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Racing toward History: Utopia and Progress in John Guare's *A Free Man of Color*

JOANNA MANSBRIDGE



ABSTRACT: *This article examines the way John Guare's A Free Man of Color (2010) mobilizes a metatheatrical aesthetic to question the methods we use to organize our understandings of the past and formulate our projections of the future. Looking specifically at George C. Wolfe's production at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theatre and drawing on the work of Reinhart Koselleck and Ernst Bloch, the article shows how Guare's densely textured epic stages a metatheatrical duel between two competing forces of history: one grounded in Enlightenment notions of progress (rational, linear, forward movement), the other in utopia (an imagined future always on the horizon). As progress and utopia jostle for the authority to define the history – and so also the future – that the play re-enacts, it becomes clear to the audience that what is at stake, in our present, is the meanings and practices of citizenship, race, sexuality, and class that history defines.*

KEYWORDS: *John Guare, utopia, progress, affect, George C. Wolfe, meta-theatre*

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.

– Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*

A Free Man of Color, John Guare's first new play in eight years, premiered at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater in November 2010, with a cast of twenty-one playing forty characters. As scripted by Guare and directed by George C. Wolfe, the play is a densely textured and visually stunning epic set mainly in New Orleans at the dawn of the nineteenth century. The script captures the affective energy and frenetic pace of the play's precise historical moment: 1801–1806, just before and after the Louisiana Purchase, when New Orleans was passed among Spain, France, and finally, the United States, and

when colonial expansion was on the mind of most western leaders. As colonialism, the slave trade, and revolutions in France and San Domingo converge and clash, *Free Man* stages a metatheatrical duel between two competing forces of history: one grounded in Enlightenment notions of progress (rational, linear movement toward an end goal), the other in utopia (an imagined future always in process). Staging history as a competition to define what the future will mean, Guare's play questions the methods we use to organize our understandings of the past and formulate our projections of what is to come.

As "an imagined or hypothetical place, system, or state of existence" (*OED Online*), utopia is not a physical location but an imagined ideal, a useful fiction integral to any political theory, including progress. Utopian writings and movements – from Plato's *Republic* to Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* to Mormonism – depend on the future tense, a "not-yet" that productively complements the "as-if" of performance. There has been important work exploring the utopian potential of theatre and performance, and my thoughts on *Free Man* follow from and build on this work.¹ The free man of colour in Guare's play, Jacques Cornet (played in the premiere production by Jeffrey Wright) is himself a utopian fiction, created by Guare and by Cornet's own metatheatrical authority as the writer of the play we watch. Moreover, the New Orleans in which he lives is a utopian community, teeming with decadent sensual pleasures and unrepentant debauchery (a stark contrast to the utopian religious communities of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America). Both Cornet and his New Orleans remind us that history, like utopia, is always in the process of being realized and that the future is always open to revision.

The idea of progress, however, within the tradition of Enlightenment thinkers like Francis Bacon and John Locke, proposed the teleological development of an ideal (read: white, Christian, elite) civilization. It was a method of organizing historical time and propelling social change, and it emerged as a dominant theory in a historical moment that emphasized rational thought, linear models of social advancement, and the realization of predetermined goals. Taken up by the Founding Fathers of the United States, most notably in Thomas Jefferson's influential notion of an "Empire of Liberty" (Hendrickson and Tucker ix), progress converged with utopian ideals in a unique synthesis of goal-oriented political practice and open-ended social theory. As deployed in the great American experiment, the idea of progress was democratized and linked to ideals such as virtue, happiness, and above all, individual freedom. The American idea of progress envisioned "man" as free to define himself and the direction of his life. Cornet sees himself in these terms, as the author of his own destiny and identity. But finally, as a "free man of color," in an era that did not grant him the rights of a subject or citizen, he represents the contradictions within and between these two founding

American ideologies – utopia and progress – embodying at once the failed utopian promise of individual liberty and the material effects of progress as a political practice. Cornet's freedom and self-definition are gradually undone by the laws of the nation state and the institution of slavery, while his utopian belief in "Illyrian time" (89) is overtaken by the telos of progress.²



FIGURE 1: Joseph Marcell, Jeffrey Wright, and Mos in *A Free Man of Color* © T. Charles Erickson

Cornet begins the play by announcing to the audience that he is the playwright of the play we are about to see. In Wolfe's production, Cornet, accompanied by his manservant Cupidon Murmur (Mos),³ stood before a plush red velvet curtain that hung from a proscenium arch (designed by David Rockwell) conspicuously perched on the thrust stage in the Vivian Beaumont Theater. Setting out to refashion history with a confidence born of brocade, Cornet tells the audience that his play's subject is the "sanctity of surfaces. The value of veneer" (Guare 2). Cornet's Wildean appearance and emphasis on the truth value of artifice points to his dramatic function as an embodiment of the theatre's doubleness, which undoes distinctions between appearance and reality, fiction and fact. As an actor onstage and a character in Guare's fiction, Cornet both is and is not real. His duplicity is positioned at a further remove through the metatheatrical framing of Cornet as both actor in and author of the play we watch. As a character in his own play, Cornet's existence is ephemeral, his "truth" in his appearances. And as the author, he claims an authority not granted to him "in reality." Significantly, his play unfolds not behind but before the velvet curtain, a metatheatrical reminder that history is a matter of appearances – of what is visible, performed, and put into action. And as the play and the history it presents unfolds, Cornet's theatrical "truth" as a free man of colour is overtaken by progress as the dominant force of history, and the proscenium arch and velvet curtain are replaced by symbols of political power (maps, flags) and of temporal and spatial displacement (ships, "white spaces").

