

**'You are white – yet a part of me': D. H. Lawrence
and the Harlem Renaissance**

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of
Humanities

2019

Laura E. Ryan

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Contents

Abstract	3
Declaration	4
Copyright statement	5
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Chapter 1: '[G]roping for a way out': Claude McKay	55
Chapter 2: Chaos in Short Fiction: Langston Hughes	116
Chapter 3: The Broken Circle: Jean Toomer	171
Chapter 4: 'Becoming [the superwoman] you are': Zora Neale Hurston.....	223
Conclusion	267
Bibliography	271

Word Count: 79940

Abstract

This thesis explores connections between D. H. Lawrence and four key writers of the Harlem Renaissance: Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston. It investigates both the responses of these writers to Lawrence's work and the ways in which New Negro writers were frequently engaging in their work with the same themes, problems and ontological and philosophical questions as the English author. In demonstrating these unlikely instances both of influence and what I here call 'confluence' connecting these seemingly disparate artists and traditions, this study argues that these writers, though all historically figured as marginal (at best) to a now outmoded definition of modernism, emerge as central to new modernist thinking. By placing these authors in conversation, I position them as co-creators of modernism.

The Harlem Renaissance is no longer considered to be the isolated, geographically-specific phenomenon that its name suggests. In dialogue with Lawrence, these writers emerge as modernist thinkers often reacting to the conditions of modernity in the same ways, experiencing the same things, even using the same forms and methods to convey their experiences. This project not only sheds new light on these particular writers; it pushes toward new ways of figuring literary connectedness across barriers of race and nation. As Paul Gilroy's concept of the 'black Atlantic' rejected this conception of African, American, British and Caribbean cultural traditions as confined within national boundaries a quarter-century ago and more recent scholarship in transnational, global and even 'planetary' modernisms has further emphasized what Gilroy calls 'the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas', this project further complicates and confounds the traditional ethnic and national divisions which persist in our understanding of modernism.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright statement

- i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.
- iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=24420>), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/regulations/>) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the AHRC for funding this project and for providing financial assistance for archival work at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

I have been lucky to have two brilliant and supportive supervisors. Thanks to Douglas Field for his sage advice and encouragement, for always having something positive to say when I needed most hear it (and for sometimes holding supervisions in the pub). Howard Booth's expert knowledge of Lawrence (and many other things) has been invaluable throughout this project; his thoughtful, incisive and thorough comments have pushed me to be both more ambitious and more precise. His guidance, especially in the final stages of this thesis, has been crucial. Thanks as well to Robert Spencer for not only reading my (sometimes exceedingly long) chapters with care, but for always offering incredibly helpful and insightful comments.

Thanks must also go to my family, especially to my parents, Paul and Debra Ryan, for their love, help and encouragement in all I have ever done (and for never asking too many questions about it).

Finally, the greatest thanks must go to Annemiek van Essen, whose faith and encouragement took this project from a vague idea to a reality and whose love, patience and tea-making skills have kept me sane, healthy and caffeinated over the past three years.

Introduction

[I]n direction I am more than half American. I always write really towards America: my listener is there.¹

Look at me trying to be midwife to the unborn homunculus!²

The bonds of literary tradition seem to be stronger than race.³

This thesis explores connections between D. H. Lawrence and four key writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance: Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer and Zora Neale Hurston. It both analyses their responses to Lawrence's work and more widely considers the ways in which these writers, though separated by factors of race and nation from the English author, engage with strikingly similar ontological and philosophical issues in their work. In demonstrating these unexpected instances both of influence and what I here call 'confluence', this study argues that these writers, though all marginal (at best) to a now outmoded definition of modernism, should be seen very differently in light of 'new modernist' approaches. Drawing upon world-systems theory, I look to demonstrate how the singular and simultaneous nature of modernity produced comparable reactions in artists experiencing modernity in

¹ D. H. Lawrence, Letter to Amy Lowell, 9 October 1921, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 4, ed. by Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 97.

² Lawrence, Foreword to *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Final Version), ed. by Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 11.

³ Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee (eds.), Introduction to *The Negro Caravan* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1941) p. 7.

unique and assorted circumstances. Reading these black and mixed-race writers alongside Lawrence, it is possible to trace continuities of thought that situate them all as co-creators of modernism. They emerge not merely as artists on the margins of the modernist project – as proponents of an ‘alternative’ strain of modernism or a ‘parallel project’ – rather, this thesis posits, they should be considered as participants in what Vincent Sherry terms ‘the modernism of radical critique, the modernism of a modernity against itself’.⁴

In the foreword to *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Lawrence mischievously styles himself ‘midwife to the unborn homunculus’ of American literature. In a similar vein, Alain Locke, editor of *The New Negro* (1925), would later pronounce himself ‘philosophical mid-wife to a generation of younger Negro poets, writers, artists’ engaged in a movement later styled as the Harlem Renaissance.⁵ Lawrence and Locke, these two self-proclaimed cultural ‘midwives’, have rarely been connected. When Lawrence cast himself as the metaphorical midwife to a burgeoning literary tradition, or indeed when he wrote to Amy Lowell in 1921 of his imagined American ‘listener’, it seems unlikely that he was envisaging a listenership in Harlem, where Locke saw the epicentre of an African American ‘spiritual Coming of Age’.⁶ Yet, this thesis argues, there is much in Lawrence’s work to which the young proponents of Locke’s New Negro movement were primed to listen and respond and many themes and concerns they shared with him.

⁴ Vincent Sherry (ed.), “The Long Turn of the Century”, *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) pp. 83-100 (p. 88).

⁵ Alain Locke, quoted in H. M. Kallen, “Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 54, No. 5 (Feb. 28, 1957) pp. 119-127 (p. 122).

⁶ Locke (ed.), “The New Negro”, *The New Negro* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999) p. 16.

In positing a relationship of conversation and co-creation between these writers, this project draws and extends upon both seminal Harlem Renaissance scholarship and more recent work on transnational modernisms. It aims to further complicate the traditional ethnic and national divisions which persist in our understanding of modernism, much as Paul Gilroy's concept of the 'black Atlantic' rejected conceptions of African, American, British and Caribbean cultural traditions as confined within national boundaries a quarter-century ago and more recent scholarship in transnational, global and even 'planetary' modernisms has further emphasized what Gilroy calls 'the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas'.⁷

This project is timely in several ways. Roughly a century on from the first stirrings of the Harlem Renaissance, and around two decades into the 'transnational turn' in modernist studies most notably identified by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz in "The New Modernist Studies" (2008), the time is ripe for a consideration of literary connections which once seemed unlikely, contentious, even unthinkable.⁸ The shift in modernist studies since the 1990s has provoked a reconsideration of previously well-established distinctions between high and low art and fostered an environment in which 'canons have been critiqued and reconfigured' and 'works by members of marginalized social groups have been encountered with fresh eyes and ears'.⁹ Before the transnational turn in modernist studies, this thesis would perhaps not have been possible. Yet this turn is also redolent of a contemporary moment replicative of certain aspects of the modern condition which produced modernism. Sherry, in the

⁷ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993) p. xi.

⁸ Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies", *PMLA*, Vol. 123, No. 3 (May, 2008) 737-748 (p. 738).

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 738.

introduction to *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (2017), explains that while *modo* in late antiquity designated ‘a special present, a brink of time, a precipitous instant, all in all, a crisis time’, in the twentieth century the more self-conscious term ‘modernism’ denoted rather a ‘crisis in time’.¹⁰ The crisis in time and the ‘condition of constantly disruptive change’ which accompanied the development of modernism (and primitivism, as Ben Etherington argues) seems today to be reproduced in the ‘new, ever more extreme claustrophobia of immanence’ Etherington sees as symptomatic of ‘a world refitted for capitalist humans’, in which ‘the Internet is consolidating itself as humanity’s sole communicative medium’.¹¹

The post-millennium ‘transnational turn’ in modernist studies proclaimed by Mao and Walkowitz has necessitated a reconsideration of the ways in which modernism has been defined, as scholars have been driven to ask the questions: when, where, what and why was modernism? It has seen a proliferation of new scholarship which variously ‘widens the modernist archive by arguing for the inclusion of a variety of alternative traditions’, ‘argues for the centrality of transnational circulation and translation in the production of modernist art’ and ‘examines how modernists responded to imperialism, engaged in projects of anticolonialism, and designed new models of transnational community.’¹² ‘Were one seeking a single word to sum up transformations in modernist literary scholarship’, Mao and Walkowitz propose, ‘one could do worse than light on *expansion*.’¹³ This thesis engages, to a certain extent, in the ‘spatial’, ‘temporal’ and ‘vertical’ expansions outlined in “The New Modernist

¹⁰ Sherry, Introduction, *Cambridge History of Modernism*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 2; Ben Etherington, *Literary Primitivism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017) p. xvii.

¹² Mao and Walkowitz, p. 739.

¹³ Ibid, p. 737.

Studies”.¹⁴ It builds upon an expanded and expanding modernist archive and highlights ‘the centrality of transnational circulation’ and ‘new models of transnational community’.

Yet, over a decade on from Mao and Walkowitz’s seminal article, I suggest a more radical shift in the way we think about modernism and modernist trajectories across national, racial and social boundaries. In 2019, the ‘*expansion*’ of the modernist archive – the incorporation of what Mao and Walkowitz call ‘a variety of alternative traditions’ – can no longer be lauded as progress in itself. Likewise, as the authors of the recent *Race and New Modernisms* (2019) suggest, ‘plurality alone (or the pluralizing of “modernisms”) [...] should not be thought to do analytical heavy lifting’.¹⁵ Indeed, the proliferation of ‘alternative’ modernisms does little to displace the outmoded ‘high modernism’ that new modernist studies claims to contest, rather reinforcing the idea that there remains an ‘original’ (and perhaps implicitly ‘best’) brand of modernism. As Harry Harootunian argues in discussing his aversion to ‘fashionable descriptions’ designating “alternative modernities”, “divergent modernities”, “competing modernities” and “retroactive modernities”, such claims to alterity are problematic in their implication of ‘the existence of an “original” that was formulated in the “West” followed by a series of “copies” and lesser inflections’.¹⁶ ‘Alternative modernisms’, it follows, can too easily be cast as secondary, belated, derivative.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 737.

¹⁵ K. Merinda Simmons and James A. Crank, *Race and New Modernisms* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) p. 10.

¹⁶ Harry Harootunian, *History’s Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) p. 163.

¹⁷ WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015) p. 14.

Alternative, after all, is only a more palatable, less loaded synonym of 'other', 'marginal', 'different'.

While many Harlem Renaissance writers have only recently been recognised as modernists and included in such volumes as *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (1999) and David Bradshaw and Kevin Dettmar's 2006 *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, Lawrence also continues to occupy an uncomfortable position in relation to metropolitan modernism.¹⁸ He is often figured as a writer on the margins of what was once designated 'high modernism': a movement most often associated with a small, exclusive group of writers including T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Though acquainted with several members of this core group, Lawrence differed from these writers, as Michael Bell notes, in his views on 'important questions concerning art, feeling and the nature of human being'.¹⁹ Indeed, for Bell, he 'provided then, and still provides, one of the most significant critiques of modernism arising from the same historical context and concerns'; he was not only an outsider but an artist 'engaged in a parallel project, both creatively and critically'.²⁰

Yet I do not figure Lawrence, McKay, Hughes, Toomer or Hurston as belonging to one of 'a variety of alternative traditions' now deemed, under the auspices of new modernist studies, worthy of inclusion within one of many new strains of modernism. The New Negro movement was of course rooted firmly in the idea that marginality could assume a transformative power. In *The New Negro*, Locke affirms that the 'deep

¹⁸ Notably, neither Lawrence nor any Harlem Renaissance writers were included in Lawrence Rainey's *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

¹⁹ Michael Bell, "Lawrence and Modernism", *Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 179-196 (p. 179).

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 179.

feeling of race' which during this time became 'the mainspring of Negro life' was cultivated in efforts 'to convert a defensive into an offensive position, a handicap into an incentive'.²¹ Yet ascribing or yoking this powerful marginality to an 'alternative modernism' inevitably presupposes that it is somehow outside the mainstream, detached from the work of modernists situated elsewhere in the world-system. Thus, where Geoffrey Jacques (2005) argues for the central role of African American artists as 'actors' in the American modernist project crucial to 'the emergence of a particularly modernist poetic language' and Nathan Irvin Huggins' seminal 1973 study argues that 'black and white Americans have been so long and so intimately a part of one another's experience that [...] they cannot be understood separately', this study goes further in positing a co-creative and symbiotic relationship stretching beyond the bounds of the Atlantic.²² 'Harlem Renaissance' has always been a misleading term in several senses. The phenomenon it describes was never confined to uptown Manhattan or indeed to the United States; it was always a fundamentally transnational movement. It thus makes sense now to consider these writers not merely in conversation with other (white) American modernists, but with modernists of different nationalities and, indeed, differing modernities.

As the canon of works ascribed to the Harlem Renaissance continues to expand – most notably with the recent publications of McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* (2017) and Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Slave* (2018), and the forthcoming publication of McKay's *Romance in Marseille* in 2020 – the time is ripe to reflect upon

²¹ Locke, "The New Negro", p. 11.

²² Geoffrey Jacques, *A Change in the Weather: Modernist Imagination, African American Imaginary* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005) pp. 25, 1; Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 11.

and challenge many of the tired narratives that have long accompanied the movement and these writers. Equally, as Lawrence scholars look increasingly to consider his work in new contexts and to provide more nuanced counters to the simplistic (yet enduring) claims that figure him as a deeply racist and misogynistic (not to mention colonialist, fascist and anti-Semitic) figure, reading him in conversation with these writers provides fruitful new avenues of inquiry.

The fundamentally diverse nature of the cohort involved render these interactions especially intriguing; these four writers differ in background, gender, sexuality, political affiliations, class, artistic sensibilities and views on race. McKay, Hughes, Toomer and Hurston together form a diverse pantheon; often pigeonholed by the 'Harlem Renaissance' label or by certain facets of their life story and identity, they emerge here as deeply complex, fascinating and itinerant thinkers. Simultaneously, this project must account for the difficulties in placing Lawrence within a cultural framework. There are, Lee Jenkins notes, multiple versions of Lawrence, who has been variously identified as the quintessential English author and the 'deterritorialized nomad'.²³

Though this thesis does not emerge from archival work, it has been informed and enhanced by archival research. The chapter on Jean Toomer in particular examines many of his unpublished writings, housed within the Jean Toomer Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Bringing light to unpublished and newly published works as well as offering new readings of familiar texts, this project looks to contribute to an evolving scholarship in line with the changing canon of Harlem Renaissance texts.

²³ Lee M. Jenkins, *The American Lawrence* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014) p. 5.

The Harlem Renaissance, Modernism and Mobility

A reappraisal and reframing of the Harlem Renaissance has been at the heart of much new modernist scholarship and work since 2000 that has highlighted the inherently transnational nature of the movement. It is no longer viewed as the isolated, homogenous, localised phenomenon that its name suggests. Brent Hayes Edwards (2003) notably describes black writing in the period as part of 'the practice of diaspora', situating African-American writing within transnational cultural and political contexts, with Paris highlighted as the 'privileged site of black internationalism'.²⁴

This project does not centre on one particular 'privileged site'. Many sites emerge as important here, but even more significant is movement in space, the establishment of distance from home or from the metropolis and the subsequent return, of the simultaneous wondering and wandering evoked in the title of Hughes' 1956 autobiography (*I Wonder as I Wander*). All of the writers treated here travelled widely and frequently; most of the key works examined in the chapters to follow were written abroad or inspired by travel. McKay wrote his most famous novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928), in France, professing that its 'vividness' could be attributed to his 'being removed just the right distance from the scene.'²⁵ Hughes began writing his 1934 short story collection, *The Ways of White Folks*, and completed several key stories whilst in the Soviet Union, while Toomer's *Cane* (1923) was famously stimulated by the author's travels in the southern United States. Hurston wrote *Their Eyes Were*

²⁴ Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 10.

²⁵ McKay, Letter to Max Eastman, quoted in Melvin Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) p. 53.

Watching God (1937), reportedly in the space of seven weeks, whilst in Haiti. In all of these cases, the fact of being ‘removed just the right distance from the scene’ – of being elsewhere – was crucial.

Indeed, mobility was vital to the New Negro movement from its inception; the very notion of the ‘New Negro’ was conceived far from Harlem. As Jeffrey Stewart notes, Locke was staying in the Italian coastal city of San Remo when he formulated the concept in 1924. The escape to San Remo, Stewart argues, was crucial in enabling Locke ‘to overcome his writer’s block and sketch in writing a compelling image of a New Negro that was not fundamentally elitist, that embodied “the Negro.”’²⁶ It seems for Locke, as Edwards notes of black internationalism in Paris, that ‘certain moves, certain arguments and epiphanies, can only be staged beyond the confines of the United States’.²⁷

Yet movements within the United States were also critical. The Great Migration from the southern states to the northern cities made an African American cultural ‘renaissance’ possible. Movements in both time and space, then, are figured as key to African American agency and New Negro identity. For Stewart,

The Great Migration was Black subjectivity emptying through space [...] Black people changed “what time it is,” by moving through space; and by chronicling it as revolutionary, Locke showed the spatial creativity of the New Negro—turning segregation into aggregation by moving away.²⁸

Moving to Harlem, Chicago, Pittsburgh and other northern urban centres constituted not merely flight from prejudice or the pursuit of work, but a ‘reinvention of subjectivity’;

²⁶ Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) pp. 446-447.

²⁷ Hayes Edwards, p. 4.

²⁸ Stewart, p. 448.

these cities were thus ‘not refugee camps but new triumphant examples of traversing space and making place’.²⁹ By moving in space from south to north, African Americans were also moving in time, even altering time. Efforts to occupy ‘another time’ and ‘another space’ characterise the lives and trajectories of Locke, McKay, Hughes, Toomer and Hurston. Inhabiting a space outside of the United States permitted some escape from the suffocating and alienating binaries of Jim Crow America.

Lawrence, America and American Literature

Lawrence’s international wanderings – the ‘savage pilgrimage’ that led him eventually to America – were of course provoked by rather different circumstances. He was writing ‘towards America’ by the 1920s because, especially after the suppression of *The Rainbow* (1915) and his expulsion from Cornwall during the war years, America came to represent a location in which rebirth and regeneration might occur. He looked increasingly to an American readership for his work, feeling, as he told an American friend, that England had ‘gone all thick and fuzzy in the head’, so that it could no longer ‘hear’.³⁰ In a time when England had become an ‘alien nation’, America was ‘the promised land’.³¹ Lawrence did not set foot on American soil until 1922, but he had, from an early age, engaged with north America through reading and writing. He would later claim, in “Indians and an Englishman” (1922), that he was ‘born

²⁹ Ibid, p. 449.

³⁰ Lawrence, Letter to Amy Lowell, 9 October 1921, p. 97.

³¹ Jenkins, *American Lawrence*, pp. 5-6.

in England and kindled with [James] Fenimore Cooper'.³² In 1917 he began work on the essays which would become *Studies in Classic American Literature*. As in Locke's case, the Englishman's remove from the United States afforded a certain critical distance. In essays on Edgar Allen Poe, Walt Whitman and Herman Melville amongst others, Lawrence sets out a kind of manifesto on American literature. As had earlier been the case with his *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1914), he uses creative criticism as a workshop for his own ideas; here, for he feels the paucity of American criticism necessitates it, Lawrence casts himself as 'midwife to the unborn homunculus' of American literature.

That Lawrence and Locke should figure themselves as 'midwives' seems both an odd coincidence and a strangely feminized self-characterisation (where 'father' or 'godfather' might have served). Yet the central image here is clearly of birth (or rebirth), a preoccupation evident in the term 'Harlem Renaissance' itself. Lawrence and Locke, as midwives, then envision themselves as the guiding hands beckoning these two emerging literary movements into being. Indeed, the 'midwife' role clearly speaks to the status of both American and African American literature at the time. As Jenkins affirms, in the early 1920s 'there was no settled American canon: not only were "classic" American books often thought of as children's books, but American literature as such was widely regarded as a subset of English literature, the immature offspring of the colonial parent-tradition.'³³

Though Lawrence's figuring of his own 'midwife' role undoubtedly overestimates his importance to American literature, *Studies* is now considered by many critics as a

³² Lawrence, "Indians and an Englishman", *Mornings in Mexico and Other Stories*, ed. by Virginia Crosswhite Hyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 115.

³³ Jenkins, "*Studies in Classic American Literature* and American Studies", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (September 2012) pp. 44-59 (p. 46).

crucial text in constructing the very notion of American studies. Indeed, Eugene Goodheart draws upon *Studies* to posit Lawrence as a substantial influence on American literature and ‘an incarnation of American consciousness.’³⁴ Jenkins’ *The American Lawrence* (2015) portrays a thoroughly transatlantic Lawrence; she notably emphasizes his status as a ‘New Americanist’ and ‘a non-American who, in one period of his life at least, wrote American literature’.³⁵ Yet Jenkins’ work, which so eloquently places Lawrence within ‘an intercultural contact zone’ in which white, indigenous and Mexican cultures interacted, does not remark at all upon Harlem Renaissance links.³⁶ Previous major studies of Lawrentian influence, including Jeffrey Meyers’ *The Legacy of D. H. Lawrence* (1987) and Keith Cushman and Dennis Jackson’s *D. H. Lawrence’s Literary Inheritors* (1991), have also consistently ignored Lawrence’s impact upon African American writers.

The link between Lawrence and several key Harlem Renaissance figures has, however, been noted by a number of critics and biographers. Thus far, though, this connection has largely remained no more than an uncomfortable footnote in Harlem Renaissance scholarship: a recurring theme never adequately acknowledged or explored. Leo Hamalian’s “D. H. Lawrence and Black Writers” (1990) came closest to examining this trend, treating Lawrence’s influence on five black writers: McKay, Toomer, Hughes, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. Yet Hamalian’s article is marred by unsupported claims and factual errors.³⁷ Hamalian furthermore does not address

³⁴ Eugene Goodheart, “Lawrence and American Fiction” in *The Legacy of D. H. Lawrence: New Essays*, ed. by Jeffrey Meyers, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987) p. 137.

³⁵ Jenkins, *American Lawrence*, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 96.

³⁷ Hamalian notably claims that Toomer and his wife met the Lawrences in Taos, New Mexico, ‘probably in 1924’; the author of *Cane* in fact did not visit Taos until Christmas 1925, by which time the Lawrences were in Italy (and Toomer was unmarried), “D. H.

the complex nature of the connections he identifies, tentatively skirting some of the key issues and questions that prompted and informed this project. It seems inevitably problematic and contentious that these Harlem Renaissance writers – ostensibly engaged in a movement seeking to evoke a distinctively black identity and consciousness – should be influenced in a significant way by a white, European writer. In 1990, Hamalian concludes only, rather obliquely, that ‘the shift in political climate has made such interaction more problematical’.³⁸

This vague ‘shift in political climate’ seems to preclude any more forceful commentary. What Hamalian describes seems analogous to the dynamic Gilroy would outline only a few years later, affirming that ‘where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political subordination.’³⁹ Almost three decades on from Hamalian’s 1990 article, modernist studies and literary studies more widely have moved on considerably. Yet the 2018 collection, *D. H. Lawrence in Context*, offering ‘up-to-date insights into the key contexts to [Lawrence’s] life, career, and legacy’, cites Hamalian as the only source to be consulted ‘[o]n Lawrence’s influence on the writers of the Harlem Renaissance’.⁴⁰

This study looks to address and explore what Hamalian did not, offering a much-extended consideration of Lawrence not simply as an influence upon black and mixed-

Lawrence and Black Writers”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1990) pp. 579-596 (p. 585).

³⁸ Ibid, p. 596.

