the acceptable forms of citizenship.[5] Du Boisian double consciousness, by contrast, employed a less deterministic, more fluid language to

5. Herbert Spencer, "Progress: Its Law and Cause" (1857), reprinted in Spencer, *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1910). On U.S. influence, see John S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 121–52; George Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 234–69; and Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870–1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 10–26, 240–41.

describe subjective individual and collective experience in a mixed and syncretic society. This is not to say that double consciousness finds freedom from racial evolutionism in race psychology. Double consciousness is not about freedom from one state of being and subsequent entry into another—an essentially chronological plot of identity. Instead, double consciousness presents—and this is its peculiar ontological strength—a state of being defined by the refusal to choose between opposed identities, be it those of the "Negro" and the "American" that the passage describes or those of the contending discourses that subtend its description. I have glossed these discourses as the law of seven and the agon of two, but they might equally be named as the structuring presence of Spencerian social evolutionism and Hegelian historical teleology, on the one hand, and on the other, the "new psychology" propounded by Du Bois's Harvard mentor William James.

James understood the self to be emblematically split, partially "hidden" to itself, and subject to various processes of multiplication, fluctuation, and simultaneity as "fields" and "streams" of consciousness that offered the very obverse of dominant positivist models of internally homogenous and comparatively different races and nations, each fixed at a particular point on history's timeline.[6] Whether James's mystical philosophy of mind provided a template for Du Bois's notion of double consciousness, as several critics suggest;[7] or whether, as David Levering Lewis claims, the "psychic purgatory" of Du Bois's own racial identity was all that was needed to produce a theory of the divided self,[8] one fact remains.

6. See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) and *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), especially "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished." On James as a revolutionary social scientist whose psychological models of mind contradicted deterministic laws of instinct, behavior, heredity, and evolution, see Reba N. Soffer, *Ethics and Society in England: The Revolution in the Social Sciences 1870–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 32–45, 135–61; Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 239–43; and David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois—Biography of a Race, 1868–1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 1:87–96. For a useful introduction to the "new psychology" and a discussion of James's contributions, see Robert C. Fuller, *Americans and the Unconscious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially chaps. 3, 4.

7. On James's influence on Du Bois, see Rampersad, *Art and Imagination*, 68–90; Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 571–72; Posnock, *Color and Culture*, 10–11, 18–19, 35–36, and 57–58; Dickson D. Bruce, "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," *American Literature* 64 (1992): 299–309; Thomas J. Otten, "Pauline Hopkins and the Hidden Self of Race," *ELH* 59 (1992): 227–56; and Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W. E. B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888–1903* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 153–68. Du Bois himself describes his debt to James in *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940; New York: Schocken, 1968), 578, 590, 770–71.

8. Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois—Biography of a Race*, 1:96.

Du Bois's unique anatomy of racial and panracial, national and global identifications, its doubled simultaneity nowhere better distilled than in the description of double consciousness, found expression there in what we cannot fail to recognize as a concept of the racial psyche, however much we may question its sources and origins. Through the construct of the racial psyche—internally divided, linked outside itself, endlessly moving between the space and time of the self and that of the other—Du Bois elaborates the broadly connective thinking for which *Souls* and his later works are justly famous. As Du Bois's earliest and most lasting articulation of the idea of the racial psyche, double consciousness provides both the ground and the figure, the philosophical condition and the expressive modality, of his double politics.

In a stringent counterargument to the one just outlined, Adolph Reed charges that the idea of double consciousness "by and large disappeared from Du Bois's writing after 1903." Citing Du Bois's acknowledgment in the subsequent year of August Weismann's rediscovery of Mendelian genetics, Reed concludes that by 1904 Du Bois "had begun revising his thinking about race in ways that were incompatible with the neo-Lamarckian resonances surrounding the double consciousness idea."[9] In Reed's narrative, the idea left behind by Du Bois has been perversely reanimated by several generations of political historians, psychologists, philosophers, and literary critics in order to serve their own purposes, ranging from 1920s integrationism to 1960s nationalism and 1980s academic race theory. Scholars in the last group warrant Reed's most severe criticism for having disconnected double consciousness from the intellectual history of early-twentieth-century social science and Progressive Era politics, only to dubiously link it through "assertions and intimations," "inference" and conjecture, to other intellectual genealogies, notably the work of G. W. F. Hegel, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Josiah Royce, and most of all William James, in an effort to foreground the psychological dimensions of Du Bois's idea.[10]