Free Man begins on the eve of Mardi Gras, in 1801, when New Orleans was "[t]he free-est city in the world," a place where "you c[ould] be whatever you declare yourself to be" (Guare 5). Dr. Toubib (Joseph Marcell), "*a man of reason*" (3), narrates the play, acting as a mediator between audience and playworld and inviting the audience to "[t]ake off your twenty-first century glasses . . . Imagine the unimaginable. Race is a celebration! See the lush palette of skin tones in New Orleans" (5). At the centre of this "celebration" is Cornet, the son of a wealthy white father and an African American slave. Having inherited his father's fortune, which he used to buy his freedom and live a libertine lifestyle in New Orleans, Cornet assumes that, by virtue of his wealth and appearance, he is exempt from the practice of slavery, both in France and in the United States. He identifies as neither a black man nor a slave but rather as an aristocrat and unapologetic womanizer. Like race, gender and sexuality operate along an unpredictable spectrum of desires and impulses in utopian New Orleans, which was accentuated in Wolfe's production through cross-gender casting and cross-dressing characters. As a port city at the mouth of the Mississippi River, New Orleans was, in 1801, an epicentre of trade and a cosmopolitan kaleidoscope of life and colour. In this precise

historical moment, New Orleans was free of any fixed national identity and relatively unbound by social conventions, its inhabitants living in a kind of utopian no-place, on the cusp of dramatic socio-political changes.

The play marks the precise moment when progress and colonial expansion transformed the city and its people, including Cornet, binding them under the laws of the nation-state. The play's historical characters – including Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon Bonaparte, General Le Clerc, and Meriwether Lewis – enact the principle of progress, as each struggles for the authority to write history and map out the future. Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingans interrupt these competing visions of time and history with the spectre of revolution. *Free Man* is poised in a historical moment when ideas of history and temporality were shifting and when geopolitical conflicts were playing out on a global scale. The play's affective shifts from decadence and sensual pleasure to anxiety and despair, along with its generic shifts from the cyclical optimism of comedy to the end-driven telos of tragedy, work to position it in this historical moment of transition. Moreover, Wolfe's production compelled the audience to see history as a visceral, shared, and deeply embodied affair. In what follows, I examine *Free Man*'s dramatization of progress and utopia as competing social theories, political practices, and forces of history that remain active in our present. To borrow the words of Joseph Roach, the play stages “the deep eighteenth century” (*It* 3), a modern era that extends from the Restoration to the present. History – as the play's characters, action, and aesthetic suggest – is “a densely woven fabric of thousands of threads” (3) that moves in many directions, takes many forms, and is informed by, among other things, abstract theories, embodied performances, spatial displacement, and affective encounters. All of these forms of history, moreover, shape the contours of our present and inform our visions of the future.

FORMS OF HISTORY

The idea that history (and so also the future) is *made* is, of course, a defining idea of modernity. A seminal articulation of this way of understanding history is found in Karl Marx's “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte,” which looks at the French coup of 1851 from a materialist perspective:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and

costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. (188)

We are both subjects making history and products of history. History is figured by Marx as an inheritance, a resurrection, and a *theatrical performance*. Exploiting the theatricality of the stage to demonstrate the modern idea of history as something made – and remade – *Free Man* “conjures up the spirits of the past . . . borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present a new scene of world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.” History appears in the play in a kind of drag, so to speak, with the present posing as the past, using theatrical devices, spatio-temporal shifts, and impersonations to defamiliarize the present. Moving from a utopian playworld to a playworld driven by progress, and from bawdy comedy to haunted nightmare, *Free Man* reverses Marx’s oft-quoted statement that “all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur . . . the first time as tragedy, the second as farce” (188).

In an interview, Guare explained how he

early on stumbled upon the truth that farce is tragedy speeded up. Filling up that hunger . . . The want becomes a need. The need becomes a hunger and because you’re speeding it up so much . . . [t]he intensity puts it on the edge . . . and if you’ve got a stageful of people at that psychic, manic state, and an audience in tune with them, then something dangerous might happen out of that hysteria. You want to move the audience to a new part of themselves. (85)

Guare is keenly aware of the way dramatic form carries with it a whole set of social relationships and structures of spectatorship; dramatic forms shape ways of seeing, at the same time as they are shaped by the material conditions of spectatorship. As Raymond Williams reminds us, *form* carries with it two senses: “visible or outward shape, and an inherent shaping impulse” (186). Williams writes, “[E]very element of form has an active material base,” including “modes of consciousness” (190). So while “new formal possibilities” carry with them “inherent[] possibilities of a newly shared perception, recognition, and consciousness” (189), residual forms carry with them traces of the past, which emerge as feeling, belief, potentiality. Outdated dramatic forms replay a whole structure of feeling, which can work to defamiliarize the present by revealing its continuity with the past. Framing his play as a Restoration comedy, Guare juxtaposes the time signified by that particular dramatic form with the time of the audience, thus constructing a dialectical spectacle that forges a conversation between a seemingly inaccessible past and an often opaque present. Positioned at the beginning of the modern era, the play moves from a utopian theatrical present tense to an accelerated race to conquer the future.

Guare uses a highly metatheatrical aesthetic as a lens through which to revise – literally, “to see again” – the past, challenging understandings of history as a stable, written account of the past and questioning progress as the organizing principle of modernity. This is no traditional history play but a play that displays history as performance (an embodied doing, a process) and performative (a speech act that performs the action it speaks). Guare borrows liberally from the dramatic canon, most obviously from the main plot of William Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*, in which the womanizing Horner fakes impotence to try to regain the trust of the husbands he has cuckolded. Preening lady’s man Cornet (French for “horn”) is clearly modelled on Horner, while Cornet’s half-brother, Pincepousse, and his wife, Margery Jolicoeur, are modelled after the Pinchwife and Margery of Wycherley’s play (a couple Wycherley transposed from Molière’s *School for Wives*). *Free Man* implicitly links theatre’s and history’s fabrications, not to draw distinctions between historical fact and theatrical fiction, but to juxtapose the performative force of history (the authoritative account of the past) with the performance of history (an unauthorized, ongoing process). Cornet’s utopian vision of what could have happened / what could happen problematizes the finality of history as an account of what happened.