³⁹ Gilroy, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Andrew Harrison (ed.) *D. H. Lawrence in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) pp. i, 334.

race writers, but as a modernist co-creator. Like Jacques in his 2005 study, *A Change in the Weather: Modernist Imagination, African American Imaginary*, I see African American culture as ‘a codeterminate agent of the modernist project’.⁴¹ Jacques’ argument ‘not only that African American culture is a constituent part of modernism but that modernism cannot be fully understood unless its African American element is fully explored’ speaks to the current vogue for global modernisms.⁴² Yet when New Negro writers are considered in wider modernist contexts, they are most often connected to American modernists and expatriates including Eliot and Gertrude Stein, as in Michael North’s *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1994). North explores how Eliot and Stein, along with others including William Carlos Williams and Joseph Conrad, achieved ‘the most radical representational strategies of modern literature’ through ‘linguistic mimicry and racial masquerade’.⁴³ In *The African American Roots of Modernism* (2011), James Smethurst (2011) similarly focuses upon Eliot, Stein and Williams alongside F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner in his evocation of ‘a paradoxical adoption and adaptation of the dualism of their black predecessors’ among ‘the modernists’.⁴⁴ Of course, in the contexts of North and Smethurst’s studies, it is unsurprising that ‘the modernists’ implicitly means ‘the American modernists’. Smethurst argues that the roots of American modernism lie in the early Jim Crow period, contending that the responses of African American intellectuals and artists like Paul Laurence Dunbar to the Jim Crow system ‘deeply marked American notions of modernity—and, ultimately,

⁴¹ Jacques, 6.

⁴² Ibid, p. 25.

⁴³ Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) p. 7.

⁴⁴ James Smethurst, *The African American Roots of Modernism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011) p. 25.

modernism'.⁴⁵ Lawrence, as an Englishman, was of course not exposed like his American contemporaries to the Jim Crow system, nor would he even have encountered many non-white people in his youth.⁴⁶ Yet he seems in many ways a more natural interlocutor than many of the 'high' American modernists listed above.

Global Modernisms and World-Systems Theory

Evocations of 'alternative' modernities and modernisms not only reinforce the 'otherness' of those writers and traditions historically excluded from the ranks of 'high modernism'. They also, as Mark Wollaeger notes, 'fail to take into account the concept of uneven development': the idea that economic and social development does not occur evenly everywhere in the world system.⁴⁷ The idea of multiple modernities is countered in Fredric Jameson's *A Singular Modernity* (2002); though its title and argument have often mistakenly (as Neil Lazarus explains) been taken to imply that 'modernity [...] assumes the same form everywhere', Jameson's study in fact posits modernity as a 'singular phenomenon' which is 'everywhere irreducibly specific'.⁴⁸ Jameson elsewhere employs Ernst Bloch's notion of the 'simultaneity of the

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁶ See Judith Ruderman's *Race and Identity in D. H. Lawrence: Indians, Gypsies, and Jews* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) on the racial composition of Eastwood (p.2).

⁴⁷ Mark Wollaeger, Introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 13; The concept of uneven development was formulated by Leon Trotsky in the early 1900s.

⁴⁸ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002); Neil Lazarus, "Modernism and African Literature" in Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, 228-245 (pp. 232-233).

nonsimultaneous' to denote 'the coexistence of realities from radically different moments in history – handicrafts alongside the great cartels, peasant fields with the Krupp factories or the Ford plant in the distance.'⁴⁹ This, he argues, is the unevenly developed world to which modernism must be recognised to correspond.

Lawrence's life and career overlap with the lives and literary careers of all four Harlem writers considered here; all but Hughes (born 1902) were born before the turn of the century and within a decade of each other, between 1885 and 1894. Yet the conditions of modernity experienced by McKay during his youth in Jamaica, and later in Europe and Africa via the USA, or by Hurston in Eatonville, Harlem and Haiti, are unquestionably in stark contrast to Lawrence's experience of modern life in Eastwood, Croydon, Italy, Ceylon, Australia, New Mexico and Mexico (and not only due to racial factors). However, as the chapters to follow demonstrate, these specific conditions gave rise to an abundance of shared concerns and themes as well as aesthetic similarities.

Bloch's 'simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous', scholarship in 'world-systems theory' and recent work on global modernisms all offer useful models here. In line with Jameson and with the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) (2015), this project works with a conception of modernity and modernism not as phenomena originating in the 'West' and spreading out from a prescribed centre, but as singular and simultaneous aspects of the world-system. WReC argue that '[m]odernity is neither a chronological nor a geographical category. It is not something that happens – or even that happens *first* – in "the west" and to which others can subsequently gain access; or that happens

⁴⁹ Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) p. 307.

in the cities rather than in the countryside'.⁵⁰ I concur here with WReC's call to 'do away once and for all with the still-dominant understandings of modernism that situate it both in terms of writerly technique [...] and as a Western European phenomenon, whose claims to being *the* literature of modernity are underscored precisely by this geo-political provenance.'⁵¹

Crucial to this project is the dismantling of the centre-periphery binary implicit not only in accounts of 'alternative modernisms' critiqued above, but in the very term 'modernism', as Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel argue in the introduction to *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (2005).⁵² Doyle and Winkiel declare that their 'explicit aim is to collapse the margin and center assumptions embedded in the term *modernism* by conjuring instead a web of twentieth-century literary practices, shaped by the circuitry of race, ethnicity, nativism, nationalism, and imperialism in modernity, and by the idea or commodity of "modernism" itself.'⁵³ Yet there is always a danger, the editors of *Geomodernisms* acknowledge, that those critics 'invested in the [...] field-defining power' of modernism might 'misconstrue or appropriate divergent cultural histories', 'wrenching them to fit under the canonical notion of "modernism"'.⁵⁴ 'The globalization of criticism, like that of trade,' Doyle and Winkiel affirm, 'inevitably sends forth the specter of appropriation'.⁵⁵ Though this thesis does not deal with the same range of non-Western and non-anglophone texts and authors as *Geomodernisms*, it does cut across racial, national and social boundaries in reading

⁵⁰ WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, p. 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁵² Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (eds.), Introduction to *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005) p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

these authors together and consequently subjecting them to the same kinds of critical analysis. Such a move, as I discuss later, has not always been supported by scholars of African American literary studies.

Gary Edward Holcomb and Charles Scruggs' edited collection, *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (2012), serves as a useful model for this research. Addressing themes and concerns close to this project, Holcomb and Scruggs have explored a similarly 'conspicuously overlooked topic'.⁵⁶ *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* examines the connection between Ernest Hemingway and several writers examined here, including McKay, Toomer and Hughes. Like this study, it treats a diverse group of black writers who reacted to and interacted with Hemingway's work in various ways. The editors significantly seek to identify what these black writers deemed 'germane to their own experience' in Hemingway's work.⁵⁷ They emphasize that 'the praises by black writers for Hemingway share an affirmation that the white modernist's prose rises out of the same insistence of intensely American concerns that their own writings are formed on: the integrity of the human subject faced with social alienation, psychological violence, psychic disillusionment, and personal loss.'⁵⁸ Hemingway's perspectives on the human condition, 'life's mutability, its potential for violence and its unpredictability' emerge in particular as human themes that transcend racial boundaries in this context.⁵⁹ Hemingway and these authors are thus joined in a kind of 'modernist intertextuality, in conversation and exchange that addressed issues and expressed concerns common to both'.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Gary Edward Holcomb and Charles Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), back cover.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21.

There is far less evidence to suggest a two-way reciprocal dialogue between Lawrence and black writers. Indeed, it is hard to judge how much Lawrence knew of Locke's New Negro movement and of African American literature more generally. Some insight is offered in his 1926 review of four novels including Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) and Walter White's *Flight* (1926). Lawrence is particularly scathing in his comments on *Nigger Heaven*, which he deems 'a nigger book, and not much of a one'.⁶¹ Of *Flight*, he is only slightly more positive. It is, he affirms, 'another nigger book; much more respectable, but not much more important'.⁶² Unlike Van Vechten, White, Lawrence notes, 'is himself a negro. If we weren't told, we should never know.'⁶³ 'But', he quips, 'there is rather a call for negro stuff, hence we had better be informed, when we're getting it.'⁶⁴ There is more than a hint of hostility in Lawrence's wry acknowledgement of the 1920s vogue 'for negro stuff'. He is particularly disappointed that 'the pigmentation of the skin seems to be the only difference between the negro and the white man'; '[i]f there be such a thing as a negro soul, then [...] that of the Harlemite is very very Yankee-American.'⁶⁵ 'New York', Lawrence complains, 'is a melting pot which melts even the nigger. The future population of this melting pot will be a pale greyish-brown in colour, and its psychology will be that of Mr White and Byron Kasson.'⁶⁶ It is important to note that what Lawrence

⁶¹ Lawrence, Review of *Nigger Heaven*, *Flight*, *Manhattan Transfer* and *In Our Time*, *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 305-313 (p. 307).

⁶² Ibid, p. 308.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 308.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 308.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 308.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 308; When Lawrence's 1924 essay "On Being a Man" was published in *Vanity Fair*, the editors changed his use of 'nigger' to 'negro'; this suggests that there was already a sensitivity to the word and that Lawrence was either unaware of this or not going along with it. See Howard J. Booth, "Give Me Differences: Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and Race", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 27 (1997), 171-196 (p. 190).

is objecting to here is not racial difference, but the loss or absence of difference, which he valued.

Harlem itself, Lawrence avers, is no more than 'that dismal region of hard stone streets way up Seventh Avenue beyond One hundred and twenty-fifth Street, where the population is all coloured, though not much of it is real black. In the daytime, at least, the place aches with dismalness and a loose-end sort of squalor, the stone of the streets seeming particularly dead and stony, obscenely stony.'⁶⁷ Such a description indicates that Lawrence was writing from his own experience of a daytime visit to Harlem. Indeed, in a later passage he recalls 'glimpses of Harlem and Louisiana' which lead him to doubt that 'the negro' possesses 'a talent for life which the white man has lost'.⁶⁸ As David Ellis notes, Lawrence had visited New York, if only briefly, in 1923 (though he passed through on other occasions). His time spent in the city was brief, Ellis suggests, because New York made him uneasy; after one night there, he and Frieda moved on to a cottage in rural New Jersey, which Lawrence's American publishers (the Seltzers) had rented for them.⁶⁹ He returned to New York only for literary meetings and interviews, including one with the *New York Evening Post*, during which he expressed his dislike for the city; life there, he felt, had been so 'mechanized' that it was 'nearly destroyed'.⁷⁰ 'Men don't believe in this show', he continues, because '[i]t has passed the limits of living a natural life.'⁷¹ The negative image he portrays of Harlem, which fixates strangely upon the dead, stoniness of its

⁶⁷ Lawrence, Review of *Nigger Heaven*, p. 307.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 309.

⁶⁹ David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 122-124.

⁷⁰ Lawrence, "D. H. Lawrence Sees New Civilization", *The New York Evening Post*, 20 August 1923, p. 4.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 4.

streets, may thus be at least in part simply an extension of his general dislike for the metropolis. Any ‘glimpses’ of Harlem Lawrence caught whilst in New York evidently did not strike him as redolent of the vibrant cultural epicentre we now imagine and which texts like McKay’s *Home to Harlem* brought into vivid relief.

A few years later, Andrew Harrison notes, when the Lawrences were staying with friends near Paris in 1929, Lawrence broke a Bessie Smith record (“Empty Bed Blues”) over Frieda’s head.⁷² This perhaps speaks more to Lawrence’s short temper and Frieda’s repetitive playing of this record than to his particular aversion to Smith or to African American or jazz music more generally. Yet considered in tandem with his earlier gripes: his feeling that *Nigger Heaven* and *Flight* did not offer him the vision of difference he sought, that most of the inhabitants of Harlem were not ‘real black’ and that soon its population would be merely a watered-down ‘pale greyish-brown in colour’, it seems conceivable that Lawrence did harbour a particular dislike for African Americans (or at least for those of the time, formed in these conditions), for Harlem and for the art both produced. As I shall discuss in more detail later, Lawrence valued difference as transformative and prized the ‘primitive’ as a source of renewal, but the culture and the people he saw coming from Harlem appear to have proven neither sufficiently different to himself nor sufficiently ‘primitive’ to be of any great interest.

Unsurprisingly, then, there is little to suggest that Lawrence read much further than *Nigger Heaven* and *Flight*. Had his former Taos host Mabel Dodge Luhan sent him a copy of *Cane* after meeting and immediately warming to Toomer in 1925,

⁷² Andrew Harrison, *The Life of D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Wiley, 2016) p. 382; Lawrence may be referencing “Empty Bed Blues” in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* when Mellors complains that his estranged wife Bertha ‘had to work the thing herself, grind her own coffee’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 202. Coffee-grinding was a common metaphor for sexual intercourse in blues songs (as in Lucille Bogan’s “Coffee Grinding Blues”).

Lawrence's opinion of 'negro stuff' might have been quite different, but there is no evidence to suggest that Lawrence ever read Toomer, McKay, Hughes or Hurston. Where in Holcomb and Scruggs' collection instances of multi-directional influence may be traced between Hemingway and several African American writers, the element of direct influence at issue here is thus unidirectional.

Influence and Confluence

Studies of influence are today, not without reason, commonly regarded with suspicion. As Tracy Mishkin notes, influence studies are 'often perceived as old-fashioned by the proponents of intertextuality, who envision texts rather than authors interacting and associate influence studies with obsessive source-hunting.'⁷³ The editors of *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Influence* (2015), though, suggest that a return to author-centred studies merits a reconsideration of literary influence; they use the term 'influence' unapologetically, while recognising that 'it has a slightly moth-eaten ring to it today'.⁷⁴ Indeed, the subject of literary influence today continues to conjure the metaphors of illness and contamination that characterise Harold Bloom's influential study, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Yet Bloom's model of influence, as he acknowledges, is limited in scope not only to poetry, but to the poetry of an (invariably white, male) elite group.

⁷³ Tracy Mishkin (ed.), "Theorizing Literary Influence and African-American Writers", *Literary Influence and African-American Writers: Collected Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1996) p. 3.

⁷⁴ Sarah Ailwood and Melinda Harvey (eds.), *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Influence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) p. 3.

In the context of interracial influence during the Harlem Renaissance, the ‘anxiety of influence’ seems to rest more with the critics than with the artists themselves. Here I use the term ‘influence’ with caution, not because of its ‘moth-eaten ring’ but because of the particular nature and politics of influence at stake here. For African American authors more so than their white counterparts, literary influence has been an especially thorny subject. For the earliest African American writers, the question of originality was paramount; the ‘humanity’ of those who wrote the first slave narratives and poetry collections was at issue, their freedom potentially at stake. Were their works deemed ‘derivative’ or ‘imitative’, the project of proving their intellect, their worthiness of citizenship and their very humanity could be jeopardized.

It is worth considering exactly what we mean when we speak of ‘influence’. From the Latin *influere*, combining ‘in’ (into) and ‘fluere’ (to flow), in its original sense ‘influence’ designated a flowing matter; as an astrological term it described ‘[t]he supposed flowing or streaming from the stars or heavens of an ethereal fluid acting upon the character and destiny of men, and affecting sublunary things generally’.⁷⁵ The vague, ethereal power of astrological ‘influence’ described above does not seem entirely extraneous to a consideration of literary influence, which itself can often seem a mysterious and intangible phenomenon. Indeed, Ihab H. Hassan, in a 1955 article addressing the ‘problem of influence in literary history’, after much wrangling with terms and methodologies concludes that ‘a measure of speculation and uncertainty seems ineradicable’ where questions of influence are at stake.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ “Influence”, in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <<http://www.oed.com/manchester.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/95519?rskey=pfcqyd&result=1#eid>> [accessed 14 November 2018].

⁷⁶ Ihab H. Hassan, “The Problem of Influence in Literary History: Notes towards a Definition”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Sep., 1955) 66-76 (p. 73).

Yet the term 'intertextuality' seems equally imprecise and inadequate here; in displacing the authors – the human players – the personal aspect is lost. As many Lawrentian scholars have suggested, Lawrence's legacy is arguably far more complex and multifaceted than that of many of his contemporaries. Goodheart argues that Lawrence's American literary legacy is perhaps more appropriately described in terms of 'affinity' or 'literary kinship' than 'influence'.⁷⁷ 'Affinity', 'literary kinship' and 'intimacy' are all posited here as facets of influence. As Ralph Ellison distinguishes between his literary 'ancestors' and 'relatives' (Hemingway is an 'ancestor' and Wright a 'relative'), an effort is made here to recognise the unique, personal nature of each instance of literary influence.⁷⁸ Questions of influence, however, become less central over the course of this study. Where McKay and Hughes attest to having read Lawrence and this reading seems definitely to have (in certain ways and at certain moments) shaped their own writing, links with Toomer and Hurston are less easily delineated. Toomer certainly read at least some Lawrence (he reviewed three of Lawrence's novellas for *Broom* magazine in 1923) and he moved in some of the same social and intellectual circles as the Englishman. There is no solid evidence to suggest that Hurston ever read Lawrence. Thus, the first section of this thesis, including chapters on McKay and Hughes, is titled 'Influence' (flowing in) and the second, containing chapters on Toomer and Hurston, 'Confluence' (flowing together).

The idea of confluence here references world-systems theory and developments in global modernist studies described above, tapping into the 'web of twentieth-century literary practices' Doyle and Winkiel evoke. My figuring of confluence and the

⁷⁷ Goodheart, p. 139.

⁷⁸ Ralph Ellison, "The World and the Jug", *Shadow and Act* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967) 107-143 (p. 140).

methodology employed in these chapters also bears some resemblance to Susan Stanford Friedman's models of 'circulation' and 'collage', as described in *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (2015). With this work, Friedman pushed the transnational turn beyond its usual limits, 'provocatively ask[ing] for an even more radical epistemological shift' to 'incorporate the geohistories and cultures of the planet before 1500.'⁷⁹ Here the term 'circulation', Friedman explains, describes 'a tracking of modernist mobilities through time and space'.⁸⁰ The complementary term, 'collage', denotes 'a form of radical juxtaposition that produces new insight', whereby 'fragments set side by side lead the eye to move across the surface and to discover or invent some patterns of relation in color, shape, form, and meaning.'⁸¹ Such an exercise, Friedman asserts, 'facilitates what Glissant calls in *Poetics of Relation* the elimination of relational trajectories leading "from the Center toward the peripheries" or "from the peripheries to the Center."⁸²

In a similar way, I look here to identify 'similarities of situations or diverging directions', recognising that '[w]riters located at different nodal points in the network of modernities create not in isolation but in linked relationship to creative producers elsewhere.'⁸³ Friedman's planetary model and her notions of 'circulation' and 'collage' are useful to a certain extent in this project, but the networks posited here emerge as far more tangible and personal connections than those illustrated by Friedman. Friedman places Joseph Conrad and Tayeb Salih and E. M. Forster and Arundhati Roy, amongst others, side by side in 'radical juxtaposition'. The gaps between

⁷⁹ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) p. x.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 216.

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 219, 217.

⁸² Ibid, p. 218.

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 218, 220.

Lawrence and these four writers, the time in which they lived and wrote, the social circles they inhabited, the philosophies they explored and promoted, are notably smaller.⁸⁴ Thus, rather than ‘radical juxtaposition’, what emerges in reading these writers alongside Lawrence is more of a radical correspondence: a continuity of thought. Where Friedman seems to suggest that almost anything may be deemed ‘modernist’, then, my notion of ‘confluence’ here describes a more precise mood and condition of transnational interrelatedness yoked to the early twentieth century.

The African American Literary Canon

Alongside recent scholarship in global modernisms, I draw in this project upon key works of Harlem Renaissance scholarship including Huggins’ *Harlem Renaissance* (1973), Houston A. Baker, Jr.’s *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987) and George Hutchinson’s *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (1995) as well as more recent studies including Jacques’ *A Change in the Weather* and Smethurst’s *The African American Roots of Modernism*. All deal with the ways in which Harlem Renaissance artists interacted with their white modernist counterparts. Huggins’ seminal study explores the paradoxical tensions intrinsic to the Harlem Renaissance movement: a simultaneous aspiration to (predominantly white) high

⁸⁴ Mark P. Ott notes in “A Shared Language of American Modernism: Hemingway and the Harlem Renaissance” that ‘in the America of the 1920s, modernist writers were separated by no more than two degrees, or two people, uniting much of the artistic production along aesthetic, rather than racial distinctions’, Holcomb and Scruggs, p. 28.

culture and a desire for independence from Western hegemony. These artists 'saw art and letters as a bridge across the chasm between the races [...] this alliance "at the top" would be the agency to bring the races together.'⁸⁵ In seeking to construct a new, specific, black consciousness, these writers saw art as a means for unity across racial boundaries.

Hutchinson challenges assumed oppositions between black and white modernism and American and African American cultural nationalisms. He affirms that when pitted against the 'high modernism' of American expatriate writers including Eliot, Pound and Stein, the Harlem Renaissance 'hardly seems modernist at all'.⁸⁶ Indeed, as Hutchinson observes, there is a tendency to suppose that 'Black modernism [...] is the inverse of white modernism, [...] the revolting Caliban to Europe's and white America's debunked Prospero.'⁸⁷ The debate has long raged among critics of the Harlem Renaissance and of African American literature more widely over the extent to which difference or commonality, distinct roots or shared traditions should be emphasized in discussing African American writers alongside their white American or European counterparts. Hutchinson sees "white" and "black" American cultures as 'intimately intertwined, mutually constitutive' and Huggins claims that 'black and white Americans have been so long and so intimately a part of one another's experience that [...] they cannot be understood separately.'⁸⁸ Ann Douglas (1995) posits European modernity as a 'common opponent' uniting white American modernists and

⁸⁵ Huggins, p. 5.

⁸⁶ George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) p. 29.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 3; Huggins, p. 11.

Harlem Renaissance artists.⁸⁹ Yet others, like Baker, stress the unique and indigenous nature of the specifically African American brand of modernism to which the Renaissance gave rise. Baker argues indeed that the very strength of the New Negro movement lay in its ability to offer an alternative to mainstream or 'high' (predominantly white) modernism.

Wider efforts to define an African American literary canon have naturally necessitated a consideration of the traceable roots and characteristics of African American letters as distinct from 'white' American literature. Perhaps the most notable effort in recent times has been Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay's *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (1997). Here vernacular roots are firmly established as central to the formation of an African American literary canon and Gates has elsewhere often argued for an ancestry of African American literary art distinctly separate from its Euro-American counterpart and requiring different critical tools. In "Canon-Formation, Literary History, and the Afro-American Tradition: From the Seen to the Told", Gates reflects upon earlier attempts to define an African American canon. V. F. Calverton's 1929 *Anthology of American Negro Literature* is distinguished as 'the first attempt at black canon-formation to provide for the influence and presence of black vernacular literature in a major way.'⁹⁰ Calverton posits a self-contained African American canon and tradition, one distinctly 'American' and 'far more free of white influence than American culture is of English'.⁹¹ He bemoans the fact that many

⁸⁹ Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995) p. 6.

⁹⁰ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Canon-Formation, Literary History, and the Afro-American Tradition: From the Seen to the Told", *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s*, ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Patricia Redmond (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) pp. 14-39 (p. 33).

⁹¹ V. F. Calverton (ed.), "The Growth of Negro Literature", *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1929) p. 3.

African American writers of the day, however, have chosen to follow their white contemporaries 'rather than extended and perfected the original art forms of their race'.⁹² The editors of *The Negro Caravan* (1941), conversely, posit a more 'integrated canon of American literature'; they argue that 'Negro writers have adopted the literary traditions that seemed useful for their purposes.'⁹³ 'Without too great imitativeness,' they affirm, 'many contemporary Negro writers are closer to O. Henry, Carl Sandberg, Edgar Lee Masters, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Waldo Frank, Ernest Hemingway and John Steinbeck than to each other. The bonds of literary tradition seem to be stronger than race.'⁹⁴ Gates' own biases align him more closely to Calverton than to *The Negro Caravan's* editors. The latter call for 'a single standard of criticism', while Gates feels strongly that the perpetuation of the idea that 'what is good and proper for Americanists is good and proper for Afro-Americanists' will ensure that Afro-Americanists remain 'indentured servants to white masters [...] and to the Western tradition'.⁹⁵

Gates' conviction that the African American literary tradition must define itself and his desires 'to stress the formal relationship that obtains among texts in the black tradition' appear to leave little room for a consideration of interracial and international literary exchange.⁹⁶ White influence upon African American writers of course poses a host of potential problems for an African American literary canon reliant upon the primacy of the vernacular tradition and, like Calverton and (to a lesser extent) Gates, upon the idea of a largely self-contained canon. However, I argue, analysing Harlem Renaissance authors and works uniquely within the context of African American

⁹² Ibid, p. 5.