9. Adolph Reed, *W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 124. Reed refers to "Heredity and the Public Schools," Du Bois's 1904 lecture to the Principals' Association of the Colored Schools of Washington, D.C., reprinted in *Pamphlets and Leaflets by W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (White Plains, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson, 1986), 45–52.

10. Reed, *American Political Thought*, 105 and n. 80, 98 and n. 44. On Hegel's influences on Du Bois, Reed cites Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 134; Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Robert Gooding-Williams, "Philosophy of History and Social Critique in *The Souls of Black Folk*," *Social Science Information* 26 (1987): 106–8; and Jacqueline Stevens, "Beyond Tocqueville, Please!" *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 987–90. On the collected influence of James,

Certainly Du Bois's understanding of race at the time of *Souls* was that of a turn-of-the-century American social scientist, described by George Stocking as hereditarian, Lamarckian, and convinced that "complex cultural phenomena were carried in the 'blood,' if only as 'instincts' or 'temperamental proclivities.'"[11] And certainly there are clear traces of this social evolutionism, and the curiously biologized notion of culture and identity it underwrote, in the notion of double consciousness. If, however, we read double consciousness as it teaches us to read, we cannot see it as purely the product of social evolutionist thinking but rather as a notion locked in a dialogue between that thinking and some emergent alternative. That alternative is variously sociohistorical, sociocultural, even psychocultural with regard to what race is, and variously national and global with regard to where race is situated. If we wish furthermore to avoid recasting the evolution of Du Bois's understanding of race as an altogether too tidy passage from biology to culture, a chronological conversion narrative of the sort I have argued against, we have to go back to double consciousness and see that what it describes—the condition of contending opposites—is also what it is. In other words, double consciousness demands the discernment not only of its famously warring identities ("an American, a Negro"), but equally of a set of competing and colluding discourses—the biological and the cultural, the social and the psychic, the material and the metaphoric, the historical and the spiritual, the national and the global, the forward-moving plot of racial progress and the backward-moving gaze of racial memory, all paradoxically, explosively, condensed into the fraught figure of the black man in America.

Perhaps it is the distillation of so much into so little that explains the staying power of double consciousness in twentieth-century scholarship on black politics, literature, and culture. Such rhetorical overdetermination and conceptual excess implicitly demand that we grasp, or forge, connections between seemingly separate discourses, ideas, even zones and times of existence.[12] Double consciousness,

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Royce, and Emerson on Du Bois, Reed cites Rampersad, *Art and Imagination*, 74; Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 487, 570–71; Bruce, "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness," 304; Kimberly Benston, "I Yam What I Am: The Topos of (Unnaming) in Afro-American Literature," *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 170; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 186–88, 249; and Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 142–43.

11. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 251, 256.

12. Thus, where Reed advocates for the "synchronic focus" of contextualizing Du Bois's thinking within that of his peers and his moment, as opposed to the "diachronic telescopy" that he under-

then, is not only the specter haunting black studies but also the ghostly image of a critical method that the field simply cannot live after or without. This method, less conjectural than conjunctural,[13] is as germane to black studies as to postcolonial and psychoanalytic studies. All three, I think, can benefit from serious consideration of Du Bois through the lenses of migrancy and memory. This is not a Du Bois imperialistically annexed by the respective concerns of postcolonialism and psychoanalysis, but rather a Du Bois with something to say to those and other critical fields and perhaps even with some way to renew them. Du Bois gives to postcolonial studies a figure in which, contrary to the thrust of much recent argument, nationalism and racialism did not give way to a hybrid, cosmopolitan, globalism but rather coexisted alongside and in some profound sense through it. With regard to psychoanalytic theory, Du Bois (like Fanon) offers a model of the psyche deeply embedded in the most material questions of racial, national, and global identity. If *Souls* is something like our collective critical conscience, a haunting reminder of the half-finished project of racial equality and of the intellectual's responsibility to advance it, it is equally, or could become, our collective critical model. Reading *Souls*, I suggest, we may learn how to speak the pull of the particular and the push of the universal in the same breath.