The metatheatricity of the play was further accentuated in its premiere production by the echoes produced by casting and direction. Audiences at Lincoln Center might have recalled Jeffrey Wright’s majestic performance as Belize in the 1993 Broadway production of Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, which garnered him a Tony award for Best Performance by a Featured Actor. George C. Wolfe directed both *Angels in America* and *Free Man of Color*, his authorial signature evident in both productions in the skilled handling of epic structures, deliberate deployment of an extravagant theatricality, and effective incorporation of dream-like sequences. Moreover, Wright’s co-star in *Free Man*, Mos, was also his co-star in Suzan-Lori Parks’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Topdog/Underdog* (2001). In Parks’s play, Wright and Mos played Lincoln and Booth, respectively, two brothers who repeat a personal and national history of violent conflict. This theme, in turn, was revisited from Parks’s earlier *The America Play* (1994), which restages Lincoln’s death as theatrical re-enactment and recasts the role of Lincoln as an African American character named the Foundling Father. These performative echoes exemplify the repetition and revision (or rep & rev) central to Parks’s theatrical aesthetic. As both a theory of history and an aesthetic, repetition and revision work in her plays as a form of resurrection – of bodies, voices, and sensations – an unearthing and remaking of the past in and as the present (Parks 10). In *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson describes “the haunted body” of the actor, who plays many roles and so becomes a kind of living archive of intertextual

meanings as each “new role evoke[s] the ghost or ghosts of previous roles” (8). As co-stars in *Topdog/Underdog* and then again in *Free Man*, Wright and Mos duplicate the return of history that both Parks’s and Guare’s plays stage.

The minstrel show is another ghost of theatre history haunting Guare’s play. As Restoration comedies were waning in popularity in Europe, black-face minstrel shows were emerging in the United States as the nation’s most popular form of entertainment. Cornet’s performance can be read as a reverse minstrel show, a caricatured performance of a stock character (the Restoration rake) historically and symbolically coded as white. Moreover, his defamiliarized performance of race recalls the Foundling Father in Parks’s *The America Play*; positioning the black male body at the centre of American history and culture, both Guare’s and Parks’s plays point to the role of theatrical representation in the formation of race as both a discourse and identity in the United States. As Soyica Diggs Colbert points out, the theatrical black body “shapes history” by challenging “the notion that . . . an event should and will remain in the past” and asking to be “incorporated into history” (264). By writing his play, Cornet writes himself into (theatre) history as a free citizen of a utopian community. And even though his role is rewritten by the events and institutions around him, he remains determined to find a place. “I need to play a role in this Hobbesian juggernaut called history,” he declares. “I need to know where I fit” (44).

Colour, as a micro-formal element, plays a central role in the production of meaning in *Free Man*. The costumes and décor of the early scenes, as well as the ubiquitous references to race and, specifically, skin tone, emphasize the visible – the seen, the legitimized – as the material from which history is made. In his author’s note to the 2014 Dramatists Play Service edition of the play, Guare explains, “In the New World at this time, there was a vocabulary of more than a hundred terms for people of mixed race” (6). On the one hand, this elaborate spectrum reifies race; on the other hand, in Wolfe’s production, the “lush palette of skin tones” (5) was represented not as ideology or politics but as artifice. Cornet’s belief in appearance – “the sanctity of surfaces” (2) – as the source of his social power implicitly invokes and defamiliarizes a modern discourse of race, in which the “truth” of race is determined primarily by outward, visible signifiers. Kenan Malik explains that, in the Enlightenment era, “the notion of ‘rights,’” like equality and freedom, “acquired a metaphysical aspect” and came to be seen as rooted “in nature” (42), rather than in social relations or political conditions. This “reification and naturalisation played an important role in the creation of a discourse of race,” by positing abstract ideas of “social equality and common humanity” that could be understood through racial difference (42). And as Karen and Barbara Fields point out, Thomas Jefferson, ambivalent as he was in his attitudes

toward slavery and race, himself developed an “elaborate catalogue of differences” between whites and blacks, ranging from skin colour and internal organs to intellect and emotions (18). Staging the *theatricality* of race – not, to be clear, reducing race to a spectacle but rather reinforcing it as both a way of seeing and a discourse constructed in time and through performance – *Free Man* defamiliarizes its ideological associations for a contemporary audience. Moreover, the richly coloured fabrics and furnishings of the early Restoration scenes contrasted sharply with the later scenes, in which the white spaces of an unknown future were signified by Rockwell’s stark, bare stage and underscored by Cornet’s drab appearance. The history that Guare’s play scripts and that Wolfe’s production brought to life emerges, first, as a shimmering display of textures, which, when juxtaposed to the bleakness of the later scenes, productively displaces the empirical “fact” of race with the “truth” of theatrical appearances.

Standing out in the “lush palette of skin tones” (5) is Pincepousse (Reg Rogers), who describes himself as “extremely white and my blood extremely blue” (8). He and Cornet share a father, but Pincepousse is quick to clarify that “my mother was a *Duchesse*. His a mere possession.” Pointing to his dramatic function, he adds, “I am also the plot” (8). Indeed, Pincepousse is able to move in and out of the play at will, a theatrical trick that undermines Cornet’s authority and suggests the shifts of power in this moment of socio-political transition. When Pincepousse says of Cornet’s mother that she was “[b]ought and sold for a very trivial price” (79), Cornet defends her honour by challenging him to a duel. Yet even after Cornet kills him, Pincepousse returns as a ghost to witness Cornet’s downfall. Pincepousse emerges as a past that refuses to go away and that remains as irritant. In contrast, his wife, Margery, embodies a possible future. She enters the play in Act Two, dressed in drag, claiming to be pregnant with Cornet’s child. Guare leaves the veracity of her claim in question in a stage direction that reads, “*Is she pregnant?*” (75), which underscores that the future is always yet to be determined. Pincepousse and Margery personify disjunctive temporalities in the way they embody a tenacious past and possible future and also in the way they replay theatre history; not only are they ripped straight from Wycherley’s play, but their performances exploit two of the most enduring theatrical devices: ghosts and cross-dressing.