⁹³ Gates, p. 36; Brown, Davis and Lee, Introduction to *The Negro Caravan*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 7; Gates, p. 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 38.

literature (or Afro-modernism) restricts opportunities for fruitful and unexpected critical work, precluding the discovery of new and enlightening interpretations. While self-definition and efforts to define a canon of African American literature which need not be measured by traditional Western or European standards are undoubtedly necessary and correct, these efforts and their associated politics should not impede attempts to understand more fully the range of processes, environments, networks and literary conversations that produced these works. This project thus employs Mishkin's simple logic that 'interracial influence means not that a black canon is not self-sufficient but that it did not grow in a vacuum.'⁹⁷

Lawrence and Race

Little has been more contentious for readers and critics of Lawrence over the past few decades than his positions on race. Often considered racist, anti-Semitic and misogynistic, Lawrence's reputation certainly renders him an unlikely figure to be linked with proponents of Locke's New Negro movement. Recent work on Lawrence and race has sought to provide a more nuanced outlook, recognising the contradictions and inconsistencies in the views he espoused regarding racial matters.

In proposing a multi-directional influence in their study of Hemingway and the 'Black Renaissance', Holcomb and Scruggs highlight a 'black presence' which 'haunts

⁹⁷ Mishkin, p. 15.

Hemingway's prose'.⁹⁸ They evoke the 'Africanist presence' which Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) identifies as central to any consideration of American literature and indeed Americanness itself.⁹⁹ The 'Africanist presence' named by Morrison exists, she recognises, not only in American literature but also in the cultures of 'South Africa, England, France, Germany, Spain,' which have all 'participated in some aspect of an "invented Africa."' ¹⁰⁰ Indeed, such a presence is also evident in Lawrence's oeuvre.

Long before Morrison, Lawrence identified 'IT, the American whole soul' as a 'dusky body' beneath 'democratic and idealised clothes' (SCAL, 19). Though the 'dusky body' he references here is most likely Native American, Lawrence's sense of a dark body, concealed but ever-present, just under the surface of the 'democratic and idealised clothes' of American culture, is certainly in the same spirit as Morrison's haunting and persistent 'Africanist presence'. In "The Spirit of Place", the first essay in *Studies*, he likens America to 'a vast republic of escaped slaves' (SCAL, 16). The 'Pilgrim Fathers', he writes, came across the 'black sea' in a 'black spirit', '[a] black revulsion from Europe' (SCAL, 16). The American mantra, he suggests, might be: 'Whatever else you are, be masterless'; he then riffs on Caliban's rebellion song in the refrain 'Ca Ca Caliban / Get a new master, be a new man' (SCAL, 16). Transplanted Europeans – and not Native Americans or African slaves – are here equated with Shakespeare's half-human slave. White America, Lawrence proclaims in his essay on Melville's *Moby-Dick*, is 'doomed' (SCAL, 146). Years earlier, Jessie Chambers recalls how Lawrence's reading of Schopenhauer's "The Metaphysics of Love" (1844)

⁹⁸ Holcomb and Scruggs, Introduction, p. 20.

⁹⁹ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 7.

convinced him that 'white skin is not natural to man' and led him to declare: "For me, a brown skin is the only beautiful one".¹⁰¹ For Lawrence, dark-skinned peoples were closer to the 'blood-consciousness' he prized, while whites, too much consumed by their minds and anaesthetised by the deadening mechanisation of the industrial world, were doomed like Ahab.

This prizing of the darker races as representatives and keepers of some primordial form of consciousness is evident in *Women in Love* (1920). In one scene, Rupert Birkin recalls the African statues he has earlier seen at the home of his friend, Julian Halliday. One figure in particular, of a West African woman, comes back to him in vivid relief. With her face 'crushed like a tiny beetle's', her 'astounding long elegant body' and her 'protuberant buttocks', to Birkin she represents 'thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge', 'knowledge such as the beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution'.¹⁰² Birkin's admiration of the female statue swiftly descends into a kind of horror; it becomes not merely an art object but a projection of his own fears of decline and degeneration. In an earlier scene, Gerald Crich recognises Halliday's girlfriend, Pussum, in an African statue of a black woman giving birth. The African woman comes here to represent a particular form of white degenerate sensuality.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), too, Mellors' comment that only 'black women' 'really "come" naturally with a man' (*LCL*, 204) illustrates Lawrence's othering of the black female as simultaneously representative of the 'real sex' both he and Mellors prize and a kind of degraded sexuality. This statement, which simultaneously praises

¹⁰¹ Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) p. 111.

¹⁰² Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ed. by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 253.

and denigrates the presumed ultra-sensuality of black women, seems indicative of Lawrence's ambivalent primitivism more widely. His work is often marked by idealisations of the primitive or instinctive life, yet this is frequently accompanied by shock, disgust and disappointment when 'primitive' cultures are encountered or, indeed, when a people or culture proved insufficiently primitive or different (as evidenced in the review of *Nigger Heaven* and *Flight*). Primitivism emerges as an important and recurring theme in the chapters to follow; in *Home to Harlem*, McKay politicizes the primitive in an effort to celebrate a specifically black identity and consciousness, while in *The Ways of White Folks* Hughes mercilessly mocks white primitivism. Etherington, whose 2017 study *Literary Primitivism* looks to reignite long-dormant debates about primitivism, positions it as 'an aesthetic project formed in reaction to the geographical totalization of the capitalist world-system.'¹⁰³ Like Etherington, I look here to explore primitivism as an expression of a particular moment in history: a moment when any truly 'primitive' culture was becoming increasingly impossible under the auspices of the 'capitalist world-system', but during which writers and artists, especially those radicals disenchanted with this system, sought to rediscover and reaffirm the merits of the primitive through art.

In any discussion of Lawrence and primitivism, the issue of his racial politics inevitably surfaces. Yet Lawrence's views on race are notoriously hard to pin down. Indeed, as Ronald Granofsky asserts, '[t]he issue of Lawrence and race is entangled in his writing within a nexus of competing ideological and psychological formulations, and to untangle it is no easy task.'¹⁰⁴ Those who have attempted such an untangling,

¹⁰³ Etherington, p. 169.

¹⁰⁴ Ronald Granofsky, "'Jews of the Wrong Sort": D.H. Lawrence and Race", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1999-2000) pp. 209-223 (p. 209).

most recently and significantly Judith Ruderman, have not often focussed upon Lawrence's responses to and depictions of African Americans. Indeed Ruderman, in her 2014 *Race and Identity in D. H. Lawrence: Indians, Gypsies, and Jews*, seems to conspicuously avoid or at least limit any discussion of the author's depictions of or comments upon people of African descent.

A survey of Lawrence's views on race more generally reveal an ambivalence comparable to his attitude towards the 'primitive'. As Granofsky notes, in the rejected epilogue to *Movements in European History* (1921), Lawrence employs the metaphorical 'tree of mankind' in his explanation of racial difference, seeming to suggest 'a fundamental unity and equality among races:'¹⁰⁵

In its root and trunk, mankind is one. But then the differences begin. The great tree of man branches out into different races: huge branches, reaching far out in different directions. [...] My manhood is the same as the manhood of a Chinaman. But in spirit and idea we two are different and shall be different forever, as apple-blossom will forever be different from irises.¹⁰⁶

Having initially highlighted the 'oneness' of mankind, Lawrence feels compelled to emphasize racial difference as incontrovertible, especially when it comes to 'spirit and idea'. Indeed, though Lawrence found darker skins 'beautiful', he did not 'desire' them.¹⁰⁷ Nor could he identify easily with men 'of another race, of different culture and religion', as he affirms in his review of Marmaduke Pickthall's *Saïd the Fisherman* (1903).¹⁰⁸ He could not help but feel, as he wrote to Rolf Gardiner in July 1924, that

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 216.

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence, *Movements in European History*, ed. by Philip Crumpton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 256

¹⁰⁷ Chambers, p. 111.

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence, Review of *Saïd the Fisherman*, *Introductions and Reviews*, p. 245.

ultimately 'the great racial differences are insuperable'.¹⁰⁹ Later, however, Lawrence's views on race and particularly on the issue of miscegenation would alter. In *Quetzalcoatl* (composed in 1923, but unpublished in Lawrence's lifetime), he had rejected the possibility of miscegenation, but in this novel's later manifestation, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), he portrays interracial marriage between his Irish protagonist and the 'pure Indian' Don Cipriano.¹¹⁰

"On Being a Man" (1924) contains perhaps Lawrence's most significant comments on African Americans; he here reveals more of his seemingly contradictory philosophy on race and difference, describing an encounter with a black man in a train carriage:

It is not enough for me to glance at a black face and say: He is a negro. As he sits next to me, there is a faint uneasy movement in my blood. A strange vibration comes from him, which causes a slight disturbance in my own vibration. There is a slight odour in my nostrils. And above all, even if I shut my eyes, there is a strange *presence* in contact with me.¹¹¹

As Howard J. Booth notes, Lawrence here 'criticises fixing the African American with a single word', but 'then falls into a series of stereotypes'.¹¹² Lawrence goes on to explain that he is unable to comprehend this 'strange presence': 'I am not a nigger and so I can't quite know a nigger, and I can never fully "understand" him.'¹¹³ In this essay Lawrence sees otherness as an opportunity for internal transformation resulting in 'a

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence, Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 4 July, 1924, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 5, ed. by James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 67.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, ed. by L. D. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 64.

¹¹¹ Lawrence, "On Being a Man", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 211-222 (p. 215).

¹¹² Booth, "Give Me Differences", p. 190.

¹¹³ Lawrence, "On Being a Man", p. 215.

new bit of realisation, a new term of consciousness'.¹¹⁴ He values difference for the transformation it offers. The discovery of sameness where otherness was to be expected, then, was often disappointing and disconcerting to Lawrence. In his review of *Nigger Heaven* and *Flight*, then Lawrence is disappointed to discover that '[t]he nigger is a white man through and through'; he seems almost to foreshadow Fanon's landmark *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) in his comment that '[h]e even sees himself as white men see him, blacker than he ought to be.'¹¹⁵ 'One likes to cherish illusions about the race soul, the eternal negroid soul, black and glistening and touched with awfulness and with mystery', Lawrence affirms, but, he laments '[o]ne is not allowed'.¹¹⁶

In the introductory chapter to *New D. H. Lawrence* (2008), Booth draws attention to this 'deeply problematic assumption that others are there to provide transformative experiences for Western subjects.'¹¹⁷ However, earlier in the same introduction, he stresses that Lawrence, crucially, 'is part of an earlier social and cultural formation'; he 'is not our contemporary' and cannot be thought of as such.¹¹⁸ The temptation to consider Lawrence in contemporary terms is strong, as the relevance of his themes endures and his works continue to challenge modern sensibilities. However, as A. S. Byatt attests, we must employ 'an historical imagination in approaching Lawrence's world'.¹¹⁹ Booth cites Kate Millett's famously hostile chapter on Lawrence in *Sexual Politics* (1970) as an example in which 'there is no sense that Lawrence's context was

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 215.

¹¹⁵ Lawrence, Review of *Nigger Heaven*, p. 308.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 308.

¹¹⁷ Booth (ed.), Introduction to *New D. H. Lawrence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009) p. 8.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ A. S. Byatt, "The one bright book of life", *New Statesman*, 16 December 2002.

different to her own'.¹²⁰ Indeed, as Bell notes, 'it is actually very difficult, though deceptively easy, to write [Lawrence] down ideologically, which is why the ideological turn in literary studies during the late twentieth century led to a dramatic drop in his academic reputation.'¹²¹ This drop in Lawrence's reputation, at least within academia, and the stock responses his work tended to elicit at this time, may explain why, almost three decades ago, Hamalian felt unable to write more forcefully about Lawrence's relation to black writers.

Yet, this study demonstrates, for these black and mixed-race writers who professed their love of Lawrence (McKay), the significance of his impact upon their work (Hughes) and even those who engaged in an openly critical dialogue about his work (Toomer), the English author's racial politics do not appear to have been an issue. These writers neither valued nor repudiated Lawrence for his views on race. McKay writes in his 1937 autobiography that: 'In [Lawrence] I found confusion – all of the ferment and torment and turmoil [...] the sexual inquietude and incertitude of this age, and the psychic and romantic groping for a way out.'¹²² This striking passage will be analysed more extensively in the chapter that follows, but McKay's idea of 'groping for a way out' seems to capture a profound sense both of Lawrence's attraction and his perceived entreaty.

The 'sexual inquietude' McKay references may allude to his own sexuality as well as Lawrence's depiction of sex and sexuality. Of course, the sexualized content of Lawrence's work saw it frequently and famously banned in many countries for many

¹²⁰ Booth, Introduction, *New D. H. Lawrence*, p. 4.

¹²¹ Bell, "D. H. Lawrence", *The Cambridge Companion to English Novelists*, ed. by Adrian Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 309-325 (p. 322).

¹²² Claude McKay, *A Long Way From Home* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007) p. 118.

years; Hamalian identifies his status as a 'blacklisted' author as key to his appeal to black authors.¹²³ In a later study of Lawrence's influence upon nine women writers, Hamalian offers a similar theory, affirming that 'when a writer working on the margins needed succor, she most likely would turn to the dissenter, whether male or female, who scorned the collectivity and actively opposed it. Lawrence, who regularly ran afoul of officialdom, served in that role better than any other writer of the time.'¹²⁴ Indeed, there are parallels to be drawn between Lawrence's appeal to female writers and his connection to these black and mixed-race writers.

Despite many attacks upon Lawrence from a feminist point of view (Millett's is perhaps the most famous), critics like Carol Siegel have stressed the extent of his affinity with and influence upon female writers ranging from Catherine Carswell to Doris Lessing. His own writing, Siegel explains, 'developed in his reaction to his reading of Victorian women authors' including George Eliot, the Brontës and Olive Schreiner.¹²⁵ Even where female writers respond angrily to Lawrence's work, rejecting his misogyny and his appropriation of the female voice, for Siegel '[t]heir rejection of Lawrence brings them into accord with his female models; one might say that they are better able to transcend the cultural differences between their own values and those of Victorian women because they first tried and failed to align their work with Lawrence.'¹²⁶

A major part of the New Negro movement was of course a rejection of the 'white' aesthetic and a celebration of folk culture and a uniquely black aesthetic. Perhaps the

¹²³ Hamalian, "Black Writers", p. 579.

¹²⁴ Hamalian, *D. H. Lawrence and Nine Women Writers* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996) p. 27.

¹²⁵ Carol Siegel, *Lawrence Among the Women: Wavering Boundaries in Women's Literary Traditions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991) p. 186.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 187.

most famous and powerful expression of this is to be found in Hughes' 1926 essay, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain". Here Hughes scorns the black middle-classes, with their reliance upon white cultural standards, decrying the young black poet (probably an unnamed Countee Cullen) who once told him "I want to be a poet – not a Negro poet".¹²⁷ For Hughes, 'the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America' is 'this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible.'¹²⁸ The inherently paradoxical nature of this period in African American life and culture means that Hughes' riveting 'declaration of independence', as Robert Bone notes, 'was promulgated by a writer who depended on a series of white patrons for his daily bread.'¹²⁹

Indeed, white figures were intimately involved with the burgeoning New Negro movement from the beginning; they acted as publishers, wealthy patrons, mentors and friends. This phenomenon has notably been documented in Hutchinson's *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* and more recently in Carla Kaplan's *Miss Anne in Harlem* (2013), which highlights the involvement of white women in the movement. Van Vechten, the photographer, writer and patron, is frequently cited as a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance, having promoted writers including Hughes, Hurston and Wallace Thurman. Though a close friend to many of the leading lights of the New Negro movement, he has often, as Allen Dunn and Hutchinson note, 'been

¹²⁷ Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) p. 31.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 32.

¹²⁹ Robert Bone, *Down Home: A History of Afro-American Short Fiction from Its Beginnings to the End of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1975) p. 250.

characterized as a kind of vampire, the very quintessence of the white cultural colonialism that purportedly destroyed the Harlem Renaissance'.¹³⁰ Charlotte Osgood Mason, 'Harlem's most influential patron' in Kaplan's view, was another key figure, though less high-profile than Van Vechten.¹³¹ Mason acted as patron and 'Godmother' to Hughes, Hurston and Locke; her involvement with black artists stemmed from her fascination with all things 'primitive'.

Such white involvement and patronage, alongside perceived 'assimilation' or 'mimicry' of white European artistic forms, has in the past encouraged scholars to declare this flourishing of African-American culture as ultimately a failure. Critics like Huggins have found the Harlem Renaissance finally and fatally unable to escape the weight of historic American racism or sufficiently separate itself from white-dominated, European culture. For Huggins, the Renaissance failed to produce an authentically new or exclusively black identity or art. Aligned with this perceived aesthetic failure was a disappointment in the social efficacy of the movement. The 'Indignant Generation', as Lawrence P. Jackson terms those writers working in the aftermath of the Harlem Renaissance, as well as the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, repudiated and distanced themselves from the New Negro movement. Perceived as an emasculated, white-washed movement by those, like Harold Cruse – who blamed figures like Van Vechten who took over the "spiritual and aesthetic" materials' of black

¹³⁰ Allen Dunn and George Hutchinson, "The Future of the Harlem Renaissance", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 80, No. 4, (Winter 1997) pp. 445-454 (p. 451).

¹³¹ Carla Kaplan, *Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013) p. xxx.

writers 'for their own self-glorification' – white 'cultural paternalism' was often cited among the key reasons for the 'failure' of the Renaissance.¹³²

The character of Ray in *Home to Harlem* posits the problem of white involvement rather eloquently. Ray acts as an analogue to McKay; much like the author, he is attempting to form a new black aesthetic and identity. He believes that the black population can no longer live in a 'white house' or receive a white education: "We ought to get something new, we Negroes. But we get our education like – like our houses. When the whites move out, we move in and take possession of the old dead stuff. Dead stuff that this age has no use for."¹³³ But Ray has long lived in a 'white house' and received a 'white' education; he is in many ways an outsider in Harlem and, surely not coincidentally, an avid reader of Lawrence (*HH*, 227).

Here McKay, perhaps unwittingly, reveals what some would perceive to be a fundamental problem inherent in his own efforts to contribute to a specifically black consciousness. It is also a problem at the core of this project's inquiry: does Lawrence's influence constitute merely another inheritance of 'old dead stuff' or a taking possession of a certain radical literary spirit, an evocation of the universality of art and its ability to transcend racial, national and social boundaries? And, in the cases of Toomer and Hurston, where the question of influence is not at stake, how does reading these authors together enhance our understanding of them as artists and of modernism more widely? The former quandary is surely at the very heart of any evaluation of the Harlem Renaissance; Holcomb and Scruggs' collection naturally wrestles with the same kinds of issues. Critics like Baker argue that the strength of

¹³² Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: New York Review Books, 2005) p. 35.

¹³³ McKay, *Home to Harlem* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987) p. 243.

the New Negro movement lay in its ability to offer an alternative to mainstream (white) modernism; if such claims to alterity or independence can be dismissed by Hemingway's influence on Ralph Ellison or Lawrence's direct inspiration of Hughes' short stories, must this necessarily point to an inherent 'failure'?

Baker repudiates any approach in which the question 'Why did the Harlem Renaissance fail?' is the starting point. We should not, he argues, begin with 'notions of British, Anglo-American, and Irish "modernism" as "successful" objects, projects, and processes to be emulated by Afro-Americans'.¹³⁴ My efforts to explore these Harlem Renaissance writers and texts in dialogue with Lawrence do not figure Lawrence as a 'successful' model that these writers wished to emulate. Rather, I seek to highlight and explore the ways in which reading these writers together is enlightening and revealing of the transatlantic and interracial mobility of modernist thought in the 1920s and 1930s. With this in mind, I look also to address Baker's suggestion that racial difference precludes 'intimacy': that 'shockingly personal' aspect identified by Lionel Trilling as characteristic of modern literature.¹³⁵

'It is difficult,' Baker asserts, 'for an Afro-American student of literature like me – one unconceived in the philosophies of Anglo-American, British, and Irish moderns – to find intimacy either in the moderns' hostility to *civilization* or in their fawning reliance on an array of images and assumptions bequeathed by a *civilization* that, in its prototypical form, is exclusively Western, pre-eminently bourgeois, and optically white.'¹³⁶ I argue, however, that 'intimacy' is exactly what emerges when these writers are read and considered in tandem. I agree with Mishkin, then, that '[d]espite the facts

¹³⁴ Baker, pp. xv-xvi.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 6

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

of imperialism and racism, black writers can identify with white writers on an individual level, can see them as people' and I heed her entreaty to 'listen to what the authors have to say'.¹³⁷

Ralph Ellison in "The World and the Jug", his indignant 1963 response to Irving Howe, opines that 'any writer takes what he needs to get his own work done from wherever he finds it'; Hemingway was more important to him than Wright for reasons unrelated to race, he claims, 'because he appreciated the things of this earth which [Ellison] love[d]'.¹³⁸ This sense of relatedness which is not precluded by racial difference is evident in Hughes' 1951 poem, "Theme for English B", from which this project takes its title. The poem's speaker – a black student at a white college – muses upon his relation to his white instructor. Asked to write a page and to 'let that page come out of [him]', he realises that whatever he writes 'will not be white', but it will be 'a part of' his white teacher.¹³⁹ Addressing his instructor, he declares: 'You are white— / yet a part of me, as I am a part of you. / That's American.'¹⁴⁰ Just as Huggins would later argue that 'black and white Americans have been so long and so intimately a part of one another's experience that, will it or not, they cannot be understood independently', Hughes' speaker recognises that he and his instructor, though divided by race, age and the degree of freedom society affords them, are part of one another, will it or not.¹⁴¹ This study interrogates the extent to which a white European writer can be incorporated into Hughes' universalist American vision and Huggins' notion of interdependence within a global modernist frame.

¹³⁷ Mishkin, p. 10.

¹³⁸ Ellison, "The World and the Jug", p. 141, p. 140.

¹³⁹ Hughes, "Theme for English B", *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (New York: Holt, 1951) p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 39.

¹⁴¹ Huggins, p. 11.

Structure of the Thesis

The four chapters that follow focus primarily upon individual authors along thematic lines. In this way, I hope to illustrate the individual connection and response of each author, without precluding the opportunity to discuss the commonalities between them. Dividing the thesis further into two parts, 'Influence' and 'Confluence', allows for the exploration of two different models of literary exchange and connectedness. The structural twoness of the thesis thus comes to mirror the doubleness that W. E. B. Du Bois famously cited as characteristic of the African American experience ('an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body'): the 'double consciousness' embodied in the metaphorical 'veil' which separates and mediates between the races.¹⁴² The division here aims not to cut off or separate these chapters from one another. Rather, it aims to foster a dialogue between 'influence' and 'confluence', between traditional and new ways of thinking about literary connection, exchange and the flow of ideas. The 'flowing in' and 'flowing together' evoked in the section headings thus enacts a dialectic not dissimilar to the Du Boisian veil. Such a dialectic seems especially relevant to a study of a movement replete with paradoxes, widely deemed both a 'failure' and a ground-breaking moment in African American letters, and an itinerant author who continues to divide opinion both within and outside academia.

By beginning with McKay and ending with Hurston, it is possible to trace a (non-chronological) line from McKay as Lawrence's enthusiastic literary 'brother' to Hurston

¹⁴² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 2012) p. 2.

as his furthest-removed philosophical cousin. These writers and works share many of Lawrence's greatest ontological concerns, but the affinities and instances of 'influence' and 'confluence' I explore are variously aesthetic, thematic, political and personal. The first chapter considers McKay's 'literary kinship' with Lawrence, beginning with an overview of their shared cultural and intellectual roots. It argues that these early conditions produced a young artist especially susceptible to Lawrence's influence. Plotlessness and ambivalent primitivism are here explored as particular themes evident in McKay's life and work which bear the mark of Lawrence's influence and constitute modes and means by which both men sought to 'grop[e] for a way out'.

Chapter two posits Lawrence's posthumous short story collection, *The Lovely Lady* (1932), as a link connecting Hughes' experiences in the Soviet Union in 1932-1933 to his 1934 collection, *The Ways of White Folks*. I argue that Lawrence's impact spurred Hughes to reconsider his own role as a writer and to reconceive of literature's function as a mode capable of revealing the hypocrisies and horrors of life under Jim Crow. In *The Ways of White Folks*, Hughes mirrors the sardonic style and often bitter tone of Lawrence's late short fiction and translates the themes of female possessiveness and unnatural family relations in a bid to explore new configurations of racial identity and new ways of thinking about family and legacy.