Double Consciousness and Dialectical Formalism

The fact that Du Bois was thinking race, at the time of *Souls* as throughout his career, through a multiplicity of discourses, some inherited, others invented, none

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stands to mark interpretations that advance "putative chain[s] of influence," I would urge a reading that thinks through both axes and even through their convergence. Reed, *American Political Thought*, 107, n. 80.

13. I take the model of conjunctural analysis from Antonio Gramsci's reconceptualization of history as a series of kaleidoscopic movements in which distinct subsets of dominant and subaltern classes now join or "articulate" at their points of commonality to produce hegemony, now break apart along their differences to produce change. As usefully glossed by Stuart Hall, Gramsci's theory of articulation rethinks the units and methods of social analysis in terms of positionality—from his rewriting of the concept of the ruling class, unified in itself and in its action, into brokered, constellated, constantly renegotiated historic blocs; to his redrawing of history's line as conjuncture's pattern and his reimagining of the nation-state as, in Hall's words, "not a *thing* to be seized, overthrown or 'smashed' with a single blow, but a complex *formation* in modern societies which must become the focus of a number of different strategies and struggles because it is an arena of different social contestations." Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 19. As I understand it, a conjunctural analysis of Du Bois explores how nationalism and globalism, gender and race, sociology and psychology, the line of progress and the agonistic dyad of doubleness all come together and break apart in order to produce social and conceptual change.

of them wholly independent of the others, argues for a more connective, conjunctural, or contrapuntal approach to his writing. By way of example, I consider another passage from the first chapter of *Souls*. As Reed disapprovingly notes, only a few pages after his opening description of racial twoness, Du Bois appears to shortchange the darker half by describing Emancipation's optimistic vision of equality as "the dreams of a credulous race-childhood" (11). The phrase, like so many found in Du Bois's writing, is blatantly paternalistic and elitist, worthy of Spencer, Freud, Hegel, or any other great primitivist, and clearly embedded in the very developmentalist narratives Du Bois is purportedly trying to denounce. Yet if we follow the phrase through the entire passage (as Reed does not), something rather different emerges. Referring back to Emancipation's vision of equalities to come, "physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands," and asking "Are they all wrong,—all false?" Du Bois responds: "No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete,—the dreams of a credulous race-childhood or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power" (11).

This passage's formal claim for a combined strategy of equality that will unite bodily integrity under the law, the exercise of the ballot box, and the opportunity of the classroom is also a claiming of form. As such, the passage provides an exemplary instance of the yoked structure on which Du Bois's thinking of race and nation so frequently depended. So in a sentence that is itself a locked embrace of opposites, one race's dreams of equality are another's simultaneous desire and fear, recognized in "fond imagining" precisely because they are denied in fact. For all its seeming initial allegiance to the developmentalist doctrines of social evolutionism, the law of seven, the sentence is nonetheless much more indebted to the agon of two, that drama of interlocked self and other that is both the dream and the nightmare of difference. That the sentence references the most material of facts—freedom, power, education—in the language of dream, fantasy, and inner life argues not for its betrayal of double consciousness's account of race (its abandonment of the split race-man and return to the credulous race-child of social-scientific custom) but rather for an ongoing echo of double consciousness's central feature—namely, its doubling of the thing it describes and the form in which it does so, what I call dialectical formalism. "To think dialectically," explains Fredric Jameson, "is to invent a space from which to think . . . two identical yet antagonistic features together all at once."[14] *Souls*'s oft-cited

14. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 234.

polydiscursivity is in this sense the dialectical form of double consciousness writ large—a persistent twinning of such seemingly opposed yet intimately entwined idioms as the sociological and the literary, the ethnographic and the psychological, the cultural and the economic, the political and the personal, the prophetic and the elegiac, the manifesto and the memoir, and perhaps most famously, the juxtaposed fragments of European poetry and slave sorrow songs that open every chapter. All of these, the text seems to imply, are as necessary as the overarching metaphor of double consciousness in order to represent the "strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century" (1).