TIMING HISTORY, PLACING HISTORY

Guare’s play stages a liminal period in history, between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, when utopian theories coexisted with the theory of progress that emerged in the Enlightenment and when experiences of time and conceptions of history were changing radically in relation to broader

socio-political changes. In *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, German historian Reinhart Koselleck develops the notion of multiple planes of history, each alive and in motion in any given present, shaping change at varying speeds and degrees. He identifies two converging “planes of history,” in particular, that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century: a plane grounded in eschatology and oriented toward a future anticipated through prophecy; and a plane emerging in the modern era, grounded in the scientific method and oriented toward a future predicted by prognosis. Koselleck labels this threshold period “*Sattelzeit*” (literally, “saddle time”). Here, there emerged a “new time” (*neue Zeit; Neuzeit*), a modern experience of historical time characterized by “motion and acceleration” (103). During this liminal period, moreover, notions of a singular history gave way to distinct temporal periods; past, present, and future were no longer experienced as continuous but rather as accelerated and disjointed. Within this new temporality, the future was suddenly conceived of as unknowable; it could no longer be predicted according to past events but now lay radically open, indecipherable. As Koselleck puts it, “[t]his always-already guaranteed futurity of the past” became “a future that transcended the hitherto predictable” (17). Perceived now as fragmented temporalities, the past, present, and future needed to be organized for coherence and meaning, and the organizing concept developed was *progress*, which privileged the future over the past and made the past appear alien and inaccessible. Guare’s play is situated precisely within this “saddle time,” registering the temporal dislocation and acceleration of the modern era, which progress both set into motion and sought to order and control. In its setting, its self-conscious references to a historical future, and its transition from the frantic pace of farce to the creeping finality of tragedy, *Free Man* stages this “new time” as a race for authority over territories, peoples, and definitions of the future.

Cornet is the embodiment of utopian thinking in a playworld dominated, in the end, by progress. And, although Cornet loses his place in the playworld he crafts, we, the audience, see in him, in his hope and belief in continued freedom, other possible ways of envisioning the future. In *The Principle of Hope*, Marxist theorist Ernst Bloch develops a philosophy of hope and the future that illuminates Cornet’s function in *Free Man*. Utopia, according to Bloch, is a dialectical *process* (not *telos*), which has no predefined aim or end, and it emerges out of possibility, rather than prognosis. As Bloch points out, “real possibility is nothing other than dialectical matter” (206); that is, material traces of the past that remain open to the present. This emphasis on process and possibility distinguishes utopia, as both a theory and practice, from progress. If progress sees the past as alien and the future as an end goal, utopia sees the past as the necessary material out of which to create

better futures, which always remain open to revision. Bloch's idea of utopia takes seriously the content of art, sports, instincts, and daydreams because, in these forms, he argues, can be found the hopes, the seeds, of a better life to come. Theatre is such a form; in the fictional worlds of plays such as Guare's, we can see glimmers of potential futures.

In *Free Man*, what is at stake, ultimately, are claims over the future. Those who have the authority to define a vision of the future also define the affective experience of the present. Bloch contends, "Primarily, everybody lives in the future . . . and as yet genuine present is almost never there at all. The future dimension contains what is feared or what is hoped for" (4). Bloch's utopian theory depends on hope as the activating principle of social change, and hope⁴ is mobilized not only as "*emotion . . . but more essentially as a directing act of a cognitive kind*" (12; emphasis in the original). Visions of the future propelled by this kind of purposeful hope "are utopian" (12), according to Bloch, since they resist a present perceived as static and closed, seeing it instead as full of tendency, possibility, and "propensity towards something" (18). Utopian thinking seeks to bring to light the not-yet-conscious by "grasp[ing] the New as something that is mediated in what exists and is in motion" (4). This is the mode of spectatorship that Guare's play invites the audience to participate in; *Free Man* presents history as a space of possibility open to the present, a space from which multiple futures might be made, leaving the audience to wonder what its role should be in this process. And Cornet stands at the centre as a utopian figure that is simultaneously out of place, out of time, and out of date.

Cornet is a man out of sync with time and a historical contradiction. His appearance and anachronistic speech patterns – he is prone to speaking in rhyming verse – together amplify "outward signs of foppery" (44) that, in the more restrained nineteenth century, are, as Dr. Toubib tells him, out of date. A "*dazzling piece of work*" in a "*coat made of purple satin and embroidered and laced with gold,*" Cornet begins the play by announcing: "The year is 1801. Alas. This is the last time men will / dress like this" (1). And while the silk, satin, and grosgrain fabrics from which his clothes are made inspire his play's opening subject – the "sanctity of surfaces. The value of veneer" (2) – the subject changes minutes later when Cornet considers the distance his fabrics must travel to reach him, at which point he shifts his focus to the temporal logic of progress: "The future is always about speed," he states, "That's the true subject of my play" (3). Initially living in the "Illyrian time" of his utopian New Orleans (89), Cornet becomes increasingly aware of the changes going on around him as well as of his role in these changes. In order to find a place and avoid losing his freedom, he revises the gender of his role mid-play, posing as a *berdache* – a Native American two spirit (or transgender) person.

With the help of Murmur, he stages a mock castration, burns his lavish wardrobe, and dons all black, while his libertine companions proclaim, “Jacques Cornet . . . shall be an integral part . . . of the future of . . . New Orleans” (54). Caught up in the race toward the future, Cornet clings to the hope that he will find a place there as a free person of colour.

The revolution in San Domingo, however, threatens the relentless pursuit of the future. While the European and American leaders compete to stake a claim on the future and thus secure a place in history, Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingans disrupt the linear trajectory of this competition by emerging as another possible future, a future made from what still remains of the past. The San Domingans challenge the claims over the future made by both utopia and progress, disrupting conventional understandings of a singular modernity and a universal experience of modern time with a spectral reminder that modernity has many histories. Building on Koselleck’s notion of multiple planes of history, Elin Diamond points out that “Progress – what would be called modernization by the nineteenth century – is also racialized time . . . [or] the ‘time of the other’” (7). That is, the undercurrent of the progress metanarrative is the counter-narrative of colonial resistance, which pulls back against the forward movement of progress with the recursive motions of revolution. More precisely, progress *means* forward movement only for the creators of this ideology. For others, it means destruction, domination, and cause for rebellion. The San Domingans signify the “time of the other,” the obverse side of the meta-narratives of progress and modernity. The scientist Doña Polissena describes the people’s uprising in San Domingo as “the voice of history. This is a time of revolution” (27), while the Frenchman Count Achilles Creux (French for “hollow, empty”), a bigot who holds a vitriolic hatred of both Cornet and the San Domingans, spits back, “I curse all revolution. The Americans, the French gave too many people the idea of freedom” (27). The central irony of the play is that freedom remains an abstraction, a motivating utopian ideal that fails to be realized either in Napoleon’s dictatorial monarchy or in Jefferson’s democracy.