In the third chapter, I read Toomer and Lawrence as modernist writers reacting to the problems they perceived as intrinsic to modernity and suggesting alternatives to the modern alienation and fragmentation they identified. In particular, I argue, both men explored ideas around racial mixing and human connection and dreamed of forming ideal communities in their pursuit of new ways of living and new ways of connecting to others. Chapter four places Lawrence in dialogue with Hurston, positioning both as writers belonging to a vitalist tradition. Employing Nietzsche's

concept of self-creation – of ‘becoming what you are’ – I posit Hurston’s Janie and Lawrence’s Ursula as Nietzschean ‘superwomen’, consider both authors’ rejection of ‘herd morality’ and finally explore their shared interest in pre-Christian and polytheistic forms of religion. Here I probe the difficulties inherent in Hurston’s prizing of the individual over the group in the context of the Harlem Renaissance’s focus upon the artist as a representative of their race and against the focus upon racial uplift espoused by figures like Du Bois.

Ultimately, this study looks to demonstrate what McKay and many of his contemporaries already knew and what Hughes expresses in “Theme for English B”: that racial difference does not preclude literary conversation, that these seemingly opposing voices and outwardly distinct strains of modernism do not exist and cannot be properly understood in isolation. The example of Lawrence and these four New Negro writers speaks to a wider claim concerning the nature of modernism and the direction of modernist studies. These figures, once routinely considered (at best) marginal participants in the modernist project, emerge as central to any contemporary understanding of modernity and thus modernism as a singular but fundamentally uneven phenomena revealing unexpected, multiple and interrelated histories.

Part I: Influence

Chapter 1

'[G]roping for a way out': Claude McKay

[M]y feet itch, and a seat burns my posterior if I sit too long. What ails me I don't know – but it's on and on.¹⁴³

I had wandered far and away until I had grown into a truant by nature and undomesticated in the blood. [...] I desired to be footloose, and felt impelled to start going again. (*ALW*, 118)

In *A Long Way From Home* (1937), Claude McKay maintains that 'D. H. Lawrence was the modern writer [he] preferred above any' (*ALW*, 190). He concedes *Ulysses* (1922) to be 'a bigger book than any of Lawrence's', but nonetheless 'preferred Lawrence as a whole' and thought him 'more modern' than Joyce (*ALW*, 190). 'In D. H. Lawrence', he explains, 'I found confusion – all of the ferment and torment and turmoil, the hesitation and hate and alarm, the sexual inquietude and incertitude of this age, and the psychic and romantic groping for a way out' (*ALW*, 190). McKay had earlier – in *Home to Harlem* – written of Ray, the Haitian intellectual character, that he 'had read, fascinated, all that D. H. Lawrence published. And wondered if there was not a great Lawrence reservoir of words too terrible and too terrifying for nice printing' (*HH*, 227).

This chapter argues that McKay's admiration of Lawrence was rooted firmly in the sense of 'psychic and romantic groping for a way out' evoked above. The disparity

¹⁴³ D. H. Lawrence, Letter to Irene Whitley, 18 December 1919, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 3, ed. by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p. 435.

between the implied spiritual, emotional and idealistic nature of this action ('psychic and romantic') and the tentative, fumbling physicality of its execution and object ('groping for a way out') is indicative of the complexity and perhaps the contradictoriness McKay identified in Lawrence. For these writers, this chapter will demonstrate, 'groping for a way out' variously entailed negotiations with language and form, engaging with the complexities of primitivism and travelling the world in search of alternative ways of living. As the epigraphs above suggest, I posit an important correspondence here between Lawrence and McKay's peripatetic lives – spurred by itchy feet and 'undomesticated' blood – and the itinerancy of their work and thought. For McKay especially, change of place almost always meant change of form. From dialect poetry in Jamaica to his American sonnets and from the picaresque novels composed in Europe to the more conventional narratives completed in Morocco, geographical journeys often went hand in hand with formal peregrinations.

In exploring Lawrence's influence upon McKay, I make three main interrelated claims. Firstly, I suggest that the roots of Lawrence's impact lie in a shared radical tradition, highlighting the work of Edward Carpenter in particular as an early common stimulus for their later work and thought. Secondly, tracing the formal progression described above, I identify Lawrence's impact upon McKay's transition from poetry to prose, highlighting particular parallels between McKay's 1929 novel, *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot* and Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod* (1922). Finally, I see both Lawrence and McKay as writers who complicate definitions of primitivism and convey the complex, contingent, ambivalent nature of primitivism in their work. Where Etherington intimates that both authors are ultimately unsuccessful in their attempts to render the primitive and achieve what he calls 'an aesthetics of immediacy' in their novels, I argue that the shared ambivalence and inconsistency of their primitivism in fact represent an

appropriate and revealing response to the conditions of global modernity.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, many decades before scholars began to recognise and highlight the problematic nature of both the term and the concept, Lawrence and McKay offer prescient criticisms and complications of primitivism.

These two writers seem simultaneously a natural pairing and an unlikely coupling, in part because both transcend national boundaries and elude easy categorization.¹⁴⁵ Holcomb indeed attests that '[t]he problem that the nomadic McKay and his transnational, aesthetically itinerant writing inevitably posed was where to locate him'; he has consequently often appeared 'an anomalous pastiche of frequently incompatible identities'.¹⁴⁶ An improbable leading light of the New Negro movement, McKay was born in British-ruled Jamaica and spent much of the Harlem Renaissance period far from the United States. Simultaneously a British subject and a radical internationalist, McKay became an American citizen only in 1940, when the Renaissance had dwindled to a memory. Lawrence has also proven difficult to locate; cast paradoxically as both quintessential English author (as in F. R. Leavis' 1955 *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist*) and rootless nomad, he combines, as Bell notes, 'a peculiarly English sensibility with a global outlook and an intensely international formation'.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Etherington, p. xii.

¹⁴⁵ McKay is probably the black writer most frequently associated with Lawrence. Wayne F. Cooper notes that although McKay admired many white and European writers, '[h]e considered Lawrence, in particular, a spiritual brother', Foreword to McKay, *Home to Harlem*, p. xiv. Holcomb opines that '[t]he effect of Lawrence on McKay's work is indisputable', *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha: Queer Black Marxism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2009) p. 118.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Bell, "D. H. Lawrence", *Cambridge Companion to English Novelists*, p. 320.

A Long Way From Home sees McKay – after over a decade away from the United States spent mostly in France, Germany and Morocco and disappointing sales of his most recent publications (*Gingertown* (1932) and *Banana Bottom* (1933)) – attempting to re-establish and re-define himself. In part, this meant distancing himself from the Harlem Renaissance. In the autobiography he scorns those black intellectuals who naively ‘expressed the opinion that Negro art would solve the centuries-old social problem of the Negro’, calling Alain Locke’s introduction to *The New Negro* ‘a remarkable chocolate soufflé of art and politics, with not an ingredient of information inside’ (ALW, 247). McKay’s efforts at self-definition (and indeed self-promotion) also involved descriptions of his meetings with well-known figures including Charlie Chaplin, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw.

Somewhat ironically, then, his evocation of Lawrence’s ‘groping for a way out’ here forms part of McKay’s efforts to find a way in, to be considered alongside white intellectuals as their equal. By highlighting his encounters with some of the most prominent figures of the time and professing his love of Lawrence, Joyce and several Russian authors, McKay positions himself within an elite, international, multi-racial network of artists. It is a move that has not always been reflected in critical responses to McKay’s work. In the United States, he is best known today for his association with the Harlem Renaissance and for “If We Must Die” – the 1919 protest poem inspired by the ‘Red Summer’ of race riots – while internationally he is renowned for his influence upon Caribbean writers including Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, who saw *Banjo* in particular as an exemplum of the values of Négritude. Critical and popular responses to McKay continue to evolve as his canon expands, most notably with the recent and forthcoming publications of two novels: *Amiable with Big Teeth* (2017) and *Romance in Marseille* (2020). Both of these works are more overtly political than

McKay's previously published novels, while in *Romance in Marseille* McKay is notably far more daring and explicit in his depictions of same-sex relationships. Though this chapter looks primarily at McKay's better-known works and those published within his lifetime, it is informed by and looks to contribute to an evolving scholarship. Exploring Lawrence's influence permits new insight into several aspects of McKay's life and work.

Where other critics have either largely dismissed Lawrence's impact upon McKay or resorted to describing it in ambiguous terms as a kind of 'spiritual' kinship, I demonstrate here that Lawrence's influence *can* be traced and articulated in several aspects of McKay's work. In locating this influence, I focus particularly upon Lawrence's post-war novels and essays of the early to mid-1920s, though earlier and later works are also referenced. The so-called 'leadership novels' (now a much-contested description) of this period (including *Aaron's Rod*, *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Plumed Serpent*), I suggest, best fit McKay's descriptions of 'incertitude' and 'inquietude'. These are also the works in which Lawrence is at his most experimental and challenging, in which the very form of the novel seems to be disintegrating as he writes. McKay then recognised in Lawrence a fellow writer who shared his sense of the chaos of the modern world; what he valued and sought to emulate was the ability to convey this chaos.

While many of their 'high' modernist contemporaries sought to contain and control the complexity and chaos of modern life, McKay and Lawrence looked to lay them bare. In McKay's life and work, this chapter demonstrates, this manifests in a variety of aesthetic and thematic forms, encompassing an eschewal of narrative order and a complex and ambivalent primitivism. I begin this chapter by considering McKay and Lawrence's common cultural and intellectual roots, including their family backgrounds

and McKay's Jamaican education. Highlighting in particular the writings of the Edwardian socialist poet and activist Edward Carpenter as significant common cultural stimuli, I argue that McKay's connection to Lawrence is firmly rooted in a shared radical tradition. Carpenter's sense that civilization constituted a 'disease', his prizing of male friendship and his idea of the 'intermediate sex' as a utopian and potentially revolutionary figure infuse both McKay and Lawrence's work. The radical intermediacy of the 'intermediate sex' is mirrored in the conflicting modes of expression of McKay's early poetry.

In a section on form and language, I argue that Lawrence's novels – especially those of the early to mid-1920s – offered a model for McKay's transition from poetry to prose, highlighting a particular dialogue between *Banjo* and *Aaron's Rod*. Drawing upon Aarthi Vaddé's *Chimeras of Form: Modernist Internationalism Beyond Europe, 1914–2016* (2016) and particularly ideas around 'plotlessness', I contend that McKay adopts and adapts the open form and loose plot of Lawrence's picaresque novel in a story that rejects both narrative order and the logic of capitalism, presenting a disorderly, itinerant narrative as a more suitable vehicle for modern black experience. I move on to discuss primitivism in Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* and *The Rainbow* (1915) and McKay's *Banjo* and *Home to Harlem*. Responding to Etherington, I trace a shared ambivalent primitivism in these texts, arguing that both authors' depictions of 'the primitive' are tentative and paradoxical, redolent of the 'incertitude' and 'hesitation' McKay identifies in Lawrence.

Radical politics, plotlessness and ambivalent primitivism all constitute means by which both men sought to 'grop[e] for a way out' of capitalist modernity and its stultifying strictures. By the time he wrote *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*, McKay had largely rejected the communist thinking to which he had been exposed during his time

in the Soviet Union in 1923; Lawrence offered a critique of modernity that spoke to his own sense of the world and his desire to escape the civilization that held him trapped as a racialised subject, 'a thing apart'.¹⁴⁸

Shared Roots: Radical Politics and Sexuality

Lawrence's impact upon McKay must be understood as emerging from a complex nexus of cultural influences and life experiences that impelled both men to reject the social, political and sexual mores dominant within western modernity. Born almost exactly four years apart, in Clarendon, Jamaica and Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, parallels emerge in many aspects of the seemingly disparate early lives of McKay and Lawrence; both came from relatively humble families and had aspirant parents.¹⁴⁹ More significantly, for the purposes of this chapter, both were exposed early to radical ideas around politics and sexuality. Here I posit these ideas – particularly the views expressed by Carpenter – as key contexts for understanding Lawrence's influence upon McKay.

¹⁴⁸ McKay, "Outcast", *Complete Poems*, ed. by William J. Maxwell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004) p. 174.

¹⁴⁹ McKay was born into a well-established and upwardly-mobile farming family, while Lawrence was famously the product of the union of a socially ambitious mother and an obstinately working-class collier father whose clashes he often depicted in his early work. Cooper indeed imagines that McKay's reading of *Sons and Lovers* (1913) must have struck a particular chord, revealing a man who also had 'a mother with whom he closely identified' and 'an emotionally distant father with whom he felt little kinship', *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) p. 208.

McKay's earliest intellectual formation was steeped in British culture. He later commented that education in British-ruled Jamaica at this time was 'so directed that we really and honestly believed that we were little black Britons'.¹⁵⁰ From childhood, black Jamaicans were encouraged to see themselves as British citizens, loyal to the British monarchy and speaking their language, but this to some extent impeded efforts to preserve and develop authentic Jamaican culture. Unsurprisingly, then, McKay's earliest forays into poetry were heavily influenced by the British writers he studied at school. Outside of school, the two most significant early influences upon McKay were his schoolmaster brother Uriah Theodore (U'Theo) and the English folklorist Walter Jekyll. McKay had been sent to live with U'Theo by his parents around 1897 (at the age of probably 7 or 8) and under his charge enjoyed the social and educational advantages of his brother's position. U'Theo's small library contained not only classic British literature (including Walter Scott, Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare), but also, as Cooper notes, "'freethought" literature' including evolutionist works by Thomas Huxley and Ernst Haeckel.¹⁵¹ These years with his elder brother – during which McKay was encouraged to read and think independently – laid the foundations for the radical thinking he would later embrace.

McKay met Jekyll in 1907, when he was apprenticing in Brown's Town. As Heather Hathaway notes, over the following five years of 'physical and emotional flux', during which McKay moved frequently around Jamaica and lost his mother, Jekyll's friendship was the sole constant.¹⁵² McKay often visited his secluded home in the

¹⁵⁰ McKay, quoted in Tyrone Tillery, *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992) p. 13.

¹⁵¹ Cooper, *Rebel Sojourner*, p. 14.

¹⁵² Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) p. 32.

Blue Mountains, where he disposed himself of Jekyll's 'excellent library', reading Byron, Milton, Keats and Shelley along with his mentor's translations of Goethe, Baudelaire and Schopenhauer (*ALW*, 16). Jekyll was the first to show real interest in McKay's poetry; he encouraged the young poet to write in Jamaican dialect and helped publish his first poetry collections. Though Jekyll's kindness towards McKay seems clear, this relationship which offered such crucial artistic and intellectual opportunities inevitably relied upon an imbalance of power. Jekyll, as Rhonda Cobham notes, 'remained firmly ensconced in his aristocratic notions of class and racial hierarchy', McKay thus often played his mentor's own 'noble savage' whom he occasionally 'trotted out' for his friends.¹⁵³ McKay was not oblivious to this dynamic; he hoped one day to prove himself to Jekyll's circle as a 'real' writer and not merely a novelty: 'I used to think I would show them something. Someday I would write poetry in straight English and amaze and confound them'.¹⁵⁴ This desire, as I discuss in the next section, contributed to McKay's complex relation to traditional literary forms and to the canon.

Despite these strains in their relationship, McKay remained fond of Jekyll, paying tribute to him in the character of Squire Gensir in *Banana Bottom*. As others have speculated, this friendship may have been further complicated by a sexual element. Cobham conjectures that 'there may have been a homo-erotic dimension to their relationship', while Gene Andrew Jarrett seems more confident in his affirmation that 'McKay's eventual sexual relation with Jekyll was the beginning of several such

¹⁵³ Rhonda Cobham, "Jekyll and Claude: The Erotics of Patronage in Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom*" in Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler (eds.), *Queer Diasporas*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000) pp. 126-127.

¹⁵⁴ McKay, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 126.

relations in the black writer's life'.¹⁵⁵ It remains unclear to what extent this relationship was sexual, but it is generally accepted that Jekyll did have sexual relationships with men. He was also involved in The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, later renamed the British Sexological Society. Founded in 1913 (with Havelock Ellis and Carpenter at the helm), the Society's primary concern was homosexuality; it aimed to combat legal discrimination by furthering scientific understanding. Little is known regarding the nature of Jekyll's association with the Society, but he was certainly in possession of works by its prominent members, including Carpenter.

In a 1918 biographical piece in *Pearson's Magazine*, McKay pays tribute to Jekyll's influence, listing Carpenter alongside such diverse figures as Buddha, Goethe, Walt Whitman and Victor Hugo as part of the 'greater, deeper literature' to which his white mentor introduced him.¹⁵⁶ U'Theo's library had furnished him with the 'English masters', but Jekyll's collection offered McKay a grounding in a more international and radical literature. A young Lawrence had also been exposed to Carpenter by a respected and well-connected mentor. Willie Hopkin, as Booth notes, was 'Eastwood's leading freethinker and socialist' and an admirer of Carpenter.¹⁵⁷ Lawrence was part of a cultural and political discussion group – led and hosted by Hopkin and his wife Sallie – at which Carpenter occasionally spoke. As Sheila Rowbotham notes, '[w]hether Carpenter and Lawrence ever encountered each other

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 124; Gene Andrew Jarrett, Introduction to *A Long Way*, p. xxii.

¹⁵⁶ McKay, "A Negro Poet Writes", *The Passion of Claude McKay*, ed. by Cooper (New York: Schocken, 1973) pp. 49-50.

¹⁵⁷ Booth, "'At last to newness': D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and the dream of a better life", *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2015), 19-44 (p. 25).

in person is unclear, but they certainly knew of each other's doings through the Hopkins'.¹⁵⁸

Today Carpenter is best-known as an early advocate for sexual freedom and homosexual rights; in works including *Homogenic Love* (1895), *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) and *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), he argued for the biological causes of same-sex attraction. In the 1908 work, he contended that the 'Uranian' or 'third-sex' individual performed a special role in society as a mediator between the sexes and pointed towards a freer, more open society: 'the experience of the Uranian world forming itself freely and not subject to outside laws and institutions comes as a guide – and really a hopeful guide – towards the future'.¹⁵⁹ The former priest also wrote and campaigned on a range of other issues, including women's rights, socialism and the detrimental effects of industry on the wellbeing of city-dwellers. Parallels between Carpenter's thought and Lawrence's – especially on the subject of the pernicious effects of urban life – are easily apparent. Much as Lawrence's poem "The People" (elsewhere titled "City-Life") expresses horror at 'corpse-like fishes hooked and being played / by some malignant fisherman', Carpenter characterises civilization as a 'disease', associating bodily ailments resulting from 'the loss of the physical unity' with a loss of social unity which would constitute 'true society'.¹⁶⁰ The only possible 'cure' for this disease – for 'the strange sense of unrest which marks our populations' –

¹⁵⁸ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008) p. 314.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1908) p. 127.

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence, "The People", *The Poems*, Volume I, ed. by Christopher Pollnitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 513; Carpenter, *Civilisation: its Cause and Cure* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1906) pp. 2-3; A similar response to civilization is espoused in *Banjo*, in Ray's opinion that "Civilization is rotten" (*B*, 171).

Carpenter affirms in *Civilisation: its Cause and Cure* (1889), would be a return to nature.¹⁶¹ The 'strange sense of unrest', which Carpenter identifies as characteristic of modern civilization, aligns with the 'hesitation and hate and alarm', 'incertitude' and 'inquietude' McKay detected in Lawrence's work. Furthermore, Carpenter's sense that 'primitive' peoples – those untouched by the disease of civilization – were in many ways superior to and healthier than modern man, speaks to McKay and Lawrence's later engagements with primitivism as a counter to the damaging aspects of modern life.

The extent to which Carpenter's work influenced Lawrence remains unclear. Emile Delavenay (1971) claims that Carpenter's work exercised a crucial influence on Lawrence, professing that 'many of the ideas which hurled Lawrence along his romantic and vitalist way into the search for a new creed were first found by him in the writings of Carpenter'.¹⁶² Delavenay's claims are bold given Lawrence's lack of reference to the socialist thinker.¹⁶³ Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Lawrence was resistant to Carpenter and his ideas due to the older man's homosexuality. E. M. Forster, whose novel *Maurice* (published 1971, but begun 1913) was inspired partly by Carpenter and his partner George Merrill, suggests that Lawrence may have made homophobic comments about Carpenter: 'After Lawrence's remarks about Carpenter realise with regret that I cannot know him.'¹⁶⁴ Rowbotham affirms that 'while the extent to which Lawrence was influenced consciously or

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 3.

¹⁶² Emile Delavenay, *D. H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter* (London: Heinemann, 1971) p. 9.

¹⁶³ As Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes, Delavenay's statements on and methods in demonstrating Lawrence's indebtedness to other thinkers are in several instances questionable, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 794-795.

¹⁶⁴ E. M. Forster, quoted in Rowbotham, p. 391.

unconsciously by Carpenter remains a matter for speculation, by 1915 [...] Lawrence wanted to cauterise any traces of the older man's thinking that may have remained.'¹⁶⁵ Rowbotham thus suggests that 'the similarities in [Lawrence's] and Carpenter's writing could be accounted for by the cultural influences they shared rather than direct transmission'.¹⁶⁶

However we account for the Lawrence-Carpenter connection, a clear link emerges between Carpenter's radical views on the nature of society and sexuality and the 'sexual inquietude and incertitude of this age' which drew McKay to Lawrence. McKay's sexuality is certainly relevant to a consideration of his connection to Lawrence; the 'sexual inquietude' he cites in *A Long Way From Home* seems to reference the homoerotic dimension that many critics have identified in Lawrence's writing. McKay is widely believed to have been bisexual, though he never spoke openly about his sexual preferences. Critics like Michael Maiwald have pointed, however, to the trinity of homosexual writers he groups together in the 1918 *Pearson's Magazine* preface, where he lists Oscar Wilde and Whitman alongside Carpenter as important influences.¹⁶⁷ This grouping certainly seems at least a loosely-coded expression of his intellectual and political allegiances, if not an explicit indication of his own sexuality.¹⁶⁸ McKay was not the only Harlem Renaissance figure familiar with Carpenter. According to Stewart, Locke recommended Carpenter's *Iolaus: An*

¹⁶⁵ Rowbotham, p. 391.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 275.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Maiwald, "Race, Capitalism, and the Third-Sex Ideal: Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* and the Legacy of Edward Carpenter", *Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 48, Number 4, Winter 2002, 825-857 (p. 839).

¹⁶⁸ Maiwald argues that McKay was particularly influenced by Carpenter's idea of the 'intermediate sex', affirming that 'the "fallen" world of *Home to Harlem* [...] echoes Carpenter's sustained exploration of gender roles and relations in modern industrial civilization', *ibid*, p. 831.

Anthology of Friendship (1902) to a young Countee Cullen struggling with his sexuality.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Maiwald affirms, '[t]he circulation of Carpenter's works as a means of expressing gay affiliation or sensibility was [...] a commonplace within Harlem Renaissance intellectual circles.'¹⁷⁰

Lawrence's own sexuality has often been debated. Mark Kinkead-Weekes argues that Lawrence was himself bisexual, even suggesting that his 'idea of the bisexuality of everyone was [...] influenced to some extent by Carpenter', while Jeffrey Meyers points to Lawrence's repressed homosexuality.¹⁷¹ Booth finds Kinkead-Weekes' and Meyers' summations overly simplistic and unsupported in Lawrence's writings, contending that Lawrence was at various points in his life both interested in and repelled by male homosexual desire and that he neither accepted his own bisexuality nor swiftly lost interest in homosexual desire after 1918 (as Kinkead-Weekes suggests).¹⁷² Indeed, Lawrence was not interested in labelling sexuality in such terms; he believed passionately in the power of male friendship, but thought the term 'homosexual' 'so imbedded in its own period' to be irrelevant to his own life: 'I do not belong to a world where that word has meaning.'¹⁷³

There is insufficient space here to properly discuss either McKay's sexuality or Lawrence's views on and depictions of homosexuality. It seems clear, though, that the cultural roots which connect McKay to Lawrence are bound up – through Jekyll and Carpenter in particular – with radical views on society and sexuality. Radical or

¹⁶⁹ Stewart, *The New Negro*, p. 338.

¹⁷⁰ Maiwald, pp. 839-840.

¹⁷¹ Kinkead-Weekes, *Triumph to Exile*, p. 810; Jeffrey Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature, 1890-1930* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977).

¹⁷² Booth, "D. H. Lawrence and Male Homosexual Desire", *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 209 (Feb., 2002), 86-107.