Double consciousness is clearly too double for singularizing interpretation, too intimately connected to other social discourses and material histories to be simply reduced to a purely psychological figure of split subjectivity or a psychic rhetoric of temporality. But to altogether dismiss the psychic resonances is to miss something fundamental about Du Bois's politics. What we have been accustomed to think of as doubleness might equally be understood as the multiplicity and connectivity of a politics that constantly reaches outside a set of bounded norms (nation and race foremost among them) toward more unbounded definitions of those very norms. If nation and race subsequently expand, deterritorialize, and move, whether in the discrete example of double consciousness or in *Souls* more broadly, they do so in no small part because of their subjection to the category of memory in particular and the psyche in general.

Thomas J. Otten credits the popular dissemination of spiritualism and Jamesian psychology with providing late-nineteenth-century American culture with what he calls "the sort of analytical plot that we now think of as Freudian," in which a "hidden" or lost part of the self can be accessed and brought to the surface of consciousness through the work of memory. Such painstaking reconstruction aims at once to restore the past, to work through it, and to move beyond it in the interest of someday living differently.[15] It is the particular genius of double consciousness to produce Du Bois's own version of such an "analytic plot," within which he has recourse to a particular kind of time (racial memory and racial history, troped, as Otten points out, as Africa) in order to then lay claim to a different kind of racial space—not the divided world of Jim Crow America but that utopian space of belonging within which "it might be possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American." Du Bois's use of this "plot" need not make him a black James

15. Otten, "Pauline Hopkins," 229. For a related argument see Susan Gillman, *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 148–99.

or, if we want to entertain a notion for which there is even less evidence, a black Freud. To argue so would be to grossly misrepresent Du Bois's profound achievements and to caricature the kind of critical method I am calling for. More then simply seeing psychic resonances in the notion of double consciousness, more than reconstructing the path of influence by which those resonances got there, this method explores what cognitive work the discourse of the racial psyche performs in a given articulation of nationalism and to what political aspirations and textual strategies it is allied.

In the emblematic case of double consciousness, the travails of a masculine racial psyche split on the terrain of national belonging ("an American, a Negro") are set within the feminized and fantasized geographies of Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx as places of recuperation and restoration. Egypt the Sphinx is both a racial memory, a form of time that returns the African American subject to its forgotten origin, and a distinctly diasporic space, a reminder that for some subjects it is only by going outside the national, only by inhabiting alternative kinds of space and time, that they can lay claim to a nation that variously anteriorizes or exteriorizes them on the forward-moving line of progress. The final pages of *Souls* similarly turn to the extranational space-time of world history in order to make the point that the place currently occupied by blacks on the timeline of progress cannot be where they are doomed to remain and is not even where they always were.

> The silently growing assumption of this age is that the probation of races is past, and that the backward races of today are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of peoples irreverent toward Time and ignorant of the deeds of men. A thousand years ago such an assumption would have made it difficult for the Teuton to prove his right to life. Two thousand years ago such dogmatism, readily welcome, would have scouted the idea of blond races ever leading civilization. So wofully unorganized is sociological knowledge that the meaning of progress, the meaning of "swift" and "slow" in human doing, and the limits of human perfectability, are veiled, unanswered sphinxes on the shores of science. (214)