With the characters continually predicting the future, sometimes correctly, other times erroneously, the play invites the audience to critique the past, specifically its emphasis on the future as the time of change and the space of discovery. Thomas Jefferson (John McMartin) urgently commands James Monroe (Arnie Burton) and Robert Livingston (Veanne Cox) to buy New Orleans before England declares war, telling them that “[t]he future destiny of this republic depends on you!” (78). Meanwhile Livingston declares greedily, “I’m going to be the only one in the history books” (78), hurrying to buy Louisiana before Monroe arrives in France. (He does not achieve this solitary glory, of course; he and Monroe made the land purchase together on

30 April 1803.) History is perceived as a contest, and the historical characters are aware of their historicity, predicting a future conceived of *historically*. The characters act from this dialectical perspective, seeing, as the audience does, a future already filled with the past and still reverberating with the implications of their actions. And as the play makes clear, definitions of the future are neither neutral nor stable, but strategic and unreliable. In one of the play's many theatrical tricks, Cornet summons Jefferson into the scene in which Cornet is about to be sold as a slave. Brought back to New Orleans by the promise of the words in the Declaration of Independence – "All men are created equal" – Cornet finds himself betrayed by that promise, and he demands to "see the man who wrote Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" (91–92). When Cornet implores Jefferson, "[L]isten to your own words. Make your words real" (96), Jefferson disowns the disingenuous promise of equality, stating that "my words are not part of the Constitution. The Constitution is where we keep the laws" (93). Later, he regretfully realizes those words' performative implications, confessing, "Sometimes I curse writing those words. I did write other phrases I thought as winning" (96). Oscillating between rationalizing slavery as necessity – "We have to import workers. That's how it starts" (94) – and making glorified claims about "the future destiny of this republic" (78), Jefferson is depicted as a pragmatist *avant la lettre*. With more urgency, Cornet challenges the president's (and progress's) "faith in the beneficence of the future" by pointing out that that perspective requires having "no faith in today." Cornet pleads with Jefferson to conceive of change in the present tense: "Change the future now. You'll avoid a Civil War – Jim Crow – Dred Scott – lynching – back of the bus – whites only – assassination – degradation" (96). Not surprisingly, in this situation, Jefferson declares his comfort with the "now," which includes his plantation Monticello and the slaves who work to keep it going. He tells Cornet, "I really don't like confrontation. I like to [. . .] experience the present. The 'now' is where we are now. I'm comfortable in the now. Try it. Say Now" (96). The play positions Cornet's self-defined role as a free man of colour in antagonistic relation to the forces of progress, which cast him in a part not of his own choosing.

Free Man stages a frenzied race to discover, conquer, and dominate an unknown future, aligned with both freedom and masculine virility. (In Guare's play, there is no such thing as phallic overstatement; Napoleon Bonaparte himself emerges from his bathtub to reveal a cannon in place of a penis.) Progress is envisioned in the play as a race toward the future, a race driven by an erotic energy and oscillating between surrender and control, domination and submission. The play's satiric edge comes through most vividly in the characters' belief in a "pulsing" future that looms tantalizingly on the horizon, with everyone competing to claim it. "Feel the future pulsate"

(11), invites Tallyrand (also Reg Rogers). Napoleon's prediction of America's future exemplifies the symbolic connections forged in the play among political conquest, male potency, and profit. Dressed in "*full majesty*" (80), he declares,

At first, America will be proud of their [*sic*] size. They'll start singing songs about their country [. . .] see slavery spreading like a cancer. I see this territory tearing blacks and whites apart. The poor United States – not prepared for greatness. Sell it. Get their money. Then we attack and destroy Britain. France, ruler of the seas, sails to an emasculated North America and reclaims war-torn Louisiana for France. (*The enormous white space of Louisiana Territory glows on the map of North America.*) Give them all this size. No country can be this big and survive. (81)

Not quite wrong and not exactly right, this vision captures something of America's ambitions and its contradictory history as a country whose concept of democracy and freedom has not historically included African Americans.

As the maps that pervade the playworld suggest, history is not only a matter of time but also a question of authority over space. Maps are collected, charted, scoured, and redrawn throughout the play. In Wolfe's production, they even formed part of the set design as a looming backdrop to the action. As Henri Lefebvre has suggested, representations of space draw the boundaries and direct the movements of our everyday lives. Thus, the authority involved in drawing the symbolic geographies of maps carries with it the power to dominate actual social space (Lefebvre 39–46). The maps that Cornet collects, that Napoleon studies in his bathtub, and that Meriwether clings to on his doomed journey are representations of space that carry with them real political power. Indeed, Cornet's question, "Every map attached to a dead Indian?" (17), connects the violent history of progress to the social power associated with maps and the command over space they represent. Cornet collects maps to find quicker routes by which his silks and muslins might travel from Samarkand and Shanghai to New Orleans. However, it turns out that, like his clothes and speech, his maps are outdated, having been re-drawn by people with more authority than he has. When he discovers that France's *Le Code Noir* will mean the end of his freedom, Cornet leaves a French-governed New Orleans on a solitary exploration, directed by the hope that his maps will at least lead him "into *terra incognita*. The hieroglyphs of geography" (79). The future, now imagined within the narrative of progress, becomes for Cornet an escape, a promise, and a compensation for a precarious present.

The characters in *Free Man* all clamour, not only to claim space, but also to dictate how that space signifies – that is, how it becomes socially meaningful as a lived sense of place. The "white spaces" of the future referred to throughout the play translate multiply as "alien," "unknown," "[f]reedom,"

“the lie,” “[o]ur dream,” and “your secret” (14, 98, 99). The meanings conjured by the white spaces all defer to an unknowable future that exists in conjunction with a distant, inaccessible past, illustrating Koselleck’s theory of a “new time” of modernity characterized by an unpredictable future and an estranged past. The white spaces, the play suggests, are produced by a white imagination, which envisions both the land and the future as there/theirs to discover and which adopts progress as theory and guide. These blank spaces contrasted sharply with the other geographical locations depicted in Wolfe’s production – colourful New Orleans, neoclassical France, shadowy San Domingo – which have already been inscribed by history. The white spaces, in contrast, promise a future bigger and better than the present, in part, because free of the past.