¹⁷³ Lawrence, quoted in Knud Merrild, *A Poet and Two Painters: A Memoir of D. H. Lawrence* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1938) p. 91.

non-normative sexuality thus constitutes another means by which McKay sensed Lawrence's 'groping for a way out'. As Carpenter saw the homosexual or the 'third sex' individual as a utopian and revolutionary figure capable of combating the pernicious effects of civilization, McKay and Lawrence, as we shall see, posit the male friendship which prevails in their 'plotless' novels as an alternative to the stifling conformity of male-female relationships. Just as the range of causes espoused by Carpenter were all rooted in what Booth calls 'a commitment to a different kind of life', the various common strands in McKay and Lawrence's thought express an overarching desire to strive towards new ways of living.¹⁷⁴

'We have no language for the feelings'¹⁷⁵

Connecting Lawrence and McKay through Carpenter suggests the extent to which both men were engaged from an early age in a radical critique of modernity. Such a critique necessitated the provision of alternative means and modes of living, whether this meant following the example of the 'Uranian' to build a freer society or returning to nature to combat the 'disease' of civilization. Later in this chapter, I will explore how these motivations manifest in both authors' engagements with primitivism. But first it is important to consider how language and form function in this context: how McKay and Lawrence utilise the writerly tools at their disposal to 'grop[e] for a way

¹⁷⁴ Booth, "At Last to Newness", p. 24.

¹⁷⁵ Lawrence, "The Novel and The Feelings", *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 203.

out'. In tracing McKay's artistic development from the early Jamaican dialect poems composed under Jekyll's tutelage to the standard English sonnets written in the United States and finally the novels completed in Europe and North Africa, I demonstrate how McKay strove to achieve a form and language that permitted expression of his particular subject position.

The formal aspect of Lawrence's impact upon McKay has not often been recognised. Etherington argues that although McKay 'admires both the spiritual disposition of Lawrence's work and his ability to find the language to express it', '[n]owhere does McKay speak of directly emulating Lawrence's style [...] and reading across the corpora of these two writers, one sees little evidence of it.'¹⁷⁶ I argue here that Lawrence's formal influence was not predominantly stylistic in the sense that Etherington suggests; McKay loved the Lawrentian language, but never sought to imitate it. Rather, the influence explored here is better characterised as the pursuit of language and form that can convey 'the psychic and romantic groping for a way out' McKay evokes above. While North opines that in leaving behind both Jamaica and dialect poetry McKay entered 'a linguistic no-man's-land from which he never quite emerged', I suggest that something like a 'linguistic no-man's land' is actually what McKay sought: a liminal, intermediate language and form offering the artistic freedom elsewhere denied to him.¹⁷⁷ McKay's desire for artistic freedom was finally best fulfilled in the novel form; it is in his two novels of the late 1920s that Lawrence's impact is most easily detectable. *Banjo*, in particular, mirrors the episodic, experimental nature of Lawrence's post-war 'leadership novels' as well as their concern with masculinity and male friendship.

¹⁷⁶ Etherington, p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ North, p. 113.

In exploring McKay's search for a suitable form and tracing Lawrence's influence here, I build upon Vaddé's *Chimeras of Form*, in which the chimera – simultaneously 'a monstrous figure of the unclassifiable body' and 'a figure of taxonomic interference and rearrangement that brings newness' – is a metaphor for aesthetic innovation and modernist experimentation.¹⁷⁸ She explores how – for writers who experiment with form – 'rethinking definitions of the work of art built on originality, wholeness, cohesion and autonomy' also 'enables them to question how those same principles [...] operate as measures of the identity and health of communities, particularly national ones.'¹⁷⁹ Vaddé's expansive study applies the banner of 'modernist internationalism' to writers ranging from Rabindranath Tagore to Zadie Smith. I here incorporate Lawrence as another writer in whose work formal innovation involves a questioning of what Vaddé calls 'the range of the possible' and a troubling of the formal, national and sexual boundaries within which McKay struggled to find a foothold.¹⁸⁰ I argue that Lawrence and McKay experiment with plotlessness in a bid to challenge the 'originality, wholeness, cohesion and autonomy' not only of national communities and identities, but of the very nature of modern life under capitalist modernity.

McKay suggests in his autobiography that his admiration of Lawrence stems in large part from his love of 'the Lawrentian language' (*ALW*, 191). Much as Ray in *Home to Harlem* fantasizes about 'a great Lawrence reservoir' of taboo words, McKay found in Lawrence 'the ripest and most voluptuous expression of English since Shakespeare' (*ALW*, 191). He complained, however, in an unpublished 1930 letter to

¹⁷⁸ Aarthi Vaddé, *Chimeras of Form: Modernist Internationalism Beyond Europe, 1914–2016* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

his agent, W. A. Bradley, about the 'stock phrases of the underworld' of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.¹⁸¹ Having recalled that in reading the novel he 'felt the same sensation that [he] did when as a boy of 18 [he] read Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*', McKay bemoans that the proliferation of 'words like "shit" "piss" and "cunt"' 'marred' the experience.¹⁸²

Ray may have marvelled at the idea of a taboo Lawrentian vocabulary, but McKay, confronted with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, suggests that such language is perhaps indeed unsuitable for 'nice printing'. McKay interprets the inclusion of such choice words as evidence that 'Lawrence has lived a long time away from his proletarian environment'; '[p]roletarians,' he affirms 'don't use words like "shit" "piss" and "cunt" in the hearing of their women'.¹⁸³ McKay's charge is thus not against the language itself – or indeed the novel, which he calls 'a wonderful modern love poem' – but against Lawrence as a writer who has so long been cut off from his 'proletarian' roots that he does not accurately capture the speech of his working-class characters.¹⁸⁴ A real-life Mellors, McKay seems sure, would never speak to Connie as Lawrence's gamekeeper does.

McKay's striking response to Lawrence's last novel suggests the extent to which the Jamaican-born author engaged in a critical dialogue with Lawrence's work

¹⁸¹ McKay, Letter to W. A. Bradley, 18 March, 1930, William A. Bradley Literary Agency Records, Box 43 Folder 8, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁸² Ibid; McKay's complaints seem especially strange considering that in *Romance in Marseille* (the development of which he discusses earlier in this letter) he features his own share of crude language. Of particular note is a reference to an invented organisation: the 'Christian Union of Negro Tribes' or 'C.U.N.T.', *Romance in Marseille*, Box 6, Folder 24, Claude McKay Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, p. 25.

¹⁸³ McKay, Letter to Bradley, HRC.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

– especially regarding his use of language – and his consciousness of his own duty to authentically capture the speech of ‘working’ men and women. It also suggests that McKay – as he would later affirm in his autobiography – did not value Lawrence primarily as a ‘social rebel’ or a ‘social thinker’ (*ALW*, 191).¹⁸⁵ As I will discuss later, parallels emerge between *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and McKay’s *Banana Bottom* (both mark a return to linear narratives and to the authors’ home nations). The formal aspect of Lawrence’s impact, however, is best observed in his picaresque novels of the late 1920s, in which McKay’s long-held desire to reconcile and represent in art the disparate elements of his life experience and identity was finally fulfilled.

McKay’s first real negotiations with form and language (and their associated politics) began under Jekyll’s tutelage. At school, he had been taught standard English; ‘the common Negro dialect,’ he recalls, ‘was regarded as the mark of an inferior person’.¹⁸⁶ He was bewildered, then, by the Englishman’s suggestion that he write in Jamaican dialect. Caught between the urge to write in standard English (what he considered ‘real’ poetry) and to please his mentor, the resulting work is marked by these conflicting modes. In the preface to *Songs of Jamaica* (1912), McKay’s first poetry collection, Jekyll defines the ‘negro variant’ in which McKay writes as ‘a feminine version of masculine English’ and describes the young poet as ‘a Jamaican peasant of pure black blood’.¹⁸⁷ Jekyll casts these poems as the feminized artefacts of a primitive culture rather than art produced by a poet schooled in the classics of

¹⁸⁵ Somewhat contradictorily given his complaints at the puerile language in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, McKay claims in his autobiography that Lawrence’s ‘half-suppressed puritanism’ in fact ‘often repelled’ him (*ALW*, 191).

¹⁸⁶ McKay, *My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Short Stories* (Kingston: Heinemann, 1979) p. 113.

¹⁸⁷ Walter Jekyll, Preface to McKay, *Songs of Jamaica* (Kingston: Aston W. Gardner & Co., 1912) pp. 5, 9; It is likely that the individual footnotes to poems are also Jekyll’s.

European literature, but a close reading of *Songs* reveals two distinct voices which often intrude upon each other. “The Hermit”, for example, shifts unceremoniously between dialect and standard English: ‘Far in de country let me hide myself / From life’s sad pleasures an’ de greed of pelf, / Dwellin’ wid Nature primitive an’ rude, / Livin’ a peaceful life of solitude’.¹⁸⁸ Barring the use of ‘de’, ‘an’ and ‘wid’ in place of ‘the’, ‘and’ and ‘with’ and ‘Dwellin’ and ‘Livin’’, standard English predominates in this first stanza and instances of dialect seem incongruous additions to an otherwise traditional poem in the pastoral mode. There are no words here – save perhaps the archaic middle-English ‘pelf’ – likely to trouble the average English reader.

Despite this intermingling of standard English and Jamaican dialect – which invalidates the idea that McKay could be the uneducated peasant Jekyll describes – his early poetry was largely interpreted not as the art of a talented young poet, but as the innocent, artless articulations of a ‘primitive’ mind. On arriving in America in 1912, then, McKay ceased writing in Jamaican dialect. Free of Jekyll’s direct influence, he embraced traditional European forms – primarily the sonnet and short lyric – and wrote in standard English. Two later collections, *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920) and *Harlem Shadows* (1922) are dominated by such ‘traditional’ poetic forms. By reclaiming the sonnet – the form of the coloniser – McKay announced to his critics (and perhaps to Jekyll) that he would not have his work figured as less advanced or less accomplished than that of his white counterparts.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ McKay, “The Hermit”, *Songs of Jamaica*, p. 41.

¹⁸⁹ McKay was criticised – perhaps most notably by Kamau Brathwaite – for his move away from Jamaican dialect and his use of the sonnet form; Brathwaite argues that McKay ‘forsook his nation language, forsook his early mode of poetry’, but observes as well that his early poetry is ‘*dialect* as distinct from *nation* because McKay allowed himself to be imprisoned in the pentameter’, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London: Villiers, 1984) p. 20.

Yet there is evidently far more of significance in McKay's use of old, high-status forms than merely a reproach to his critics. Focusing upon McKay's time in Britain from late 1919 to early 1921, Booth argues that his 'adoption of the lyric form can [...] be viewed as dramatizing an intense difficulty in experiencing the self as a unified subject'.¹⁹⁰ Such a difficulty, of course, seems already to have been present in the earlier Jamaican poetry, though its cause in the two 1912 collections (*Songs* was followed closely by *Constab Ballads*) may be attributed at least in part to Jekyll's influence. McKay's two collections of the early 1920s, though, stage the poet's experience as one requiring a particularly intermediate – perhaps chimeric – form. Indeed, in his preface to *Harlem Shadows*, McKay announces the liminality of his formal choices, explaining that 'although very conscious of the new criticisms and trends in poetry, [...] I have adhered to such of the older traditions as I find adequate for my most lawless and revolutionary passions and moods. I have not used patterns, images and words that would stamp me a classicist nor a modernist.'¹⁹¹ Having earlier negotiated between Jamaican dialect poetry and the 'real' standard poetry he longed to write, McKay resists the efforts of publishers and critics to categorise him as either 'classicist' or 'modernist'.

In *Harlem Shadows*, then, the traditional sonnet form contains McKay's angry modern calls-to-arms. For Hathaway, 'it is precisely the tension between these two contrasting components of form and content that hallmarks McKay's sonnets as remarkably innovative pieces which reflect his own complex heritage'.¹⁹²

Contemporary reviewers did not agree; Robert Littell of the *New Republic* complained

¹⁹⁰ Booth, "Claude McKay in Britain: race, sexuality and poetry", *Modernism and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) ed. by Len Platt, pp. 137-155 (p. 144).

¹⁹¹ McKay, Preface to *Harlem Shadows* in *Complete Poems*, p. 315.

¹⁹² Hathaway, p. 42.

that 'a hospitality to echoes of poetry he has read has time and again obscured a direct sense of life and made rarer those lines of singularity which express [...] [his] naked force of character.'¹⁹³ Littell, like Jekyll, looks to the young black poet for a certain rawness which he finds hindered by poetic convention. Writing in standard English, as North observes, invited white editors and critics to figure McKay as a 'stuffed exhibit' much like the poet depicted in Jekyll's preface.¹⁹⁴ Whether writing dialect poetry or standard English sonnets, it seems McKay could not avoid such a fate.

Change of place for McKay often meant change of form; he wrote no dialect poetry after leaving Jamaica, little poetry of significance after leaving the USA in 1922, and his career as a novelist played out almost entirely in Europe and North Africa. His turn to the novel after 1922 signalled a particular change of mindset.¹⁹⁵ In *Banjo*, Ray references this shift in his contention that 'it seemed a natural process to him that youth should pass from the colorful magic of poetry to the architectural rhythm of prose'.¹⁹⁶ This seems a reiteration of advice offered to McKay by Frank Harris (editor of *Pearson's Magazine*): "Poetry comes first; prose follows with maturity" (*ALW*, 21). Harris encouraged McKay to write prose because in 'the great machine age', with language 'loosening and breaking up under the pressure of new ideas and words', only the 'flexibility of prose' could 'express this age' (*ALW*, 21). Vaddé argues indeed that the 'vagueness' of the prose form 'allowed it to elude the developmental scale from primitivism to modernity—or, in biographical time, childishness to adulthood—

¹⁹³ Robert Littell, "Negro Poets", *The New Republic* (July 12, 1922).

¹⁹⁴ North, p. 113.

¹⁹⁵ In his autobiography, McKay suggests that his work on the railroad in America impeded his ability to write prose and encouraged him to stick primarily to poetry: 'It was much easier to create and scribble a stanza of poetry in the interval between trains than to write a paragraph of prose' (*ALW*, 23).

¹⁹⁶ McKay, *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2008) p. 274.

that McKay's poetic trajectory from dialect to sonnet had come to illustrate.¹⁹⁷ Prose, then, offered McKay an escape from the formal bind that poetry had long represented.

Like Harris, Lawrence was conscious of the disintegration of the novel and its language. McKay's use of old, high-status forms to express his 'lawless and revolutionary passions' seems analogous to Lawrence's efforts to mould the novel into a vehicle capable of expressing his experience of modern life. The Great War, which had so devastated Lawrence personally, had also confounded Victorian realism. A new mode and a new language were needed to achieve his chief aim, described in the late essay "The State of Funk": 'to know the feelings inside a man, and to make new feelings conscious.'¹⁹⁸ As Bell notes, '[t]he traditional form of the novel assumes a measure of cultural consensus,' but Lawrence's work suggests that 'human beings may have to share the same language while living different forms of life.'¹⁹⁹ This inevitably leads to confusion, as in *Women in Love*, where verbal communication between Ursula and Birkin proves insufficient:

There was always confusion in speech. Yet it must be spoken. Whichever way one moved, if one were to move forwards, one must break a way through. And to know, to give utterance, was to break a way through the walls of the prison as the infant in labour strives through the walls of the womb. (*WL*, 186)

The struggle with language here is equated with physical exertion much like McKay's 'groping for a way out'. Lawrence knows that he is bound by language as his medium – the walls of the prison or womb – yet he persists in his efforts to break through: to produce and convey meaning through language. Somewhat paradoxically, only

¹⁹⁷ Vaddé, p. 116.

¹⁹⁸ Lawrence, "The State of Funk", *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 221.

¹⁹⁹ Bell, "D. H. Lawrence" in Poole, p. 316.

through conscious knowing and giving utterance can one achieve fulfilment that is unconscious or pre-conscious and pre-linguistic. Almost inevitably, this leads to slippages in language or narrative; in the 1919 foreword to the American edition of *Women in Love*, he defends his methods:

Any man of real individuality tries to know and to understand what is happening, even in himself, as he goes along. This struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. *It is the passionate struggle into conscious being.* (WL, 486)

For Lawrence, struggles with language and ‘failures’ of expression must be an integral part of art because they form an important part of human life, perhaps modern life in particular.

McKay’s work also evidences a self-conscious ‘struggle for verbal consciousness’, particularly in the writer character, Ray, in *Home to Harlem*. Indeed, McKay’s best-known novel is a deeply self-conscious work seemingly concerned as much with the task of creating a literature of Harlem and its inhabitants as with depicting this community itself. In his portrayal of Ray, McKay seems to consider whether the writer is ideally placed to give voice to Harlem’s residents and capture its life. Ray dreams of ‘[w]eaving words to make romance’ (HH, 225), but is mindful that language may be insufficient: ‘Dreams of patterns of words achieving form. What would he ever do with the words he had acquired? Were they adequate to tell the thoughts he felt, describe the impressions that reached him vividly?’ (HH, 227). That the sentence preceding these questions is really a fragment of a sentence – a failure to achieve form – indicates the difficulty of Ray’s quest to ‘do’ something with words. Ray’s task (and McKay’s) is to create art from ‘the fertile reality around him’, which comprises ‘Jake nosing through life’, ‘a work pal he had visited in a venereal ward’ and

'the misery that overwhelmed him' (*HH*, 228-229); he must tell these stories in a suitable and powerful form and language, conveying both the beauty and misery of Harlem.

Mirroring the double voice of his early poetry, McKay's dual position – the 'linguistic no-man's land' North identifies negatively as a kind of semantic wasteland – allows him to move seamlessly between the non-standard dialect of Jake and his friends and Ray's standard speech. But he also embraces multiplicity in form and plot. *Banjo's* subtitle, which labels the 1929 novel 'A Story Without a Plot', is an answer to critics like Du Bois, whose famous disparagements of *Home to Harlem* targeted form as well as content. Had the thematic aspects that so offended Du Bois been situated within 'a well-conceived plot' or tempered by a sense of 'artistic unity', he suggests, allowances might have been made.²⁰⁰ 'But *Home to Harlem*', Du Bois contends, 'is padded'; 'chapters here and there are inserted with no connection to the main plot, except that they are on the same dirty subject.'²⁰¹ By proclaiming the plotlessness of his second novel, McKay announces his indifference to those critics who expected black writers not only to portray particular images of black life, but to depict them within a 'well-conceived plot'.

Set in Marseille, where African Americans, West Indians, British West Africans and many others mingle, *Banjo* follows the exploits of the American Lincoln Agrippa Daily (known as Banjo) as he attempts to form an orchestra. Here McKay uses purposeful lack of 'plot' – what Holcomb calls 'Trotskyist (anti)plotting' – to make a radical political statement upon the nature of black life under capitalism.²⁰² For

²⁰⁰ Du Bois, "Two Novels: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* & Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*" *Crisis* 35, June 1928, p. 202.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 202.

²⁰² Holcomb, *Code Name Sasha*, p. 140.

Holcomb, narrative plotlessness allows *Banjo* to 'stage its revolutionary scheme' and affords it the freedom to 'writ[e] its own black militant modernist aesthetics, uniting its black proletarian characters to perform a leftist négritude modernism'.²⁰³ For Vaddé, who similarly highlights the multiple possible meanings and resonances of 'a story without a plot', the plotlessness of *Banjo* simultaneously denotes the absence of 'a planned-out heteronormative life, a collective political program, and a patch of land to call home'.²⁰⁴ The vagabondage of McKay's characters, then – their status as nomads without conventional family lives and loose national affiliations – is linked explicitly to McKay's formal experimentation and with a queering of the modernist novel which renders *Banjo*, for Holcomb, 'less a conventional novel and more of a queer black anarchist manifesto'.²⁰⁵

Both Holcomb and Vaddé emphasize the political possibilities of form – or indeed formlessness. Just as Lawrence believed that the 'struggle into verbal consciousness' should not be left out in art, *Banjo's* plotlessness conveys the incompatibility of these black vagabonds' lives with the orderly narrative of the romance or *Bildungsroman*. In a very similar way, Lawrence's novels of the early to mid-1920s are characterised by fragmentary, wandering narratives, a focus upon male friendship and a sense of restlessness suggestive of the incompatibility of modern, post-war lives with pre-war forms and linear narratives. The shortcomings of works including *Kangaroo*, *Aaron's Rod* and *The Plumed Serpent* are regularly emphasized; they are routinely viewed as uneven, unsuccessful novels in which Lawrence placed too much emphasis upon politics, religion and psychology to the detriment of plot and

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 140.

²⁰⁴ Vaddé, p. 32.

²⁰⁵ Holcomb, *Code Name Sasha*, p. 147.

unity of vision. Lawrence himself called *Kangaroo* a ‘funny sort of novel where nothing happens’.²⁰⁶ Reading these works as self-conscious ‘stories without a plot’ allows for a more open-minded consideration of what Lawrence was trying to achieve and of the merits that McKay identified in the formal openness and loose narrative of these works.

Several critics have noted particular parallels between *Banjo* and *Aaron’s Rod*. Jenkins calls *Banjo* ‘a homosocial Black picaresque loosely modelled on Lawrence’s *Aaron’s Rod*’, while Etherington acknowledges that ‘*Banjo* is similar enough to Lawrence’s *Aaron’s Rod* [...] to invite considerations of direct influence’.²⁰⁷ If we suppose that McKay’s description of Ray as having ‘read, fascinated, all that D. H. Lawrence published’ is a statement on his own knowledge of the English author, then we might assume that he was familiar with *Aaron’s Rod* by the time of writing *Banjo*. Certain resemblances between the two texts are easily apparent; both titles name the musician-protagonist and his instrument, and both are picaresque novels which proceed without definite end destination or narrative arc. *Aaron’s Rod* sees the title character leave his family for no particular reason in order to travel seemingly aimlessly around Europe, while *Banjo* – even more so than *Home to Harlem* – is an episodic and loosely-structured account of the lives of Marseille’s black inhabitants.

Whether conscious or not, it seems unlikely that the similarities between these novels are merely coincidental. In both works, the two male protagonists are a musician (Aaron and Banjo) and a writer (Ray and Rawdon Lilly). There is something of the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy in both pairings. Aaron and Banjo represent the Dionysian; Aaron’s flute (which Lilly terms ‘Aaron’s rod’) aligns him particularly with

²⁰⁶ Lawrence, Letter to Catherine Carswell, 22 June 1922, *Letters*, Vol. 4, p. 271.

²⁰⁷ Jenkins, “Lawrence’s Influence on Later Writers” in Harrison, *Lawrence in Context*, pp. 327-336 (p. 328); Etherington, p. 142.

Dionysus (Greek god of wine, fertility and theatre). As musicians, they are associated with emotion and instinct more than the writers Ray and Lilly; by contrast, they represent the Apollonian: the more ordered and rational aspects of human nature. Etherington argues that both novels, '[b]y structuring the narrative around the relationship between a musician and a writer', 'attempt to address a crisis of immediate experience':

The musician appears as the impulsive ideal, at one with his sensual self, but at odds with the world. The writer comes along to make explicit to the audience the spiritual value of this mode of existence, before, it is hoped, he rids himself of his own reflexive nature and joins the musician in the realm of spontaneous intuition.²⁰⁸

The 'attempt to address the crisis of immediate experience' is rooted in Etherington's definition of primitivism as an aesthetic characterised by 'a movement through the mediate toward the immediate'.²⁰⁹ The primary function of Ray and Lilly, Etherington suggests, is to articulate the value of the more instinctive and emotional characters: Aaron and Banjo. Certainly, both Lilly and Ray act to some extent as 'translators' for their musician friends, but there is no sense in either of these novels that Aaron or Banjo's mode of living – their 'spontaneous intuition' – is inherently better than the more intellectual approach of Lilly and Ray. There seems no real possibility, either, that the writer-figures might finally 'rid' themselves of their 'reflexive nature'.

Rather than attempting 'to address the crisis of immediate experience', then, in mirroring the writer-musician/Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic of the central relationship of *Aaron's Rod* and the plotlessness of Lawrence's picaresque novel, McKay in fact *embraces* the crisis and chaos inherent to modern life. What Etherington deems in

²⁰⁸ Etherington, p. 142.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 35.

Lawrence and McKay to be the novel's 'unevenness' and failure to achieve 'immediacy' – which he claims Négritude writers later achieved in poetry – emerges in fact in these works as a revealing ongoing negotiation between different modes of being: between musician and writer, feeling and thinking.²¹⁰ It is a negotiation that registers both the impossibility of reconciling the two and the value of keeping them in tension.