For American proslavery scientists of the second half of the nineteenth century, ancient Egypt was a once Caucasian, now diluted and degenerate, nation in which blacks were understood to have occupied their appropriate places as slaves and servants. But for Du Bois and his Ethiopianist contemporaries, Egypt was the very bedrock of black history, and the stone sphinx was perhaps its most privi-

leged symbol.[16] Blacks' claim to recognition as a race decidedly "worth the saving" rests in Du Bois's account on two familiar tactics. The first of these depends on dialectical inversion (what blacks are now is what Teutons once were). The second of these deploys a rhetoric of temporality that looks outside the moment and place of the present in order to anticipate a different future. Here, as in many of his other writings, Du Bois can be seen to share with early sociology, anthropology, psychology, and psychoanalysis a complex negotiation of race and time that marshals developmentalist plots of identity and history only to simultaneously disrupt them by reference to what (or whom) they leave behind or fail to remember.[17] These remainders, of which *Souls* is a veritable catalog, return to ghost progress with its others.

The sphinxes that flank *Souls'* beginning and end thus replace the inherently racialized timeline of progress with an alternative haunted iconography and chronology of race. Via a version of history that relies not on chronological sequence but rather on the temporal oscillation and geographical convergence associated with the work of the racial psyche, Du Bois's sphinxes are made to break away from their "own" place on the world-historical timeline and instead install the imaginative connection that brings Egypt, the territory of racial memory, to America, the territory of national belonging. Finally, in their ultimate appearance in *Souls* as in their first, the Egyptian sphinxes are a form of time (memory) and of space (diaspora) that connects divergent points as well as a mode of representation that itself takes linkage through movement as its animating principle. In other words, the sphinxes are allegories. It is in this form that they reveal the inner logic of double consciousness and its double politics.

Memory's Textuality: The Psychic Work of Allegory

"Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century" (1). So begins the "Forethought" to *Souls*. History in Du Bois is that which has been

16. For a discussion of Egypt as one of Du Bois's "signature sites" and its conceptual "multivalence," see Gillman, *Blood Talk*, 186–99. For historical accounts of the uses of Egypt in dominant Euro-American racial discourse, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); and Robert Young, "Egypt in America: *Black Athena*, Racism and Colonial Discourse," in *Racism, Modernity, and Identity: On the Western Front*, ed. Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 1994).

17. For a provocative discussion of race and time, see Charles Lemert, "The Race of Time: Du Bois and Reconstruction," *boundary 2* 27, no. 3 (2000): 215–48.

"buried" and must therefore surface, like the "repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history" in whose "restor[ation] to the surface of the text" Jameson finds the function of the political unconscious (20). Du Bois's history rises up in the ghostly forms of racial memory and in the promise of a racial future yet to be redeemed. Such oscillating time is the proper domain of allegory, the literary mode that is perhaps more than any other history's equivalent. Allegory traditionally denotes a form of interpretation in which two parallel, temporally distinct levels of signification are read in such a way that one is understood to provide the key to the other. "Allegories," writes Walter Benjamin, "are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things."[18] Allegory thus marks the formal presence of a particular kind of time in which the past outlives itself, a time that demands that the subject return to the past as it surges into, even becomes contemporaneous with, the present. Benjamin calls "medieval" the style of allegory that persistently closes the gap between past and present, history and future, the first level of signification and the second. By contrast, "baroque" allegory exploits that gap, finding within it the occasion of a character Benjamin calls "dialectical" (171). The doubled or dialectical moment of allegorical return has a talismanic force in *Souls* from the Egyptian sphinx onward and in fact forms one of the text's leitmotifs. In allegory's function we see again double consciousness's work of double reading, carried forward in a formal medium that is itself the expression or, in Jamesonian terms, the structural displacement of an unconscious both political *and* racial. Allegory, in other words, is how the racial psyche writes itself in *Souls*.