However, the white spaces are also filled with the anxiety of displacement. Late in the play, Meriwether Lewis (Paul Dano) and Cornet cross paths in the white spaces. Meriwether misrecognizes a ragged and unshaven Cornet, asking, “What kind of Indian are you?” and Cornet, a character out of place in both theatre and social history, replies, “Descended from a tribe of fops [. . .] we keep the good things in life alive. Music. Fashion” (84). A not-so-unlikely pair, Cornet and Meriwether meet “out there in the limitless unknown looking for the future” (15), Cornet seeking to “escape from the present misfortune” (78) of a French-governed New Orleans, and Meriwether searching for a transcontinental waterway. Here, in this imagined non-space of the future, Cornet’s utopian vision intersects with Meriwether’s idealistic pursuit of progress.

And yet neither character finds a place in the future. When Cornet hears from Meriwether that the United States has bought New Orleans, Cornet assumes, based on the words of the Declaration of Independence, that he can return and continue to be a free man of colour in American New Orleans. Meriwether reassures him with optimistic predictions of the future: “Slavery will end. After four hundred years of hoping, we’ll find the western waterway. The world is falling into place” (86–87). Both Cornet and Meriwether’s hopes are proven wrong, however. Cornet’s freedom is foreclosed by progress, and Meriwether’s search for a waterway is thwarted by the concrete reality of terra firma. A dejected Meriwether says to Cornet, “Our dreams once pulsed with the sexual charge of the unknown. Those dreams – now emasculated thanks to me . . .” (98). And yet, they agree that their utopian dreams of freedom and the future “must never die” (99), and their failed hopes become the historical material inherited by the present. Preparing to exit the play, Meriwether reads of his own suicide in the revised script of Cornet’s play. After reading his stage directions and rehearsing his dialogue (and his death) “*with emotion*” (98), he performs his final scene, shooting himself “for real” (but also not yet, since the year is 1806 and he did not die until 1809). History is

alienated, in the Brechtian sense, and is shown to be a struggle for authority over a continually rewritten script.

As Cornet's utopian script is rewritten by the material effects of progress – his “fiction” rewritten by/as “history” – so too is his utopian New Orleans mirrored on every side by heterotopias: brothels, colonies, ships – and theatres. If utopia envisions an *ideal* world, heterotopias envision *different* worlds. In “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault defines heterotopias as non-hegemonic “counter-sites” that are both physical and non-physical and exist alongside everyday social spaces. Heterotopias are at once mental and physical; an Internet chat session and the experience of looking at your reflection in the mirror are examples. Foucault uses the mirror as a metaphor to explain the way heterotopias represent or reflect utopias, which are “sites with no real space” (24). However, both utopias and heterotopias, he says, “suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (24). And both utopias and heterotopias promote more diverse ways of imagining and participating in social life. Like Koselleck's concept of multiple histories and his description of speed and motion as the primary characteristics of modern time, heterotopias are sites where multiple times and mobile geographies converge; graveyards, museums, colonies, brothels, and theatres are all heterotopic spaces because they reconfigure the temporal and spatial continuity of hegemonic social spaces, either through a break in “traditional time,” an “indefinite accumulation of time,” an illusory perfecting of real, “messy” space, or a juxtaposition of divergent times and spaces (25–27).

While specific theatrical productions, like *Free Man*, can depict a utopia or generate utopian thinking, the physical space of the theatre itself is a heterotopia. Indeed, theatres are concrete sites where utopias are realized. As a physical *and* imaginative site where the space and time of the audience is set against the space and time of the playworld, theatre can make visible and reconfigure, in some way, the perceptions, experiences, and structures of everyday social spaces. And if theatre participates in the formation of communities – which it surely does – it does so only by either reaffirming *or* reconstituting the conditions of access and modes of perception that make communities possible. Thus, although Guare's Cornet offers his audience a utopian vision of a particular moment in history, the production of Guare's play at Lincoln Center delimits the possibilities that his utopian vision will reconstitute the social world outside the Vivian Beaumont Theater. The heterotopias *within* Guare's playworld, however, promote a way of thinking of history itself as a heterotopia – as a heterogeneous site of both psychic and embodied participation.

Examples of what Foucault calls “the heterotopia *par excellence*” (27), ships are pervasive in *Free Man*, moving dream-like into and out of the

playworld and symbolizing the temporal and spatial displacement effected by the history of progress. Unmoored from time and place, the ships disrupt attempts to impose a linear, singular temporal order on a world set into motion by trade, travel, and expansion. Moreover, like the ever-changing maps in *Free Man*, the ships displace conventional understandings of geographies by floating between locations, crossing borders, and carrying the commodified objects that drove growth and development in the nineteenth century. Sailing between New Orleans and San Domingo, the ships also invoke those carrying slaves across the Middle Passage, a historical memory signified by Cornet's racialized body but revised by the role he writes for himself as a free man of colour.

The ships signify the heterogeneity of time and space in the modern era, while effecting a perceptual shift that turns the audience's perspective toward the horizon, a Husserlian vision gesturing toward possible futures edged with both hope and fear. In the midst of a scene in which Cornet woos Doña Polissena, a scientist looking for the cause of yellow fever, Toussaint Louverture (also played by Mos) enters, standing on the imagined shore of San Domingo, awaiting the American ships promised to him by Jefferson that would bring food and arms to his people. In a utopian moment in which history is again rethought as "what if," Louverture narrates his hope to the audience: "I search the horizon! I look for ships of salvation! Yes! America will honor our request!" (60). However, Jefferson's new political interests make his alliance with France more important than his promise of help to San Domingo, and he instructs Meriwether to "[o]rder the ships to return to their America port," adding, "We can't allow the cannibal government of Santo Domingo to offend glorious France" (61). Reversing one possible future, the ships are turned back. A dejected Louverture fades into the background, with the plea, "Do not forget us. My people are starving" (61). He is forgotten, however, and we see him later, in chains, having been deported to France, where he died in April 1803.