Banjo's musical prose takes this negotiation further than *Aaron's Rod*, in which discrete musical and linguistic categories are generally enforced, but both novels employ music as a catalyst for and a symbol of plotlessness, plurality, fragmentation and itinerancy. In both, the picaresque wanderings of the title characters are aligned closely with music. As Susan Reid notes, Aaron's flight from the English midlands to London and finally out of England – funded by his flute-playing – also involves 'a phased withdrawal' from certain forms of music including the 'nasty' Covent Garden opera (*AR*, 46) and the 'big, deep music' of Bach and Beethoven (*AR*, 167–168) in favour of the 'sensitive, abstract music' of Italian composers like Scarlatti, Corelli and Pergolesi (*AR*, 210).²¹¹ It is a progression from wholeness to fragmentation; music, Lawrence suggests, can no longer provide a sense of unity. Such a feeling is conveyed through the Marchesa – with whom Aaron enjoys a short, unfulfilling romance – and her aversion to 'chords' and 'harmonies': '[a] number of sounds all sounding together' makes her 'feel so sick' (*AR*, 225). The Marchesa's rejection of chords and harmonies mirrors Lawrence's opinion – expressed in a 1925 series of essays on the novel – that the novel must advocate plurality and multiplicity; the novel,

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 159.

²¹¹ Susan Reid, *D.H. Lawrence, Music and Modernism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) p. 148.

Lawrence argues, does not 'hook on' to one absolute, rather it gives 'all things [...] full play'.²¹²

In *Banjo*, too, the title character's musical improvisation mirrors the non-standard, episodic multiplicity of the narrative structure. What seems most to differentiate the depiction of music in these novels is the relation between the musical mode and language (mirroring the relation between musician and writer). Like plotlessness, the collision of language and music here might constitute another 'chimera of form' whereby the musical novel has the potential to represent 'a figure of taxonomic interference and rearrangement that brings newness'.²¹³ In *Aaron's Rod*, though, music and language are largely cast as separate forms of knowledge. Aaron embodies music-knowledge:

He was a musician. And hence even his deepest *ideas* were not word-ideas, his very thoughts were not composed of words and ideal concepts. [...] If I, as a word-user, must translate his deep conscious vibrations into finite words, that is my own business. I do but make a translation of the man. He would speak in music. I speak with words. (AR, 164)

Lawrence's characters often yearn for a state of existence beyond language, but here his narrator recognises that the writer who 'speak[s] with words' can only manage a 'translation' of a man who 'would speak in music'. The narrator's admission that words are 'finite' and cannot express Aaron's 'deep conscious vibrations' is consonant with Ray's feeling that language might not be adequate to 'describe the impressions that reached him vividly'; both are pondering the limitations of language. Perhaps due to these limitations, *Aaron's Rod* contains relatively few descriptions of music. When Aaron's playing is described it is most often in vague or banal terms; early in the novel

²¹² Lawrence, "The Novel", *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 188.

²¹³ Vaddé, p. 2.

he plays 'beautifully', 'delighted' by the 'pure, mindless, exquisite motion and fluidity of the music' (*AR*, 12-13) and at the novel's end his flute is silenced permanently.

In *Banjo*, conversely, music infuses McKay's prose. If Ray doubts the capacity of language to render black life, McKay seems effortlessly to capture the music and dancing of Marseille's nightlife, as in the "Jelly Roll" chapter, which concludes with a description of Banjo and his friends playing "Shake That Thing":

Jungle jazzing, Orient wriggling, civilized stepping. Shake that thing! Sweet dancing thing of primitive joy, perverse pleasure, prostitute ways, many-colored variations of the rhythm, savage, barbaric, refined – eternal rhythm of the mysterious, magical, magnificent – the dance divine of life...Oh, Shake That Thing! (*B*, 60)

Whereas Lawrence's narrator stresses the incompatibility of music and language, in *Banjo* McKay's language is at its most luxuriant describing the playing of Banjo's troupe and the dancing crowd. Alliterative lists interspersed with song lyrics capture the 'many-colored variations of the rhythm' and the dancing which is variously 'savage, barbaric, refined'. As in Lawrence, McKay's depictions of music highlight its multiplicity and fragmentation. But here there is no sense that the 'word-user' is incapable of conveying the 'deep conscious vibrations' of the diverse musicians and dancers in this scene. For McKay, the art of conveying music through language is another negotiation between distinct modes of expression: a challenge he had often encountered in poetry. Here, though, McKay demonstrates that he no longer need struggle to reconcile different aspects of his identity or his art; the novel form comfortably contains and conveys the thoughts and feelings of both the 'word-user' Ray and the musical Banjo.

Closely aligned with the plotlessness and plurality of *Banjo* and *Aaron's Rod* and with the inconclusiveness of their endings – which see both sets of protagonists

about to leave for further unknown adventures – is the prizing of male friendship. At *Banjo's* close, as Vaddé notes, '[d]iscounting both the household and the territorialized homeland as sites of black incorporation and liberation, McKay replaces the equilibrium of a marriage plot with the unspoken possibilities of transnational male friendship.'²¹⁴ Women, in both *Banjo* and *Home to Harlem*, are portrayed as agents of capitalism and modernity who would limit and constrain the male characters. As Banjo assures Ray at the novel's end, they do not need women to forge forward: "A woman is a conjunction. [...] Wese got enough between us to beat it a long ways from here" (*B*, 336). Transnational male friendship is also what endures in *Aaron's Rod*; here the female characters also seem merely 'conjunction[s]'. With Aaron's relationships with women proving unfulfilling, '[t]he only thing he felt was a thread of destiny attaching him to Lilly. [...] So he made up his mind [...] to make some plan that would bring his life together with that of his evanescent friend' (*AR* 288-289). As in Carpenter, male friendship is figured here as an alternative to the constraining conformity of traditional male-female relationships and their association with the capitalist world-system. The queerness of *Banjo* and *Aaron's Rod* entails both a queering of the novel form and an eschewing of heteronormative relationships in favour of the freer homosocial future Carpenter advocated.²¹⁵

McKay and Lawrence disrupt the standard form and trajectory of the novel, but both kept faith with the form itself. This was in contrast to many of their modernist contemporaries who abandoned the novel in a bid to better depict modern life. For Lawrence, even in troubled times the novel remained 'the highest form of human

²¹⁴ Vaddé, p. 133.

²¹⁵ In *Romance in Marseille*, McKay takes this Carpenter-inspired dynamic even further, closely associating same-sex relationships with radical, internationalist politics.

expression'.²¹⁶ That its form disintegrates under the strain he exerts upon it is, as Bell remarks, 'part of the interest of the larger story'.²¹⁷ McKay and Lawrence both opt for an intermediate form that reforms the novel without abandoning it entirely. Despite their perceived eschewing of 'modernist' formal innovation, then, in many ways Lawrence and McKay's novels are strikingly modern. Gilroy evokes a similarly paradoxical dynamic in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Here he argues that the experience of the 'middle passage' and slavery rendered Black Atlantic thinkers paradoxically the most progressive and modern of their day *and* more strident critics of modernity than their contemporaries: the creators of a 'counterculture of modernity'.²¹⁸ This dynamic recalls McKay's feeling that Lawrence was 'more modern than Joyce' in spite of his apparent alienation from 'mainstream' modernism. Lawrence and his plotless novel thus embody the radical, liberating betweenness McKay sought in his formal and linguistic choices.

By the time of *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*'s publication, McKay had found a voice unstilted by his early-inculcated education, nor was it a falsely 'authentic' voice forged by a white upper-class patron. His early struggles with language and form were evidently ameliorated when he began writing novels; in the novel form, McKay found a mode capable of accommodating the conflicting aspects of his literary heritage and in Lawrence he found a model which did not inhibit his own expression. Yet his sense of his own liminality persisted. The queer plotlessness of *Aaron's Rod* and *Banjo* aligns with the ambivalence of Lawrence and McKay's primitivism. Thus, where Etherington seems finally to suggest the inherent inefficacy of the novel as a vehicle

²¹⁶ Lawrence, "The Novel", *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 179.

²¹⁷ Bell, *Language and Being*, p. 132.

²¹⁸ Gilroy, p.36.

for his ‘emphatic primitivism’ – as a vessel for the ‘techniques of immediacy’ in which he is interested – I argue in the section to follow that the novel is actually the ideal medium for expressing the ambivalent primitivism Lawrence and McKay exhibit. For both men, being modern necessarily inhered certain oppositions and paradoxes, certain formal ‘failures’ and breakdowns in language. For how can language convey what is prelinguistic, the novel depict what is preliterate and the ‘civilized’ writer capture what can exist only in a ‘state of nature’ beyond civilization?

‘Bring ancient music to my modern heart’²¹⁹: Primitivism and Ambivalence

If the plotlessness of *Banjo* and *Aaron’s Rod* can be termed a ‘chimera of form’, then the primitivist aspects of McKay and Lawrence’s work might also be considered fundamentally chimeric, both in the sense that they involve a grafting of opposing elements (‘Bring ancient music to my modern heart’) and in the negotiations between the imaginary and the actual that necessarily characterise any consideration of ‘the primitive’. Primitivism in McKay and Lawrence, I argue here, is bound up in a fundamental way with their efforts to ‘grop[e] for a way out’, to push forward, and forge new ways of living. As ever, these efforts are not straightforward. They involve – seemingly inevitably – a divergence of form and content and an incongruity of means and aims. In what follows, then, I examine the complexity and inconsistency of McKay and Lawrence’s engagements with ‘the primitive’, arguing that both writers’ primitivism

²¹⁹ McKay, “Invocation”, *Complete Poems*, p. 132.

is ultimately ambivalent, hesitant and equivocal. Like the formal innovations explored above, the ambivalence of their primitivism – the fact that they seem ultimately to concede that a reconciliation of ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’ is impossible – should be considered not as an artistic failure or a shortcoming in their vision, but as an appropriate reflection of the conflicting ways in which black and white modernists on both sides of the Atlantic reacted to ‘the primitive’ in the early twentieth century.

In making this case, I respond to Etherington’s recent comparison of Lawrence’s ‘narrative primitivism’ and McKay’s ‘primitivist narration’.²²⁰ Interpreting primitivism as not merely an inherently racist discourse, but as a reaction to a particular moment in history, Etherington contends that the most recognisably primitivist works of the modern period were produced by those ‘most violently torn from previous forms of social organization’: the colonized subjects most affected by the capitalist world-system’s expansion.²²¹ Etherington works with a very specific definition of primitivism: what he calls ‘emphatic primitivism’. ‘Emphatic primitivism’, he explains ‘is more than an expressed affinity or preference for the primitive. It is the urgent desire to become primitive, a condition whose fulfillment would require no less than an exit from the capitalist world-system.’²²² Distinguished from ‘philo-primitivism’ (‘the idealization of the primitive’), Etherington’s emphatic primitivism is concerned with restoring the possibility of primitive experience through reanimation of the primitive ‘remnant’ and the reawakening of ‘the possibility of a social reconciliation with nature’.²²³ Though Etherington never gives a solid definition or many concrete examples of primitive

²²⁰ Etherington, pp. 107, 135.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p. 38.

²²² *Ibid*, p. 33.

²²³ *Ibid*, p. xiii.

remnants, he describes them as ‘objective reminders of previous social realities’.²²⁴ Rather than pointing to representations of ‘primitive’ peoples or cultures, then, Etherington sees literary primitivism’s project as the pursuit of ‘an aesthetics of immediacy’.²²⁵

In putting forth this new understanding of literary primitivism, Etherington includes three main case-studies: the first reads Frantz Fanon and Césaire in conversation with Jean-Paul Sartre, while the second and third studies respectively consider Lawrence and McKay, who are here cast as earlier, less successful examples of the primitivist project. Read alongside the primitivism of Fanon and Césaire, Etherington argues, Lawrence in particular emerges ‘as a brash yet haphazard precursor’, while McKay links all three case studies in a chain of progression from Lawrence to Négritude.²²⁶ Etherington casts McKay here as a somewhat naïve proponent of primitivism, as one who pursues the primitivist project ‘with an earnestness that the other writers either ultimately pull back from or rhetorically finesse’.²²⁷ In McKay’s work – and in *Banjo* in particular – Etherington argues, there is ‘an abiding sense that authentic primitive experience is still within reach’.²²⁸

Whereas Etherington’s readings of Lawrence and McKay focus upon a specific strain of primitivism characterised as more or less successful pursuits of an ‘aesthetics of immediacy’, I employ a less rigid definition of primitivism here. I see these authors’ engagements with primitivism as one of several interrelated ways in which they expressed the ‘incertitude of [their] age’. In doing so, I link Lawrence and McKay’s

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

²²⁵ Ibid, p. xii.

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 109.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 135.

²²⁸ Ibid, p. 135.

primitivism to their shared desire to break away from the capitalist world-system. I find useful, then, Etherington's affirmation that primitivism was the utopian product of a certain moment in history inhering 'an undertaking to become primitive in a world where, it seemed, such a possibility had been voided'.²²⁹ Yet I challenge the specific logic of this assertion, which seems complicit in the idea that 'the primitive' was ever a concrete reality. In their evocations of 'the primitive', McKay and Lawrence are ever mindful that they are the products of western civilization and that they can never extricate themselves from it entirely. Etherington's assertion that [i]f the mode is similar, the valency and trajectory of [McKay's] primitivism are profoundly different [to Lawrence's] leads him to conclude that '[t]he significant difference between Lawrence and McKay is that the hope for a life reconciled with nature and knowledge in sensual immediacy is [in McKay] cast as self-realization rather than as self-transformation'.²³⁰ I contend here, however, that both men ultimately acknowledge the impossibility of a 'return' to the primitive and indeed the impossibility of the existence of truly 'primitive' life within the all-consuming capitalist world-system. These writers then appear to recognise – long before the scholars who would later condemn Lawrence's primitivism in particular – the pitfalls inherent to the primitivist project.

Etherington's is the most recent in a series of readings of Lawrence and McKay to recognise their shared primitivism and gesture towards influence, but ultimately conclude vaguely, as Holcomb does, that Lawrence only 'suggest[ed] to him in a general way the value of primitive sensation'.²³¹ I argue that the effect of reading

²²⁹ Ibid, p. xi.

²³⁰ Ibid, p. 138, p. 140.

²³¹ Holcomb, "Hemingway and McKay: Race and Nation" in Holcomb and Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance*, 133-150 (p. 135); Almost every critic to have commented upon the McKay-Lawrence connection has noted both authors' engagements with primitivism. Cooper affirms that McKay, like Lawrence and

Lawrence was not merely a ‘general’ suggestion of the primitive’s value. Rather, I contend, the significance of Lawrence’s primitivism for McKay lies in the ambivalence and inconsistency with which he expresses and characterises it. His primitivism is simultaneously fascinated and repelled by ‘the primitive’; it looks to ancient modes of living to reinvigorate the present, but knows that a return to the past is neither possible nor desirable. I use the term ‘ambivalent’ because it captures this sense of conflict, vacillation and fluctuation between two seemingly irreconcilable modes of being and systems of value. In further defining and exploring Lawrence’s ambivalent primitivism, I focus upon *The Plumed Serpent* and *The Rainbow* – novels characteristic of two very different modes of Lawrence’s primitivism(s) – and trace McKay’s own ambivalent primitivism(s) in *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*. Both writers, I argue, value the primitive but ultimately cannot enter into it, cannot sacrifice their civilization. They strive, like Ray, to ‘bring intellect to the aid of instinct’ (*B*, 172), to achieve a balance that seems ultimately impossible.

McKay felt deeply that the key to the success of the New Negro movement lay in celebrating a specific black identity rather than conforming to white cultural and social standards. As Ray declares in *Banjo*: “‘If this Renaissance we’re talking about is going to be more than a sporadic or scabby thing, we’ll have to get down to our racial roots and create it”” (*B*. 207). Lawrence was similarly convinced, as he wrote in

Sherwood Anderson, nurtured ‘a deep faith in the primitive life forces in human nature, as opposed to the artificial constraints imposed upon humanity by modern industrial society’, Foreword to *Home to Harlem*, p. xiii. Hamalian confirms that ‘[t]he same theme that preoccupied Lawrence - the value of the vitalizing instinctive life of the peasant as an antidote to the ills of civilization - helped to affirm McKay’s imaginative and brilliant vision’, p. 585. Holcomb similarly cites ‘the Laurentian disclosure of western society’s hypocrisy respecting the nature of sexuality and primitive instinct, Lawrence’s “blood-knowledge”’ as crucial, *Code Name Sasha*, p. 118.

1925, that ‘unless we proceed to connect ourselves up with our own primeval sources, we shall degenerate.’²³² Getting ‘down to racial roots’ for McKay means reappropriating primitivism. European art had long figured the primitive as the feminized product of a culture geographically and temporally remote from western modernity; McKay’s primitivism in *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* is decidedly masculine, metropolitan and modern. Yet McKay’s primitivism is not, I demonstrate here, a straightforward valorisation of the spontaneous aspects of black life or the naïve mode Etherington suggests; it is a complex, fluctuating dialectic that registers the author’s recognition that no true primitive life exists. The purposes of Lawrence’s primitivism were of course not quite congruent with McKay’s; his evocations of the primitive were not ‘strategic’ in the same way. Yet in evoking the primitive he did seek to enlighten and affect his readers; for Lawrence, his declared interest in the primitive was fundamentally rooted in his belief that modern ways of living within an ever-mechanising society were detrimental to innate ways of being. Like Carpenter, he believed in the importance of a renewed connection between man and nature as an antidote to the deadening effects of capitalism and industrialisation.

Lawrence and McKay were not unique in their primitivist interests. In the early twentieth century, many white modernists became fascinated with all things ‘primitive’. The popularization of Freudian theory that blamed civilization for modern man’s neurosis, a new appreciation of African art among post-impressionist artists, and a general post-war disenchantment with Western civilization fuelled the modernist penchant for ‘the primitive’. In the aftermath of the Great War, white American writers including Gertrude Stein, Waldo Frank and Carl Van Vechten turned for inspiration to

²³² Lawrence, “The Novel and the Feelings”, *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 204.

the African American population, in whom they identified a certain vitality and a vibrant, creative force lost to America's white inhabitants. Consequently, Cooper notes, 'blacks became the repository of an elemental health that Europeans no longer possessed'.²³³

While white American and European modernists were engaging with notions of 'the primitive' as a potential well-spring of creative energy and rejuvenation, black writers were also interested in the power of primitivism, if for different reasons and to different ends. So-called 'strategic primitivism' offered African American artists a powerful mode of cultural critique, whereby long-established binaries that negatively yoked blackness to uncivilized savagery and positively associated whiteness with civilization and modernity could be recalibrated and hierarchies overturned.²³⁴ For McKay – once cast as Jekyll's performing 'noble savage' – embracing the primitive in his work offered the chance to reclaim and refashion an identity which had long been forced upon him. Others, however, saw strategic primitivism as inherently demeaning and false. For those like Du Bois – who scorned McKay's first novel for its evocations of the primitive – depictions of African Americans as closer to nature and sexually liberated succeeded only in pandering to the expectations of white audiences; for racial advancement, they were thoroughly counter-productive.

Primitivism thus assumed a contested position in the Harlem Renaissance. Black artists were subject to what Edward Marx calls 'an artistic double bind': caught between the demand to cater for an educated black audience and a (potentially much

²³³ Cooper, *Rebel Sojourner*, p. 239.

²³⁴ See Edward Marx, "Forgotten Jungle Songs: Primitivist Strategies of the Harlem Renaissance", *The Langston Hughes Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 1996) pp. 79-93.

larger, more lucrative) white audience.²³⁵ McKay was not immune to the whims of the literary market; *Home to Harlem* appeared at the height of the 1920s fascination with black culture, when Harlem was a magnet for white Americans eager to discover the secrets of its jazz bars and dance clubs. Appearing on the heels of Van Vechten's controversial *Nigger Heaven*, his portrayal of Harlem life (intentionally or not) played to the desires of a white readership seeking exoticism and escapism.

Home to Harlem received extremely mixed reviews; most famously, Du Bois lambasted the novel for its portrayal of working-class African Americans, lamenting: 'for the most part [it] nauseates me, and after the dirtier parts of its filth I feel distinctly like taking a bath.'²³⁶ Marcus Garvey also attacked the novel, citing 'a new group of writers who have been prostituting their intelligence under the direction of the White man, to bring out and show up the worst traits of our people.'²³⁷ But McKay was unconcerned; he saw efforts at racial uplift through portraying purposefully 'respectable' and 'positive' images of black life as constraining to artistic freedom. In a 1921 review of the musical *Shuffle Along*, he had blasted black critics who believed that 'Negro art [...] must be dignified and respectable like the Anglo-Saxon's before it can be good', but concluded that '[h]appily the Negro retains his joy of living in the face of such criticism; and in Harlem [...] he expresses himself with a zest that has yet to be depicted by a true artist.'²³⁸ This 'zest' is surely the essence of Harlem life that McKay's novel seeks to communicate.

²³⁵ Marx, p. 81.

²³⁶ W. E. B. Du Bois, "Two Novels: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* & Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*." *Crisis* 35, 1928, p. 202.

²³⁷ Marcus Garvey, "Home to Harlem, Claude McKay's Damaging Book Should Earn Wholesale Condemnation of Negroes", *Negro World*, 29 September 1928.

²³⁸ McKay, review of *Shuffle Along*, *Liberator*, Vol. 4 (December 1921), pp. 24-26.

The debates over primitivism that divided the African American intellectual community in the 1920s continue to challenge contemporary readers and critics. Etherington's 2017 study reopened long-dormant debates around primitivism, which by 2000 had become a taboo term largely airbrushed out of accounts of literary modernism; any discussion of primitivism today must acknowledge the huge difficulties this term continues to pose.²³⁹ In *Primitivism* (1972), which remained for decades the only significant work on primitivism in literature, Bell cites the 'natural untidiness' of a term which 'refers to a dauntingly ancient and universal human characteristic with a correspondingly wide range of manifestations'.²⁴⁰ In 1972, Bell could still – if cautiously – describe the challenges primitivism posed in such prosaic terms. Indeed, up until the 1980s, as David Richards notes, 'primitivism was widely regarded as having achieved the goal set for it of reviving "belated" Western culture.'²⁴¹ The 1984 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, "*Primitivism*" in 20th Century Art: *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, is often cited as a watershed moment in the conversation on primitivism.²⁴² Edward Said's ground-breaking *Orientalism* (1978) had already highlighted the West's patronizing 'othering' of 'the East'. Thus, Etherington notes, 'scholars [...] were poised to dispatch primitivism with the same demystifying force that had just been applied to representations of the "Orient"'.²⁴³ Primitivism then came to be seen as an idealization of non-western cultures grounded in the unequal power

²³⁹ Victor Li suggests, however, that if the term 'primitive' had largely 'withdrawn from circulation' by this time, the fascination with the primitive endured, *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) p. vii.

²⁴⁰ Bell, *Primitivism* (London: Methuen, 1972) p. 1.

²⁴¹ David Richards, "At Other Times: Modernism and the 'Primitive'", in Vincent Sherry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 64-82 (p. 79).

²⁴² William Rubin (ed.), "*Primitivism*" in 20th Century Art: *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

²⁴³ Etherington, p. 12.

relations of imperialism and entailing the reproduction of racist stereotypes. Subsequent work on primitivism, perhaps most notably Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (1990), was keen to highlight the problematics of white modernist primitivism. This often meant detaching 'the primitive' from the idea of 'primitive peoples'; these 'neo-primitivist' accounts were effectively, as Victor Li argues, 'primitivism without the primitives'.²⁴⁴

Ronald Bush and Elazar Barkan's 1995 edited collection, *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, marked a move away from 'primitivism without the primitives' towards something closer to Etherington's definition; the editors characterize primitivism as 'the defensive expression of a specific moment of crisis – the prehistory of a future whose unsettling shadow had just crossed the horizon'.²⁴⁵ Marjorie Perloff's essay in particular takes issue with the 'neo-primitivism' Li describes, blasting Torgovnick's 'well-meaning' but pious study for equating a work's ideological values with its artistic and cultural value, thus assuming 'that a good writer [...] is equivalent to a good person'.²⁴⁶ That primitivism has long served to reinforce the West's sense of itself and its superiority and that this is a deeply problematic dynamic is irrefutable, but attempts to turn primitivism on its head have also frequently proven problematic.

Lawrence has often been the target of attacks predicated on the idea that 'a good writer [...] is equivalent to a good person'; as ambiguous as both categories are, his representations of 'the primitive' have been cited as proof that he is neither. Yet

²⁴⁴ Li, p. 37.