Within the classical medieval-religious form of allegory to which *Souls* is so powerfully indebted, "Egypt" denotes bondage and implies a freedom to come in the prefigurative fulfillment of time. It is in this sense that chapter 7 of *Souls* describes Georgia's rural Dougherty County, in the heart of the Black Belt, as "the Egypt of the Confederacy," home to "perhaps the richest slave kingdom the modern world ever knew" (100–101). Now, Du Bois remarks, the land is a mere echo of its former self, a ghostly geography of phantoms, remnants, and ruins that serves as a reminder that all that was once there was "built upon a groan" (102). As this chapter and the following one make clear in their portraits of the devastating poverty of sharecropping, wage labor, and tenancy, passage from the second Egypt has brought only destroyed dreams, broken promises, "the slavery of debt" (128), and the recapitulation of that which had supposedly been left

18. Walter Benjamin, "Allegory and *Trauerspiel*," in *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 177–78.

behind. In contrast to medieval allegory's temporal teleology of prefiguration and fulfillment, the circular rhythms of a slavery that never ends signal the presence of a different kind of allegory, one indebted less to eschatology's time than to memory's, that same time that I have argued structures Du Bois's racial psyche and enables its historical and political life.

In Du Bois, as in Benjamin and Jameson, allegory is the vehicle of history. In Du Bois's case, allegory is furthermore what allows for history's double cast: in the Benjaminian mode of ruin, as the cause of the decay and disorganization that haunts the racial subject; and in the Jamesonian mode of revolution, as the very means of that subject's deliverance. What the lived history of slavery's ruination and Jim Crow's deprivation take away, the remembered history of Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx will restore, in the fulfillment and fullness of a time when it will be possible to be both Negro and American, both American and African, and, if we look toward Du Bois's later politics, both African American and part of a global color line that "belts the world." Perhaps the necessary interdependence of history's two levels—history as what is lived and history as what is remembered or redeemed—is what it finally means to imagine history as allegory, that is, as a form of representation whose two levels or two selves are not chronologically sequenced or hierarchically positioned so much as deeply imbricated with or articulated to one another. History in this sense is itself a form of double consciousness.

To understand the dialectical nature of historical allegory in Du Bois and, furthermore, to isolate the raced and gendered material that provides its symbolic content, it will be helpful to consider yet another critical voice. Paul de Man's 1969 essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality" returned to Benjamin's "Allegory and *Trauerspiel*" in order to present allegory not as history's double but rather as its rhetorical fantasy. For de Man, allegory is how history misreads itself. Unlike irony ("the mode of the present"), allegory "exists entirely within an ideal time that is never here and now but always a past or an endless future." Thus, "irony is a synchronic structure, while allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration as the illusion of a continuity that it knows to be illusionary."[19] As the rhetorical mode that, in de Man's words, "takes us back to the predicament of the conscious subject" (a subject he also describes as "a

19. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 187–228, 226. For an excellent reading of this essay and Benjamin's, and a supple theory of national allegory, see Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), chap. 1.

divided self"),[20] irony is *Souls*'s preferred register for describing the conflicts of an explicitly racialized, implicitly masculinized double consciousness. Recall, for example, chapter 4's concluding lament: "How shall man measure Progress there where the dark-faced Josie lies? How many heartfuls of sorrow shall balance a bushel of wheat? How hard a thing is life to the lowly, and yet how human and real! And all this life and love and strife and failure,—is it the twilight of nightfall or the flush of some faint-dawning day? Thus sadly musing, I rode to Nashville in the Jim Crow car" (62). In this passage allegory belongs to Josie, irony to Du Bois. A similar gendered division of labor structures the description of double consciousness, which yokes the divided racial subject's strictly ironic apprehension of "a peculiar sensation . . . 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" to the imaginary territories of an America to come and an Ethiopia and Egypt that were—forms of allegorical time expressed in feminized bodies and geographies. Though *Souls* is punctuated, often piercingly, by an irony that details the sudden falling of the veil over one who imagines he has risen above it, the text is more indebted to the diachronic sweep of allegory, in which it finds the mirror image of its unceasing temporal fluctuations between a distant racial history and a racial future to come.