The San Domingans threaten the forward movement of progress with the return of a repressed past. Shortly after the ships carrying aid to San Domingo are ordered back to America, this rejected future returns as a spectre haunting the present. The Voices of Santo Domingo, embodied upstage like shadows on the horizon, explain in vivid, visceral detail the effects of yellow fever on the human body: "Despair paints itself in the eyes. / Sobs form the only language. / The mouth spreads foam / tinged with black and burnt blood" (65). Their ghostly presence registers a history understood, not as linear cause-effect, but as recursive, consisting of objects, events, and bodies enduring at different intensities, moving at different speeds, and communicating in different registers. The "racialized time" of the San Domingans emerges as a thwarted futurity, a reminder that not everyone entered the modern era at the same time or in the

same way. Moreover, not everyone lives the same experience of modernity today, which the Lincoln Center audience might have recognized, watching Guare's play in the wake of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

The repressed past becomes an imminent future when the ship returns, this time sailing toward New Orleans and carrying the infected bodies of the San Domingans who had, just moments before, been heard only as voices. Creux warns of the encroaching threat: "The demons are here! Look on the horizon [. . .] It comes bearing Yellow Fever" (67). The Spanish *Indendente* of New Orleans, Juan Ventura Morales (again, Triney Sandoval), similarly rails, "The nightmare! The infernal French at this moment are vomiting their wretched blacks upon our coast" (68). It is General Le Clerc (Nick Mennell) who sends these ships from San Domingo, with the vengeful words, "Destroy all mountain blacks! Send shiploads of rebellious blacks to American ports. Let New Orleans taste Toussaint's poison! Send these demons out of here!" (66–67). A historical character who was ordered by Napoleon, in 1801, to placate the revolution in San Domingo, re-establish control over the French colony, and later, arrest Louverture, General Charles Victoire Emmanuel Le Clerc comes across, in Guare's play, as a desperate, half-crazed character, not a villain but a product of a particular ideology and political practice. Here and elsewhere, Guare quotes portions of actual letters written by Le Clerc back to France. The letter referenced here is worth quoting more fully, as it expresses the urgency of a particularly violent colonial struggle in terms of its implications in the future:

We must destroy all the mountain Negroes, men and women, sparing only children under twelve years of age. We must destroy half the Negroes of the plains, and not allow in the colony a single man who has worn an epaulette. Without these measures the colony will never be at peace, and every year, especially deadly ones like this, you will have a civil war on your hands *which will jeopardize the future*. (qtd. in Jones 60; emphasis added)

The San Domingans threaten progress's claims over the future with the recursive return of revolution. As both history and Guare's play make clear, however, France's counter-insurrection failed, and Le Clerc died of yellow fever. Just after sending the ships of the dying San Domingans to New Orleans, Guare's Le Clerc recites his dying words: "Get me out of hell. You can't imagine the horror – the fever – the smell – the death" (Guare 69).

Ships thus disrupt the teleology of history, signifying progress realized as a dystopic nightmare. Far from the utopian shores imagined by Oscar Wilde – for whom "Progress [wa]s the realisation of Utopias" (27) – the ships and the abject bodies they carry interrupt Cornet's utopian vision and change the genre of his play. Creux announces, "Tragedy is entering the port." Sensing that his authority as playwright-historian is in question, Cornet asks

worriedly, “Tragedy?” Morales turns to Cornet, pleading, “We need salvation [. . .] Jacques, only your money can keep New Orleans free of yellow death. We must pay off the captain and divert the course of disease. New Orleans will call you hero” (68). Seduced by this new role in history, which seems even more glorious than the role he cast for himself in his own play, Cornet replies, “Call me hero? The world needs New Orleans. If I were the one to save it, Jefferson, Napoleon, King George – the world! – would be indebted to me! Murmur, bring my gold. Men, to the ship!” (69). At this moment, Cornet’s utopian play is unwritten by the realization of progress as opportunism and profit. Progress, the play makes clear, may have been founded on ideals of societal advancement, but in practice, it plays out as a violent contest of power and capital – the capital generated by the colonies and their resources, the capital that allowed territories, commodities, and bodies to be bought and sold, the capital that Cornet used to buy his freedom, and the capital that he uses to change the course of history and cast himself as hero, only to be recast as a slave. While Restoration comedy is the genre of Cornet’s utopia, tragedy, the play makes clear, is the genre of progress.

BEING MOVED TOWARD HISTORY

Free Man mobilizes affect as the mediating force that produces history as something material and present. I return here to Guare’s statement that, as a playwright, “You want to move the audience to a new part of themselves” (Interview 85). Just as affect spans “what’s internal and external to subjectivity” (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 16), so too is history both internal and external to every subject; and theatre is a vital setting within which to experience the historical present as something shared and felt. Lauren Berlant provocatively explains the way affect works to “communicate the conditions under which a historical moment appears as a visceral moment,” and thus “releases to view a poetics, a theory-in-practice of how a world works” (16). Wolfe’s production activated a spectrum of affects to present a kind of theory-in-practice of how a world works, maximizing the texture of history and illustrating the centrality of sight, touch, and emotion in historicizing bodies, objects, and political relations.

In the final section of the play, Cornet’s affectations shift to affect during an encounter with the deported people of San Domingo. Here, Cornet’s passion for women and fashion are overtaken by compassion and love. Again, the ship figures as the temporally and spatially disjunctive heterotopia. On a boat sent out to redirect the ship carrying the deported San Domingans away from New Orleans, Cornet narrates in the present tense: “I ask to see the deported blacks,” and in the “mass of human agony [. . .] I see people the color of my mother reaching up – fighting over access to rain – I hear screams”

(70). The immediacy of the suffering is conveyed when Cornet's narration is interrupted by the Voices of the San Domingans, who cry out, "*Aidez-moi! Aidez-moi!*" (70). Their Voices echo like a haunting. In their suffering, Cornet sees his own history, identifying with and *as* the people reaching desperately toward him: "I am a creature with a hundred hands reaching up up up up" (71). Cornet moves toward these suffering bodies, falling into the ship's hold and re-emerging changed in both appearance and disposition. Gone are his powdered wigs, satin coats, and silk stockings. A subdued Cornet sails back to New Orleans with Morales, who takes over the narration: "We watch the ship of dead men turn away into the gulf" (72). After returning to New Orleans, Cornet is haunted by his encounter with this ship filled with doomed captives, which he describes as an experience of recognition and love: "Why am I moved? Those men and women were me. Is what I feel 'love'? This love seems not to be a weakness but rather the beginning of a strength. How odd? Love? I must free my slaves. Yes, Murmur, you will be free" (73). Love is figured here as an empathetic encounter that re-orient's one's experience of time and subjectivity. It impels a move *toward*, a "venturing beyond" (to borrow Bloch's phrase) (Bloch 4). Cornet's compassionate recognition of and identification with the suffering of the San Domingans inspires in him an image of a future characterized by freedom. When Murmur challenges his use of the future tense ("you will be free"), Cornet resituates his performative gesture in the present tense: "Yes! *Are* free" (73).