²⁴⁵ Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds.), Introduction to *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995) p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Marjorie Perloff, "Tolerance and Taboo: Modernist Primitivisms and Postmodernist Pieties" in Barkan and Bush, pp. 339-354 (p. 352).

his attitudes were changeable and often paradoxical; 'the primitive' could represent death, disease and degeneration as well as the antidote to the Western world's lost vitality and its unhealthy attitudes to sexuality. His primitivism evolved over the course of his career; Torgovnick recognises a shift from a focus upon the primitive as female and degenerate in *Women in Love* to the regenerative male primitive in *The Plumed Serpent*.²⁴⁷ Yet almost everywhere in Lawrence, the primitive is depicted in contradictory terms as both threatening and alluring, repulsive and beautiful. Much criticism of Lawrence's primitivism has focussed upon the concept of 'blood-knowledge' or 'blood-consciousness', which he explained in an oft-quoted 1913 letter:

My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect [...] All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what not [...] The real way of living is to answer to one's wants.²⁴⁸

It is important to note that Lawrence's 'blood-consciousness' or 'blood-knowledge' lends itself to multiple interpretations. Neil Roberts explains that 'blood-knowledge' seems like 'an attempt to transcend the opposition between remaining isolated in the self and *knowing* the other', but in a racial context blood becomes 'the term for an unbridgeable difference'.²⁴⁹ Indeed, some critics have condemned this element of Lawrence's metaphysic as inherently racist. Jascha Kessler, for example, claims that his later works (including *The Plumed Serpent*) enjoyed popularity in Nazi Germany, attributing this to the fact that 'his blood theory led him directly into totalitarian ideology.

²⁴⁷ Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) pp. 162-163.

²⁴⁸ Lawrence, Letter to Ernest Collings, 17 January 1913, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 1, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 503.

²⁴⁹ Neil Roberts, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p. 19.

For to Lawrence blood was not merely a trope, or a spiritual symbol: it was the quintessence of the racial.²⁵⁰

The Plumed Serpent sees the fullest expression and the most significant test of Lawrence's ideas around blood-consciousness and race. The indigenous peoples of Mexico are consistently described as 'columns of dark blood' (*PS*, 47) and the racial composition of one's blood is taken to dictate one's behaviour. Thus, one character argues, the person of mixed blood is 'a calamity' because '[h]is blood of one race tells him one thing, his blood of another race tells him another' (*PS*, 64). Published two years before *Home to Harlem*, Lawrence's 1926 novel is widely considered his most problematic work (for its depictions of race especially), but it is also the novel in which Lawrence's ambivalent primitivism is most evident. Many critics have commented upon the failure or falsity of *The Plumed Serpent*, which Lawrence at one time deemed his most important work. Bell, for example, noting that it has 'almost universally, and rightly, been seen as artistically unsuccessful and misguided', sees the novel as 'the most striking and extended instance of Lawrence's unwitting self-parody'.²⁵¹ It has long elicited such responses in part because, as Bell observes, it attempts 'to express as a set of explicit and self-conscious themes a mode of being which takes its whole value from being pre-conscious and inarticulate'.²⁵² *The Plumed Serpent* is then caught in an impossible bind which can only result in ambivalence.

The novel follows Ramón and Cipriano as they found a 'new' religion in Mexico, banishing Christianity and re-establishing the pre-Colombian cult of Quetzalcoatl. Lawrence's protagonist, Irish widow Kate Leslie, is the sceptical Western voice in the

²⁵⁰ Jascha Kessler, "D. H. Lawrence's Primitivism", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1964), 467-488 (p. 484).

²⁵¹ Bell, *Language and Being*, p. 165.

²⁵² *Ibid*, p. 174.

novel; she is alternately seduced and repulsed by Mexico and Quetzalcoatl. She senses ‘a certain mystery and beauty’ as well as a ‘latent sense of horror’ (*PS*, 101) in the native peoples. Kate wants to escape the mechanical world, to live differently; she is attracted by the ancient, instinctive way of living that Ramón and Cipriano purport to represent and feels certain that “‘We must go back and pick up old threads. We must take up the old, broken impulse that will connect us with the mystery of the cosmos again, now we are at the end of our own tether’” (*PS*, 138). The way forward for Mexico, Ramón is sure, is a return to Mexican gods, to pantheism and blood-consciousness. Kate – unlike the title character of “The Woman Who Rode Away” (composed in New Mexico in summer 1924 just before Lawrence began redrafting *Quetzalcoatl*) – is not ritually sacrificed to native gods. Yet there is a sense, throughout the novel, that Western society and the white race are on the brink of collapse and death.

In *The Plumed Serpent*, the opposition between blood-consciousness and mental consciousness is figured as the split between the ‘real’ Mexico and the creeping Americanization of its cities, between the Quetzalcoatl movement with its ‘living gods’ and the dead icons of Christianity. McKay also engages with racialized blood rhetoric and discriminates between mental consciousness and blood-consciousness in *Home to Harlem*. Lawrence’s ‘belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect’ and the desire to ‘answer to [one’s] blood’ find expression here in the earthy, virile and sexually-liberated character of Jake. For Lawrence, as Frieda Lawrence affirmed, ‘[h]is belief in the blood [...] was not a theory, but a living experience’.²⁵³ Jake embodies this living experience; his appetites – whether for food,

²⁵³ Frieda Lawrence, *The Memoirs and Correspondence*, ed. by E. W. Tedlock (London: Heinemann, 1961) p. 135.

fun or sex – are insatiable and he and his friends exhibit an exuberance and zeal for life which is portrayed as specific to their race. This zeal is closely associated with blood and epitomized in Zeddy's declaration: "One thing I know is niggers am made foh life. And I want to live, boh, and feel plenty o' the juice o' life in mah blood. I wanta live and I wanta love" (*HH*, 49). Harlem itself is a 'contagious fever [...] [b]urning now in Jake's sweet blood' (*HH*, 15).

As in *Lawrence*, blood here represents 'the quintessence of the racial'. But if Jake and Zeddy embody Lawrentian blood-consciousness, Ray represents aspects of the opposing mental consciousness. As a Haitian intellectual, Ray is an outsider in Harlem. In this character, McKay demonstrates the pernicious effects of white influence; Ray is overly reliant upon his mind, intellectualizing his feelings and desires rather than acting upon them. When Ray and Jake find themselves at a brothel in Philadelphia, Jake 'fall[s] naturally into its rhythm', while Ray wishes he could be 'touched by the spirit of that atmosphere' (*HH*, 194), but cannot bring himself to enter into it. Like Kate, who in one early scene witnesses the dancing of the 'men of Quetzalcoatl' and is 'at once attracted and repelled' but cannot bear 'to come into actual contact' (*PS*, 122), Ray is inhibited by his 'white education' and unable to connect.

McKay thus engages with the traditional primitivist inversion of hierarchies that prizes the 'primitive' above the 'civilised'. In *Home to Harlem*, this entails a prizing of blackness over whiteness. Excluded from the true 'primitive joy of Harlem' (*HH*, 109), the white urban population can only observe the 'mad riotous joy' of the jazz club: 'the white visitors laugh. [...] Here are none of the well-patterned, well-made emotions of the respectable world' (*HH*, 337). The 'well-made emotions' of the white world are in contrast to those '[s]imple, raw emotions and real' of the black jazzers which 'may

frighten and repel refined souls' (*HH*, 338). This white deficit of real emotion extends to an implied sexual deficiency. In *Banjo*, Ray conjectures that 'white people had developed sex complexes that Negroes had not' because 'the white man considered sex a nasty, irritating thing, while the Negro accepted it with primitive joy' (*B*, 262). McKay thus inverts the racist discourse which figured black sexuality as wild, threatening and abnormal by rendering white sexual inadequacy and inhibition as unnatural.

These efforts to overturn such discourses and attribute value to Jake's instinct and natural spontaneity are subverted, however, by McKay's description of *Ray* as 'a reservoir of that intense emotional energy so peculiar to his race' and 'a touchstone of the general emotions of his race' (*HH*, 265-266). Ray embodies a mode of primitivism very different to Jake's; '[l]ife', McKay's narrator cautiously suggests, 'burned in Ray perhaps more intensely than in Jake' (*HH*, 265). This distinction recalls Lawrence's claim in *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine* (1925) that '[l]ife is more vivid in me, than in the Mexican who drives the wagon for me.'²⁵⁴ Like Lawrence, McKay establishes a hierarchy. In Lawrence's case, the hierarchy is clearly racial, while the distinction between Jake and Ray is more one of class and education. Yet what constitutes 'life' seems analogous in both cases; it denotes a certain inner flame, an intensity and a sensitivity to the world. For Lawrence, this is more 'vivid' in higher forms of life; *Reflections* constructs a taxonomy of 'existence [...] in terms of species, race, or type' whereby Lawrence is placed above the 'Mexican who drives the wagon' just as the Mexican is naturally above the 'two horses in the wagon'.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Lawrence, *Reflections*, p. 357.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 357.

While McKay's comparison of Ray and Jake may not involve the same problematic racial categorisation, it does establish an ambivalence which undermines the novel's valorisation of Jake's 'primitive' way of life. Indeed, this distinction between the Rays and Jakes of the world is perhaps the clearest expression of McKay's ambivalent primitivism. By ultimately privileging Ray's life over Jake's, McKay implicitly concedes to the strictures of a social hierarchy that places the educated, Caribbean writer, above the working-class African American. Having inverted racial hierarchies by prizing blackness over whiteness, McKay reinforces class hierarchies. He thus challenges the positioning of groups within binaries without contravening the binaries themselves, effectively failing to dismantle racist discourse. This construction of hierarchies and counter-hierarchies seems to mirror the central idea among many Harlem Renaissance artists and intellectuals that high culture would form a 'bridge across the chasm between the races': that a cultural hierarchy would trump a racial one.²⁵⁶ McKay believed in this idea of a brotherhood of artists in which racial difference did not figure, but his inversion of primitivist discourse seems to simultaneously undermine and reinforce racist racial hierarchies.

With *Home to Harlem*, McKay sought to produce both a forceful social critique of American racism and a celebration of the 'romance of being black' (*HH*, 154), but he struggled to reconcile his alliances with white upper-class mentors and black working-class comrades. The Ray-Jake juxtaposition thus reflects McKay's own position as a man caught somewhere between the repressed, cerebral Ray and the uninhibited, instinctive Jake. Yet Ray is surely the most recognisable McKay-figure in the novel, as Birkin in *Women in Love*, Lilly in *Aaron's Rod* and Kate in *The Plumed*

²⁵⁶ Huggins, p. 5.

Serpent are widely considered Lawrence-figures. Particular parallels emerge between Birkin and Ray; both are intellectuals who struggle to act upon their desires. Both are alternately attracted and repelled by the primitive. The oft-cited African statue moment in *Women in Love*, during which Birkin's reaction to a carving of an African woman shifts from awe to disgust, is redolent of the shifting, uncertain value of the primitive in *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*. The African fetish possesses an 'astonishing cultured elegance', but her face is 'crushed tiny like a beetle's' (*WL*, 253).

As Birkin's admiration of Halliday's statue descends into horror and Kate wavers in her reactions to Mexico and Quetzalcoatl, Ray's responses to Harlem range from delight to disgust. Though often envious of other Harlemites who live and love spontaneously, he is repulsed by his fellow railroad workers, by the sleeping cooks who make 'masticating noises [...] like animals eating' and by the 'offensive bug-bitten bulk of the chef' (*HH*, 153). Ray's vacillating responses to the 'primitive' aspects of Harlem life are tied to his rejection of '[r]aces and nations', which to him are 'like skunks' (*HH*, 153). He cannot relate to these men who 'claimed kinship with him':

Man and nature had put them in the same race. He ought to love them and feel them (if they felt anything) [...] Yet he loathed every soul in that great barrack-room, except Jake. (*HH*, 153)

He resents being 'chain-ganged together' (*HH*, 153) with these men, clinging to his cultural difference: the fact that '[h]e possessed another language and literature that they knew not of' (*HH*, 155). Ray's literary knowledge (including 'all that D. H. Lawrence published') is to him a more salient element of his identity than the fact of his race. Yet Ray is also ambivalent about his education; his last speech to Jake in *Home to Harlem* exemplifies this: "I don't know what I'll do with my little education. I

wonder sometimes if I could get rid of it and go and lose myself in some savage culture in the jungles of Africa” (*HH*, 274).

Of course, Ray cannot ‘get rid of’ his education or ‘lose [himself] in some savage culture’. Paradoxically, it is precisely Ray’s ‘white education’ which permits him to recognise the primitive’s value and to mobilise it in the context of a ‘racial renaissance’. Ray’s insistence in *Banjo* upon the importance of getting down to ‘racial roots’ is both a response to the critics who condemned *Home to Harlem* and a statement upon McKay’s primitivist project. The student with whom Ray is conversing replies that he believes in “a racial renaissance, [...] but not in going back to savagery” (*B*, 207). In response, Ray blasts the ‘white man’s education’; ‘educated Negroes’, he feels, are a ‘lost crowd’ who must turn to ‘the roots of [their] own people’ to find themselves (*B*, 208). Yet Ray, like McKay, is mindful that he is a product of the civilization he criticizes. Responding in “A Negro Writer to His Critics” (1932) to those ‘discriminating critics’ who (still) approach his work ‘as if [he] were a primitive savage and altogether a stranger to society’, McKay declares:

Whatever may be the criticism implied in my writing of Western Civilization I do not regard myself as a stranger but as a child of it [...] I am as conscious of my new-world birthright as my African origin, being aware of the one and its significance in my development as much as I feel the other emotionally.

One of my most considerate critics suggested that I might make a trip to Africa and there write about Negro life in its pure state. But I don’t believe that any such place exists anywhere upon the earth today, since modern civilization has touched and stirred the remote corners.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ McKay, “A Negro Writer to His Critics”, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) pp. 390-393 (p. 392).

McKay carries no illusion that an ideal form of primitive life untouched by 'modern civilization' exists. There is no sense, he recognises, in 'going back' to Africa in search of 'Negro life in its pure state'; this is not the object of his primitivism.

Nor is it the ultimate object of Lawrence's. As Carey Snyder observes, during his time in the American Southwest and Mexico Lawrence was aware of and partook in 'ethnological tourism', a practice whereby tourists like amateur anthropologists seek out first-hand experiences of cultures and peoples untouched by modernity.²⁵⁸ He was careful to distinguish himself from the region's hordes of white tourists – as he did in "The Hopi Snake Dance" section of *Mornings in Mexico* (1927) – but his writings from this time reveal his anxieties about the authenticity of these experiences of 'the primitive' and his desire to be more than a tourist: to forge a real connection. By the time he wrote *Apocalypse* (1929/1930), he had come to believe that '[w]e can never recover an old vision, once it has been supplanted. But what we can do is to discover a new vision in harmony with the memories of old, far-off [...] experience that lie within us.'²⁵⁹ 'So long as we are not deadened or drossy,' Lawrence feels, 'memories of Chaldean experience still live within us [...] and can vivify our impulses in a new direction.'²⁶⁰

The opening of *The Rainbow*, though composed over a decade before *Apocalypse*, seems especially imbued with 'memories of Chaldean experience'; it sees a depiction of an idealised world: a timeless 'old vision' which is almost immediately eroded:

²⁵⁸ Carey Snyder, *British Fiction and Cross-Cultural Encounters: Ethnographic Modernism from Wells to Woolf* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 159.

²⁵⁹ Lawrence, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, ed. by Mara Kalnins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) p. 54.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 54.

[H]eaven and earth was teeming around them, and how should this cease? They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forward the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime.²⁶¹

The early Brangwens live in 'blood-intimacy' with nature: 'the pulse of the blood of the teats of the cows beat into the pulse of the hands of the men' (*R*, 10). Though this is perhaps not inherently a primitivist depiction or indeed a primitivist novel, this vision of men living in harmony with nature and its rhythms, as Bell notes, 'bears a striking affinity with supposedly primitive, or archaic, sensibility as described in much early-twentieth-century anthropology.'²⁶² Bell invokes the theories of Ernst Cassirer, who conceives of the ancient world as pre-dualistic and thus characterises 'archaic sensibility' as inhering 'the continuity between the inner world of feeling and the external order of existence.'²⁶³ This desire for a synthesis of inner feelings and outer realities is central to both authors' conceptions of the primitive. It is evident in Jake's cry: 'But I want something as mahvelous as mah feelings' (*HH*, 293). The divorce between inner and outer lives – the crisis of modern mechanized society – is first signalled in *The Rainbow* by the building of a canal '[a]bout 1840' (*R*, 13), soon followed by a colliery and the Midland Railway. The Brangwens' 'blood-intimacy' with the landscape and with animals is replaced by the 'rhythmic run of the winding engines' and the 'shrill whistle' of trains which become 'a narcotic to the brain' and 're-echo[e] through the heart' (*WL*, 14).

²⁶¹ Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, ed. by Kinkead-Weekes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 9-10.

²⁶² Bell, *Language and Being*, p. 59.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 60.

The Rainbow's Edenic opening was among the last parts of the novel to be written; in moving forward in time, Lawrence reaches back to an ostensibly imaginary, timeless past.²⁶⁴ Like Ray, who feels the Renaissance must look to its 'racial roots' for a way forward, Lawrence feels strongly that the key to a future lived in harmonious relation to the cosmos lies in vivifying new impulses with the memories of 'Chaldean experience'. Just as Lawrence, Bell observes, 'was making a philosophical statement about Being rather than a historical statement about cultural development' in his primitivist writings, McKay saw the primitive as a mode of living in the present (whether in Harlem, Marseille or Tangiers).²⁶⁵ Mirroring how the switch to prose allowed McKay to elude the 'developmental scale' from uncivilised dialect to refined standard English, his figuring of primitivism as a facet of everyday life subverts the conception of the primitive as representative of an exotic, pre-civilised, savage culture.

The primitive thrives in Harlem; 'the Negro', Holcomb notes, thus represents both 'a figure of Lawrentian "blood-knowledge"' and 'paradoxically [...] a signifier for modern change, for insurgency – [...] a counterhegemonic agent that immanently cannot cede to modern capitalist and nationalist dominion.'²⁶⁶ Like Gilroy's assertion that Black Atlantic thinkers are simultaneously more modern and anti-modern than their contemporaries, McKay's black characters represent both a kind of primordial health and a radical modern insurrection. Yet the same might be said of Lawrence's primitivism. His belief in blood as wiser than intellect, as we have seen, was not

²⁶⁴ *The Rainbow* was substantially rewritten and its early sections expanded after Lawrence completed *Study of Thomas Hardy* in 1914. As Kinkead-Weekes notes in his introduction to the Cambridge edition, the metaphysic developed in *Study* furnished Lawrence with the language he needed to write 'the choric prelude, the Brangwen Men and Women in their timeless world of landscape and prospect' (p. xxxiv).

²⁶⁵ Bell, "Lawrence and Modernism", p. 181.

²⁶⁶ Holcomb, *Code Name Sasha*, p. 138.

motivated by a desire to return to some earlier mode of living, just as McKay's depictions of African American characters as closer to nature, more virile and more vital than their white counterparts were not expressions of a lost ancient sensibility but of a modern mode of living. For both McKay and Lawrence, the primitive represents a radical departure from the socially, spiritually, sexually and racially repressive forces of modernity and projects forward, presenting solutions for the future rather than merely lessons from the past.

Yet blood-consciousness and the primitive do not finally emerge as the solution to the modern world's ills in McKay or Lawrence. In *The Plumed Serpent*, the very exercise of making primitive blood-consciousness the centre of life reveals the shortcomings of this project. Bell sees this novel as 'an effective mirror image of *The Rainbow*'; whereas the 1915 novel moves from the idyllic 'archaic sensibility' of the early Brangwens into the increasingly mechanised, modern world, in *The Plumed Serpent* the trajectory is reversed as the Quetzalcoatl movement enacts a turn 'from the clock to the sun and the stars, and from metal to membrane' (*PS*, 161).²⁶⁷ But the success of Quetzalcoatl is not dependent upon a return to cosmic connectedness or blood-consciousness, but upon Ramón's will and Cipriano's military skill. The novel ends with Kate pondering whether she should stay in Mexico; her rational mind tells her to return to Europe. However, having come to Mexico hoping to escape 'the horrible machine of the world' and its 'mechanical cog-wheel people' (*PS*, 104), Kate finds herself in limbo, unable to 'definitely commit herself, either to the old way of life, or to the new' (*PS*, 429).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Bell, *Language and Being*, p. 168.

²⁶⁸ Virginia Hyde and L. D. Clark note that Lawrence 'labored' over the novel's ending, 'revising nearly eighty percent' of the final chapter 'and then making extensive alterations again during proofreading', "The Sense of an Ending in *The Plumed*

What has been seen by critics as the novel's failure – as Lawrence's inability to successfully render the primitive or attain 'immediacy' – is the ultimate expression of his ambivalent primitivism; the primitive cannot be resurrected and any attempt to do so will be inevitably specious. He later explained, in *Mornings in Mexico*, that:

The Indian way of consciousness is different from and fatal to our way of consciousness. Our way of consciousness is different from and fatal to the Indian. The two ways, the two streams are never to be united. They are not even to be reconciled. There is no bridge, no canal of connection.²⁶⁹

'To pretend to express one stream in terms of another, so as to identify the two', is for Lawrence always 'false and sentimental'.²⁷⁰ Of course, this is what he ostensibly attempts in *The Plumed Serpent*: to depict a trajectory toward primitive consciousness and 'archaic sensibility' through the medium of the modern novel.

Towards the end of *The Plumed Serpent*, Kate feels immanent the 'great death' of the white race, to be succeeded by 'a new germ, a new conception of human life, that will arise from the fusion of the old blood-and-vertebrate consciousness with the white man's present mental-spiritual consciousness' (*PS*, 415). This fusion of blood-consciousness and mental consciousness echoes what Lawrence earlier described in Mexico in 1923; responding to the idea that England should resume leadership of the world, Lawrence remarks: 'One hand in space is not enough. It needs the other hand from the opposite end of space, to clasp and form the Bridge. The dark hand

Serpent', *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1/3 (1993 & 1994) 140-148 (p. 140).

²⁶⁹ Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico and Other Essays*, ed. by Virginia Crosswhite Hyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p. 61.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 61.

and the white.’²⁷¹ Yet finally for Lawrence, as he hints in *The Plumed Serpent* and declares in *Mornings in Mexico*, there is ‘no bridge, no canal of connection’; the primitive cannot come to the aid of the civilised, or vice versa. The primitivist project – and that of *The Plumed Serpent* – has been doomed from the outset.

Lawrence’s utopian image of the ‘dark hand and the white’ forming ‘the Bridge’ speaks to McKay’s belief in art’s power to transcend race, while his later conviction that ‘[t]here is no bridge’ is redolent of Ray’s sense that his education and culture bar him from connection with men who ‘claimed kinship with him’. Art can connect Ray to Lawrence, Barbusse and Tolstoy, but it cannot, McKay suggests, truly connect him to the ‘primitive joy’ of Harlem or the men who embody it. For Ray, too, there is ultimately no ‘canal of connection’. McKay and Lawrence – like Harlem’s white tourists – can observe and imagine, but know that they can never truly partake in or convey the primitive. The paradoxical and inconsistent ways in which they figure the primitive are indicative of the final impossibility of reconciling an imagined, pre-conscious, ancient sensibility with their experience of modern life and the formal devices at their disposal. Their ambivalent primitivism then acknowledges that there *is* no true primitive in the world: all efforts to imagine or represent the primitive are thus *necessarily* false, ambivalent, uneven. Failure of expression, the disintegration of the novel form and ambivalent primitivism are the inevitable products of a culture in crisis.

By the early 1930s, when he was living in Morocco, McKay had tired of writing the picaresque tales for which he had come to be known; in a letter to Max Eastman

²⁷¹ Lawrence, Letter to John Middleton Murry, 25 October 1923, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 4, ed. by Warren Roberts. James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 520.

he explained that he had ‘about written [him]self dry on the picaresque stuff’.²⁷² Feeling his latest effort – “Jungle and the Bottom” (begun around 1930, later retitled “Savage Love” and finally *Romance in Marseille*) – too close to the picaresque mode of his earlier novels, he had set the book aside by September 1930. He turned to the completion of a collection of short stories, *Gingertown*. Morocco spurred McKay’s desire, after years of wandering, to put down roots; it reminded him of Jamaica. He determined that his next work – which he hoped would sell better than *Banjo* and *Gingertown* – would be a Jamaican novel.