True to allegory's refusal to occupy a single moment in time (de Man's "here and now"), Du Boisian allegory resists redistricting of all kinds. In Jameson's now notorious formula, "all third-world texts are necessarily . . . allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*."[21] In Aijaz Ahmad's forceful critique, Jameson's model of allegory tends toward totalization, employing the inherently flattening discourse of "Three Worlds Theory" in order to argue, in Ahmad's words, "the proposition that the 'Third World' is a *singular* formation, possessing its own unique, unitary force of determination in the sphere of ideology (nationalism) and cultural production (the national allegory)."[22] Du Boisian double consciousness argues against the position ventriloquized by Ahmad, against the notion that one could ever limn identity without reaching beyond the singular and toward the double. Reading the rhetoric of double consciousness, in which nation always lies alongside globe and national allegory regularly employs global form—from the positivists' timeline

20. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 222.

21. Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69.

22. Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory," in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New York: Verso, 1992), 119.

of world history to the alternative time of cross-continental racial memory—thus teaches us to see allegory, as much as the history to which allegory points, in double form. By this logic, allegory, even the subset of "Third World allegory," cannot be "always" national. For allegory is never just one thing but always both that thing and its dialectical double. This is also to say, as Benjamin and de Man suggest, that allegory makes its meaning through its movement. Building on their arguments for allegory as a species of historical consciousness (Benjamin) or *méconnaissance* (de Man), both of which emphasize allegory as a rhetoric of temporality, I suggest that allegory's temporal movement underwrites its capacity to narrate spatial movement, in particular the movement between the national and the global.[23] This is the movement that structures double consciousness and later provides the organizing pattern for *Darkwater* (1920), *Dark Princess* (1928), and *Black Reconstruction* (1935).

Conclusion

It is relatively easy to discern *Souls*'s debt to the nineteenth century's favored explanatory mechanism, the timeline of progress. And it is strikingly clear that Du Bois's simultaneous adoption and disruption of that narrative was the sign of someone who was using the conceptual tools of his moment in order to change its understanding of African Americans. This essay has begun to explore the presence in *Souls* of other, more uncertain and mobile modalities of time *and* space. To the extent that Du Bois's consciousness of nation, race, and globe were all entwined (perhaps nowhere more concisely than in *Souls*'s description of double consciousness), a conjunctural analysis would want to ask at what specific points and by what means they are joined together. Certainly race itself provides a suture, thanks to its double meaning as both the shattering source of division, difference, and discrimination within the nation and the redemptive site of memory, connection, and affiliation across the globe. It has been my further contention that *Souls* turns to two additional modes in order to link nation, race, and globe. First, *Souls* deploys a certain kind of time for which the psyche, with its recursive temporality

23. Jameson's essay later turns to the possibilities of allegorical movement, citing "the capacity of allegory to generate a range of distinct meanings or messages, simultaneously, as the allegorical tenor and vehicle change places." Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 74. Although I cannot rehearse the argument fully here, suffice it to say that Jameson's literary theorizing of what he calls "the allegorical spirit" ("profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol," 73), works against the broader totalizing claims of his essay.

of memory, at once backward-looking and forward-moving, provides a model. Second, *Souls* enlists a certain literary figure, allegory, that is also characterized by a back-and-forth movement between two orders of time, space, and signification. If psychic space-time finds condensation in the resolutely masculine figure of double consciousness's "two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder," allegory on the other hand is persistently linked to the female and feminized bodies that litter *Souls*—from dark Josie left behind by the forces of Progress; to the slave mother, that "figur[e] of the present-past" who, along with the Southern gentleman, "ever stands to typify that day [of Emancipation] to coming ages" (26); to the relentlessly feminized compromiser Booker T. Washington; and, of course, to the female figures of Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx. The expansive geography of a masculinized racial psyche can thus be seen to depend on allegory's gendered substratum, just as the far-flung coordinates of Du Bois's globalism are subtended by his nationalism.