The play's optimism is dissipated, however, when a new author, "Reality" (91), overtakes Cornet's utopian story, and history takes the more familiar form of bleak realism. Betrayed by Murmur, who uses his reward to buy his own freedom and become himself a free man of colour, Cornet is stripped of his authority, his play rendered a lie, a fiction overtaken by the logic of progress – specifically, colonization and state-formation. He is divested of his theatricality, robbed of his freedom, and shackled and sold as a slave in American New Orleans. Where once Cornet thought the world was his to buy, he now realizes that his own body has its price. And where once he proudly put himself on display, now his body is displayed as commodified spectacle. In "Slave Spectacles and Tragic Octoroons," Joseph Roach points out, "In antebellum New Orleans especially, slave auctions proved a popular and highly theatrical spectacle" (171). "As a theatrical spectacle," moreover, auctions "materialize the most intense of symbolic transactions in the circum-Atlantic culture: money transforms flesh into property; property transforms flesh into money; flesh transforms money into property" (175). This staging and selling of black bodies marks both the consolidation of the nation state of America and the commodification of bodies upon which that consolidation depended. It also marks theatrical spectacle as fundamental to the formation of race in

the United States.⁵ In a desperate attempt to regain his authority, Cornet recites a litany of revised titles, which together cover the terrain of his own history: “*A Free Man of Color or The Happy Life of a Man in Power* [. . .] *A Free Man of Color or How Jefferson is a Liar. A Free Man of Color or How My Father Sold My Mother. Free Man of Color or How Murmur Betrayed Me. A Free Man of Color or –*” (99). His final title is truncated by Meriwether’s utopian promise – “white spaces forever” – followed immediately by his suicide, and then by the winning bid that purchases Cornet as a slave in American New Orleans: “Sold!” (99). The play ends where it began, only now Cornet’s brilliant utopia is a bleak dystopia. The third movement of the Haydn “Trio in G Major” resumes, and Cornet repeats his opening line, which is now his final line: “1801. The last time men dressed like this” (101). Dr. Toubib, now in rags, after it is discovered that he was an escaped slave from Boston, concludes the play by announcing the final of the many revised titles: “*A Free Man of Color or How One Man Became an American*” (101). Such is the way history has been fashioned.

The absorption of Cornet and his utopian New Orleans into the United States underscores utopia as a paradoxical ideological formulation within the context of American culture and history. As Berlant writes:

If the meaning of the nation is its utopian “promise,” then: is America utopia incarnate, the already-realized fulfillment of the assurance of universal sovereignty postulated by Enlightenment political thought? Or is the “utopian” nation an imperfect formation constituted by a promise for future fulfillment, a “promissory note,” imminently in the state of perfection but to be achieved within history? (*Anatomy* 32)

Born from the Enlightenment Idea of Progress, America is, in theory, always-already utopia. In practice, however, America is both sustained and suspended by the promise of a utopia always on the horizon – always in the future – and haunted by a past that remains tenaciously present.

In its final scene, *Free Man* offers two competing visions of America’s future, which from our perspective, are competing visions of history. The first comes from Creux, who recites a history replete with racist fears and stereotypes: “Oh United States, be watchful. If not, you’ll have Santo Domingo all over again! Be vigilant or your Negroes will riot and rape your women. Hordes of crazed Othellos will debase our unwilling Desdemonas” (100). The other prediction comes from Cornet. Having escaped slavery but still bound in chains, he stands somewhere in the “unknown spaces” of the future, along with “*The ghosts of the people of New Orleans in 1801,*” who hover “*in half light amidst the wreckage.*” From this liminal place, Cornet predicts a future, which is our present:

I see visions of the future when generations of Margerys and Murmurs and Toubibs and the girls of Mme. Mandragola will be trapped on rooftops in New Orleans, reaching up to heaven to be saved. I say those bitter words “Hang on!” And while I hang, I think about a time when I had my maps, when I wrote my play, when New Orleans meant paradise. (100)

Like Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History, only here with his face turned toward the future, Cornet hangs battered by the storm “which we call progress” (Benjamin, para. IX), his utopia now only a nostalgic memory of the past. With the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 still present in the lives of many New Orleans citizens five years later, and the historic 2008 election of President Barack Obama, whose victory was built on the future-oriented campaign promises of “hope” and “change,” still fresh in the minds of the nation, Cornet’s description of the destruction in New Orleans reminded the Lincoln Center audience of the political urgency involved in claiming authority over what the future will mean. More precisely, Cornet’s vision and our vision of him open a theatrical space in which the audience sees that recognizing history in the present is the condition of possibility for future change.

NOTES

- 1 Dolan develops a richly productive examination of the utopian potential of contemporary theatre. Likewise, Muñoz looks at the “potentiality” of performance that “suggests a futurity” (99).
- 2 Unless other indicated, all citations are to the Grove edition of the play.
- 3 Formerly known as Mos Def, Mos was, at the time of *Free Man of Color*’s premiere, the name of the musician and actor who played Murmur. Born Dante Smith, in 1973, he currently goes by the name Yasiin Bey.
- 4 Bloch differentiates “concretely genuine hope,” which is utopia’s greatest benefactor, from “fraudulent hope,” which is “one of [its] greatest malefactors” (5). Moreover, the opposite of hope, for Bloch, is not despair, but memory. Rejecting the Freudian emphasis on a buried past, Bloch emphasizes the historical traces that remain active, though not-yet-conscious, in the present. These traces provide the material for creating better futures.
- 5 For an important examination of the ways in which African American performers used theatre and performance to challenge social and political disenfranchisement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Brooks.

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