Such a reading orients us differently to the question of Du Bois's nationalism, so often understood as the prelude to his globalism. Reaching backward to Ethiopia the Shadowy and Egypt the Sphinx, voicing the claims of racial history and racial memory, allows Du Bois's Negro to reach up and into an America that would exclude him. Double consciousness thus describes a psychic time that is simultaneously a political space; a time whose back-and-forth movement provides the measure of a nationalism and globalism that can never be plotted on a timeline of ideological progress (nationalism first, globalism after). Double consciousness is also emphatically not the assimilationist plot of racial identity *becoming* national identity, another chronological progression from one autonomous entity to another. Rather, double consciousness attempts to understand race, nation, and globe in terms of the quite different spatiotemporal plot of simultaneity. Race and nation, nation and globe are in this sense not constituted "before" or "after," "inside" or "outside" each other. Rather, they coexist in a mutually sustaining fluctuation between seemingly opposed yet secretly conjoined states of being. This process is analogous in its work to what Nahum Dimitri Chandler has called the "economy of desedimentation," by which he understands a process in which a previously essentialized category, namely "race," is at once used and altered, deployed and evacuated, in such a way as to "elaborate a sense of being that in itself could not be reduced to some simple essence."[24] Race as Du Bois imagines

24. Nahum Dimitri Chandler, "The Economy of Desedimentation: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Discourses of the Negro," *Callaloo* 19 (1996): 80, 85.

it and nation as he articulates it (both in the expressive sense of giving it voice and the Gramscian sense of linking or constellating it to other categories of being and global constituencies of affiliation) are not reduced to the fixed typology of essence, the status of being one thing. Instead, race and nation expand to be several things simultaneously. It is this expansion and simultaneity that characterize Du Boisian space-time most broadly and allow him to sustain, in *Souls* and subsequently, a distinctly doubled or desedimented sense of race and nation. Without it, neither his nationalism nor his globalism could have come into being.

The model of a nationalism always already inflected by globalism and of a globalism that cannot help but return to the scene of nationalism stands to change our evaluation both of Du Bois's politics and of the textual forms in which we have read those politics. For example, we might begin to think differently about the apparent paradox of *Souls*'s turn to a markedly global, cosmopolitan language in order to express its unique brand of African American nationalism. Defined as an ideology of border crossing, cosmopolitanism shapes *Souls*'s vision of history (in which ancient Egypt, precolonial Africa, and early-twentieth-century America are all linked in a racial continuum), of literature (in which the ideal free black subject can aspire, as Du Bois himself does, to sit with Shakespeare and Aurelius "above the veil"), and indeed of literary form itself (*Souls* is notable for the border crossing of its multidisciplinary, polygeneric form). But this cosmopolitanism of form in *Souls* does not necessarily imply a related bypassing or transcendence of nationalist identification. Allegory, I have suggested, is the formal expression of the conjoined nationalism and globalism that is the political unconscious of *Souls*. So, too, might *Souls*'s cosmopolitan form be said to be the symptom or trace of the globalism its border-crossing style mirrors and of the nationalism implicit within and inextricable from that globalism. Seen in this way, *Souls* is a different kind of founding text. National in its address, diasporic in its form, and marked throughout by processes of movement, be they those of migrancy, memory, or the allegory that is their textual double, *Souls* emerges as the kind of text that both grounds a tradition and keeps it moving.

To return to the idea that has been my major concern, one could argue that double consciousness has a second life in Du Bois's career-spanning figure of the color line, which is also emblematically racial, national, and global, both dividing (as the line of racial discrimination within the nation) and connecting (as the line of panracial affiliation that "belts the world"). It is equally possible to read Du Bois's career-spanning strategy of allegory as inheriting the mantle of double consciousness, allegory as the long formal shadow of the new kind of thinking about race, nation, and globe that double consciousness gestures toward.

Unpacking this textual process, showing how and why nationalism and globalism are linked together, teaches us something about how to read Du Bois and about how he teaches us to read. The reading strategies that Du Bois's oeuvre elicits, even demands, are contrapuntal, conjunctural, and, quite simply, *big*. We always knew we had to think big (and read close) with Du Bois; we just didn't know how much.

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