Banana Bottom seems simultaneously to enact the geographical return home that the author himself never could and a return to linear narrative; it has often puzzled scholars because it seems so completely at odds with the vision of radical black internationalism McKay espoused in earlier novels. The 1933 novel is the story of a young Jamaican woman, Bita Plant, who returns home after her education in England, having been adopted by a white missionary family (the Craigs) following her rape by Crazy Bow, a talented but troubled musician. The novel sees Bita finally reject the civilized values the Craigs represent; in marrying Jubban, an uneducated peasant farmer, she chooses a return to folk ways. The 1933 novel then seems to enact the union of worldly, intellectual character and down-home folk hero that *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* do not quite achieve. It also seems a rather radical turn away from the plotlessness of earlier novels; not only does *Banana Bottom* have a more conventional narrative structure culminating in heterosexual marriage, but McKay’s (and Bita’s) narrative return to his homeland seems also to resolve the geographical lack of plot.

²⁷² McKay, Letter to Max Eastman, quoted in Cooper, *Rebel Sojourner*, p. 269.

Parallels emerge between *Banana Bottom* and Lawrence's 1928 novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; both centre on a woman who falls in love with a man of lower social standing. Like McKay's 1933 novel, it sees a narrative homecoming to the county of Lawrence's birth as well as a reversion to a more conventional narrative structure. After the episodic novels of the early 1920s, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* certainly seems a significant departure; its final pages in particular see a return almost to the eighteenth-century epistolary novel. Lawrence and McKay scholars have often been quick to emphasize that neither work should be considered representative either of the best fiction they produced or the vision they espoused elsewhere. But what does it mean that these 'last novels' (*Banana Bottom* was McKay's last published novel, but not the last he wrote) appear to break so dramatically with their authors' previous efforts: that both seem finally to reject the innovations of their 'plotless', internationalist novels in favour of a return to the nation and to linear narratives culminating in heterosexual love?

The answer is perhaps that these novels represent an incomplete break with previous works. In some ways, both novels seem to see their authors abandoning experimental and exploratory writing in favour of more traditional forms and themes. Yet the same ambivalence that complicated the primitivism of *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* is evident in *Banana Bottom*. Bitá's marriage to Jubban does not transform her into an earthy embodiment of the folk; she continues to play the piano, to enjoy intellectual pursuits and to be figured as superior to the other inhabitants of Banana Bottom. Even in enacting this metaphorical return to his homeland and in the marriage of opposites which appears to resolve the Ray-Jake/Ray-Banjo juxtaposition between the intellectual/writer and the folk/primitive, McKay cannot reconcile these disparate elements. That Bitá's mentor is the Jekyll-character, Squire Gensir, seems further to

illustrate that with *Banana Bottom* McKay was reflecting upon his own intellectual formation and his own fate as an accomplished, highly-educated writer forever wedded in the eyes of white critics to 'primitive' folk culture. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is certainly less ambitious and less exploratory than earlier novels; it sees the return to some of the most pressing issues of his earliest works, but it is also Lawrence's most concerted attempt to affect his readers, to bring a new consciousness into being and to gesture towards a new way of living in a more popular and accessible way.

A series of seemingly contradictory impulses are at play in Lawrence's influence upon McKay, which manifests as a simultaneous 'groping for a way out' and a search for a way in. Where Joyce offered 'no confusion, no doubt, no inquiry and speculation about the future' (*ALW*, 191), in Lawrence McKay found a world-view matching his own and a sense of modern chaos, confusion and doubt which fuelled and mirrored his own restless quest. Lawrence demonstrated to McKay that he need not define himself as 'classicist' or 'modernist', that he could value what he saw as the gloriously 'primitive' elements of his race without repudiating his education: that, as Birkin says to Gerald, "There isn't only one road" (*WL*, 276).

In *Banjo*, Ray deems Tolstoy his 'ideal of the artist as a man' not because of his doctrines, but because of his 'mighty life of restless searching within and without, and energetic living to find himself until the very end' (*B*, 68). In a very similar way, Lawrence's life of restless searching touched McKay's own; upon hearing of Lawrence's passing in March 1930, he wrote to his agent: 'It was very sad to hear of D. H. Lawrence's death. Although I have never met him, it was like losing a close

friend.²⁷³ McKay looked to Lawrence, his 'great reservoir of words' and his evocations of modern confusion, to confront and express his own feelings of alienation. His reading of Lawrence served as a way into language, a way of routing his thoughts and mobilising his own marginality. Often estranged from his environment and from those around him, McKay identified in Lawrence a similarly lost soul: a literal stranger whose force of vision rendered him a kind of imaginary friend and a writer whose radical ambivalence shaped his own efforts to 'grop[e] for a way out'.

The ambivalence and itinerancy of McKay and Lawrence speak to something fundamental about the nature of modernism and of the Harlem Renaissance. Modernism expressed a nostalgia for past civilizations and a simultaneous obsession with the 'make it new' mantra; it sought a wholeness of vision through fragmented forms. The Harlem Renaissance was beset by paradox as a movement which declared its artistic independence from white America whilst being heavily funded by white patrons, which declared the advent of the 'New Negro', but in doing so evoked ancient African roots. What McKay's sense of kinship with Lawrence demonstrates most clearly, then, is the extent to which the interests and characteristics of what was once considered 'high' or 'mainstream' modernism converge with those of the New Negro movement, demonstrating that the concerns of Harlem Renaissance artists were not only racial, but inextricably linked to a wider sense of cultural malaise, of 'crisis in time'.

²⁷³ McKay, Letter to Bradley, HRC.

Chapter 2

Chaos in Short Fiction: Langston Hughes

Man fixes some wonderful erection of his own between himself and the wild chaos, and gradually goes bleached and stifled under his parasol. Then comes a poet, enemy of convention, and makes a slit in the umbrella; and lo! the glimpse of chaos is a vision, a window to the sun.²⁷⁴

In *I Wonder as I Wander*, Langston Hughes' 1956 autobiography, the author details his travels in the Soviet Union in 1932 and 1933. On his return to Moscow in 1933, his friend Marie Seton – a British actress he met at the New Moscow Hotel – gave him a copy of Lawrence's *The Lovely Lady* (1932). A posthumous collection of eight late short stories written mostly between 1924 and 1929, *The Lovely Lady* had only been published in the previous year when it made its way swiftly into Hughes' hands. Marie Seton's friendly gesture precipitated a sudden and unexpected flurry of writing and a series of short stories treating African American life as a black writer had never before dared. In a short section of *I Wonder as I Wander* entitled 'D. H. Lawrence Between Us', Hughes recalls the 'curious' circumstances in which he began to write:²⁷⁵

I had never read anything of Lawrence's before, and was particularly taken with the title story, and with "The Rocking-Horse Winner". Both tales made

²⁷⁴ Lawrence, "Chaos in Poetry", *Introductions and Reviews*, (pp. 107-116) p. 109.

²⁷⁵ The chapter title references Hughes' sometime lover Natasha, in whom he became disinterested following his reading of *The Lovely Lady* and the beginning of a serious period of writing: 'When in Moscow I started writing intensively, I really did not want to be bothered with an almost nightly female visitor. [...] another and more possessive "Lovely Lady" from D. H. Lawrence's stories had come between us', Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) p. 214. Faith Berry implies that Hughes may have used his sudden desire to write as a convenient excuse to stop seeing Natasha, *Langston Hughes: Before and Beyond Harlem* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1983) p. 187.

my hair stand on end. The possessive, terrifying elderly lady of “The Lovely Lady” seemed in some ways so much like my former Park Avenue patron that I could hardly bear to read the story, yet I could not put the book down, although it brought cold sweat and goose-pimples to my body. A night or two after I read the Lawrence stories, I sat down to write an *Izvestia* article on Tashkent when, instead, I began to write a short story. I had been saying to myself all day, ‘If D. H. Lawrence can write such psychologically powerful accounts of folks in England, that send shivers up and down my spine, maybe I could write stories like his about folks in America. I wonder.’²⁷⁶

In Pauline Attenborough, the mysteriously youthful title character of “The Lovely Lady”, Hughes recognised Charlotte Osgood Mason: the white patron from whom he had undergone a painful parting in May 1930. This recognition seems a major factor in Hughes’ intense, physical reaction to Lawrence’s stories: his ‘cold sweat and goose-pimples’. More striking is Hughes’ claim that Lawrence’s ‘psychologically powerful accounts of folks in England’ gave him the impetus to write similarly compelling stories about ‘folks in America’. Hughes here expresses a desire to emulate the effects of Lawrence’s stories: to tap into their psychological force and produce the same spine-tingling results in his readers. It is also a desire to tear a slit in the umbrella of American race consciousness, to tear down ‘the house of apparent form and stability’ and reveal – like Lawrence’s poet – the chaos that belies America’s vision of itself as ‘one Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all’.²⁷⁷

This chapter argues that his reading of *The Lovely Lady* not only encouraged Hughes to experiment in the short story form, but inspired him to think differently about the function of art and the artist in society: to reconsider his own role as a writer. Lawrence’s example provided a formal and stylistic model and pertinent themes that

²⁷⁶ Hughes, *I Wonder*, p. 213.

²⁷⁷ Lawrence, “Chaos in Poetry”, p. 109; This wording of the Pledge of Allegiance was used between 1924 and 1954, after which it was modified slightly to ‘one Nation under God, indivisible’.

aided and encouraged Hughes to challenge and disrupt both the premises and aspirations of the New Negro movement and the prevailing racism and white hegemony of Jim Crow America in his first short story collection, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934). *The Lovely Lady* suggested means by which Hughes could counter both the myth of the oneness and indivisibility of the American nation and the 'twoness' of the deep-seated Du Boisian formulation of black selfhood in his own stories.

Thus, where McKay found in Lawrence's plotless novels a form in which to express his own dual subject position, Hughes found in these late stories a similarly intermediate and adaptable form combining elements of the modernist short story and the folk-tale rooted in oral tradition. Building upon Kate A. Baldwin's positioning of Lawrence's posthumous collection as a bridge between Hughes' Soviet essays and *The Ways of White Folks*, I contend here that *The Lovely Lady* functioned as a catalyst for a significant shift in Hughes' work that was simultaneously rooted in his Soviet experiences and his evolving political beliefs. In the 1934 collection, I argue, Hughes adopts the blunt tone, sardonic voice and the composite form of Lawrence's late stories and adapts the themes of possessive femininity and unnatural familial relations.

All of these aspects which characterise the stories of *The Lovely Lady* and appear – often in substantially altered form – in *The Ways of White Folks*, form part of an effort to disrupt dominant narratives concerning American race relations, the nation, gender and the efficacy of art in the struggle for racial liberation. In both collections, Hughes and Lawrence are intent upon exposing artifice and revealing hypocrisy; the writer's role is to shock the reader into new realisation. Where Lawrence's unabashed social critique condemns domineering old women and the money-obsessed, bourgeois upper-middle-classes, Hughes' often scathing portraits of American life and race relations target overbearing white patrons, the hypocrisy of white Christian charity

and the senseless violence that American racism condones. The psychological power of Lawrence's stories convinced Hughes that his writing could exercise a more potent and forceful influence than the gently propagandistic work that had often characterised Harlem Renaissance literature.

Hughes' reading of *The Lovely Lady* inspired an intensely productive period, beginning in Moscow and continuing after his return to the United States later in 1933. Indeed, as Arnold Rampersad notes, '[t]he whirlwind of fiction that started in Moscow with his reading of D. H. Lawrence carried Hughes through long sessions at his typewriter during the fall in Carmel.'²⁷⁸ Along with three stories composed in Moscow ("Cora Unashamed", "Slave on the Block" and "Poor Little Black Fellow"), eleven more make up *The Ways of White Folks*. They range from the epistolary "Passing" to first-person perspectives like "A Good Job Gone" and the third-person narratives which make up the majority and from the biting satirical ("Rejuvenation Through Joy") to the emphatically tragic ("Home", "Father and Son").

Hughes would never again match the quality or quantity of stories produced in this period and inspired by his Moscow reading of Lawrence. Yet Lawrence's impact upon Hughes seems perhaps more unexpected than the English author's clear appeal to McKay. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", his famous 1926 essay, Hughes had promoted and fiercely defended the idea of a unique and specific black aesthetic and blasted those African Americans who exhibited an 'urge [...] toward whiteness'.²⁷⁹ The black writer's inspiration, he declares should come from 'the low-down folks, the so-called common element', who provide 'a great field of unused

²⁷⁸ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume I: 1902-1941, I, Too, Sing America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 282.

²⁷⁹ Hughes, "The Negro Artist", p. 32.

material' for 'the American Negro artist who can escape the restrictions the more advanced among his own group would put upon him.'²⁸⁰ Having scorned Countee Cullen in a thinly-veiled reference to a young black poet expressing his desire to be 'a poet – not a Negro poet', Hughes would later – in a set of Moscow essays on African American writers – critique Cullen for his love of Keats and Shelley and brand the (openly anti-Communist) Walter White 'a white Negro'.²⁸¹

Reading the 1926 essay, one may be surprised to learn that Hughes sustained many important and long-lasting relationships with white patrons and friends, most notably with his 'Godmother' Mason and his close friend Van Vechten. He was also, much like McKay, a voracious reader of European literature. Indeed, Hughes claims, it was the effect of reading Guy de Maupassant that first inspired him to write: 'I think it was de Maupassant who made me really want to be a writer and write stories about Negroes'.²⁸² This instance of connection to a foreign author is echoed in his later account of reading Lawrence in Moscow. In this early moment, too, he was inspired 'to write stories about Negroes'.

Hughes' comments in his famous essay and his criticisms of others may well seem bizarre – even hypocritical – when one considers his self-professed indebtedness to de Maupassant, Lawrence and many other white writers. In Lawrence's case, some striking parallels emerge between "The Negro Artist" and

²⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 32-33.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 31; Rampersad, *The Life*, Vol. 1, p. 271; Less than a year after Hughes' famous *Nation* essay, Lawrence himself also complained of White's 'whiteness' in his review of *Flight*.

²⁸² Hughes, *The Big Sea*, ed. by Joseph McLaren (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) p. 51.

Lawrence's 1920 "America, Listen to Your Own".²⁸³ Here he urges American writers to turn away from the restrictive influence of European art:

Let Americans turn to America, and to that very America which has been rejected and almost annihilated. Do they want to draw sustenance for the future? They will never draw it from the lovely monuments of our European past. [...] America must turn again to catch the spirit of her own dark, aboriginal continent. (SCAL, 384)

Much like Hughes' call for black writers to express their 'individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame', six years earlier Lawrence is encouraging a similar 'departure from the old European morality' (SCAL, 385).²⁸⁴ Lawrence is advocating a revisiting of Native American culture, but the impulse here remains similar to Hughes' later essay, expressing a likeminded desire to escape the restrictions of 'the lovely monuments of our European past' and embrace an authentic artistic spirit threatened with extinction.

An even more pertinent parallel can be drawn between "America, Listen to Your Own" and Hughes' later poem of 1935, "Let America Be America Again". The rhetorical similarities between Lawrence's call to 'Let Americans turn to America' and Hughes' ironic cry to 'Let America be America again' both imply a questioning of exactly what 'America' signifies.²⁸⁵ In the 1935 poem – in a voice reminiscent of the sardonic narrators of *The Ways of White Folks* – Hughes mocks the false myth that the 'American Dream' exists for all of America's citizens. For its poor, non-white populations, he affirms, America has never been 'America'; it has never lived up to the

²⁸³ "America, Listen to Your Own" was published first in the *New Republic* and written as a foreword to *Studies in Classic American Literature* but included in neither the American nor English first edition.

²⁸⁴ Hughes, "The Negro Artist", p. 36.

²⁸⁵ Hughes, "Let America Be America Again", *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. by Rampersad (New York: Vintage, 1995) p. 189

promise of equality and freedom for all. The role of the African American writer, Hughes now affirms, is to expose this. In both “Let America Be America Again” and “To Negro Writers” – a transcript of a speech composed for the first American Writers’ Congress in April 1935 – Hughes mirrors the satiric tone of *The Lovely Lady* and Lawrence’s sense of the didactic purpose of the artist as one who ‘makes a slit in the umbrella’. The duty of ‘American Negro writers’, Hughes declares in the 1935 speech, is to ‘reveal’ and ‘expose’ both the positive aspects that unite black and white Americans and the forces that oppress: ‘[t]he lovely grinning face of Philanthropy’, ‘the sick-sweet smile of organized religion’ and ‘the old My-Country-‘Tis-of-Thee lie’.²⁸⁶

This is exactly the role Hughes assumes in his 1934 collection. As its title – a play on Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk* – suggests, the collection is intent upon exposing these false narratives and revealing ‘the ways of white folks’. This duty to expose extends also in *The Ways of White Folks* to the effort to lay bare and undermine a set of concepts and a certain lexicon that Du Bois’ seminal work had ingrained in the African American consciousness. Hughes’ characters seek and exhibit something decidedly other than Du Boisian ‘double-consciousness’, this peculiar ‘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’.²⁸⁷ In effect, Hughes reverses this dynamic, revealing the ‘ways of white folks’ from the viewpoint of his black characters and reforming Du Bois’ idea of ‘the veil’, this complex manifestation of the colour line in the United States.

The lack of close attention Hughes scholars have paid to Lawrence’s influence seems symptomatic both of the general critical neglect of *The Ways of White Folks*

²⁸⁶ Hughes, “To Negro Writers”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 131-133 (pp. 131-132).

²⁸⁷ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 2.

(and indeed of many of Hughes' 1930s works) and an uneasiness with the act of associating one of the most prominent and beloved African American writers of the twentieth century – the man who so powerfully declared the artistic autonomy of young black writers – with a white writer of Lawrence's (ever-evolving) reputation. Those who have recognised Lawrence's influence, including Faith Berry and Hamalian, have often been dismissive of its significance. Berry notes that Hughes was 'overwhelmingly influenced' by Lawrence when he began writing short fiction seriously, but concludes that this influence was 'emotionally' rather than 'stylistically' significant.²⁸⁸ 'In style, tone, and structure,' Berry avers, 'his own prose bears little resemblance to the Englishman's.'²⁸⁹ Hamalian is similarly reductive in his exposition of Lawrence's significance to Hughes, citing a mutual concern with 'domineering, hateful parent[s]'.²⁹⁰ He furthermore opines that 'Lawrence's poems calling for revolution may have imprinted themselves on Hughes' psyche and inspired his own poems of revolution', while Berry speculates that 'Lawrence's reactionary political views [...] might have alienated Hughes had he read any further than *The Lovely Lady*'.²⁹¹

Yet it is impossible to pin down Lawrence's oeuvre to one stream of political thought or one set of beliefs by labelling it either exclusively revolutionary or reactionary. Berry may be accurate in her supposition that certain of the English author's works would have alienated or repelled Hughes, while Hamalian's proposal that 'Lawrence's poems calling for revolution' – presumably a reference to the late poems in *Pansies* (1929) including "A Sane Revolution" ('Let's make a revolution for

²⁸⁸ Berry, p. 18, p. 188.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 188.

²⁹⁰ Hamalian, "Black Writers", p. 587.

²⁹¹ Ibid, p. 589; Berry, p. 188.

fun!') and "O! Start a Revolution" – might have inspired Hughes' own revolutionary poems ("Good Morning Revolution", "Song of the Revolution", "One More 'S' in the U.S.A.") also seems plausible (all are tinged with the same ironic tone as the short stories discussed here). We know very little about Hughes' knowledge of Lawrence beyond his Moscow reading of *The Lovely Lady*. In *I Wonder as I Wander*, he claims never to have read any Lawrence before 1933, but the truth of this remains open to debate.

The true extent of Hughes' knowledge of Lawrence remains unclear, while Berry and Hamalian's conflicting accounts both underplay the significance of the specific circumstances in which Hughes discovered *The Lovely Lady*. Baldwin is the only critic to have addressed in any important way how Lawrence's impact relates to Hughes' wider experiences of and writings on the Soviet Union. In *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (2002), Baldwin posits Hughes' reading of *The Lovely Lady* as a bridge between his Soviet essays and *The Ways of White Folks*, particularly in terms of female power.²⁹² Elsewhere, in "The Russian Connection: Interracialism as Queer Alliance in *The Ways of White Folks*" (2007), she sees a link between the two collections as rooted in a queering of desire and selfhood mediated through the so-called 'Soviet reordination of selfhood'.²⁹³ The overly-possessive women of *The Lovely Lady*, Baldwin argues, undergo rearticulation in Hughes' stories, culminating in 'a theory of self-dispossession

²⁹² Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁹³ Baldwin, "The Russian Connection: Interracialism as Queer Alliance in *The Ways of White Folks*", *Montage of a Dream: The Art and Life of Langston Hughes*, ed. by John Edgar Tidwell and Cheryl R. Ragar (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) pp. 209-236 (p. 223).

as a response to the stultifying constraints of white supremacy'.²⁹⁴ This chapter builds upon Baldwin's analysis of *The Ways of White Folks* as undoubtedly the product of a coming together of Lawrence's striking stories and Hughes' Soviet experiences – including Soviet ideas around the nation, race, selfhood and the family. Yet Baldwin suggests that Hughes' response to Lawrence's stories was in large part oppositional or corrective in her contention that Lawrence's 'possessive' people encouraged Hughes to pursue 'a theory of self-dispossession' as a way of countering white hegemony. I contend here that Lawrence's influence – combined with the Soviet ideas to which he had been freshly exposed in 1932/33 – inspired Hughes to explore and depict different configurations of identity, but it did not lead him to abandon the goal of self-possession as a tenet of black selfhood.

I am interested in the specific ways in which the example of *The Lovely Lady* coalesced with Hughes' Soviet experiences to produce the 1934 collection, but I argue here that Lawrence should also be considered as the catalyst for a more significant and ground-shifting development in Hughes' art which mirrors a more general trend in African American writing in the period immediately succeeding the Harlem Renaissance. Hans Ostrom, echoing a metaphor employed by Hughes in "Father and Son" – the final story of *The Ways of White Folks* – posits that 'the general growth of Hughes' political awareness fused with the specific example of Lawrence's fiction to create a literary "chemical reaction" which produced not only his first book of short fiction, but also 'the bold realization that stories might be situated and/or reflect an idea of social conscience in a particular moment in history'.²⁹⁵ What Ostrom seems to

²⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 223

²⁹⁵ Hans Ostrom, *Langston Hughes: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993) p. 6.

suggest but does not quite articulate forms a key part of my argument here: that Lawrence's stories can be considered the catalyst for not only one of Hughes' major works (and surely his most impressive effort in short fiction), but for a major shift in the way he conceived of the very function of literature and of the writer.

This moment – in Hughes' life and in African American culture more generally – required new forms of expression, new ways of thinking about the function of art and the artist. By mid-1932, when Hughes left for the Soviet Union, the movement which would come to be known (however incongruously) as the Harlem Renaissance was largely over. Many texts published after this (imprecise, contested) watershed continue to be categorised as 'Harlem Renaissance' works, but they often differ considerably in subject and in tone to those texts produced in the 1920s. Much of the work of this transitional period – including *The Ways of White Folks*, George Schuyler's *Black No More* (1931) and Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* (1932) – is marked by satire often aimed at the elder figures of the New Negro movement and their faded aspirations. Already by this time, the genesis of what Jackson would term *The Indignant Generation* (2011) was emerging. Indeed, 1934 – the publication year of *The Ways of White Folks* – serves as Jackson's 'signal origin year' (*The Indignant Generation* spans the years 1934-1960).²⁹⁶ Jackson sees this oft-neglected period between the end of the Harlem Renaissance and the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement as in fact one of artistic productivity and zeal for African American writers. This was also a moment to reflect upon the achievements and the shortcomings of artistic, social and economic developments of the 1920s.

²⁹⁶ Lawrence P. Jackson, *A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics, 1934-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) p. 10.

The work Hughes produced in the 1930s has often, as Smethurst notes, been dismissed as overly didactic and ‘lacking the lyric humanism and folk wit’ of earlier and later work.²⁹⁷ This has in large part been attributed to his involvement with radical left-wing politics and the Communist Party USA in particular; though he likely never joined the CPUSA, he lent his voice and his name to Communist causes and organizations and publicly supported the Soviet Union. I argue here that it was not only his involvement in radical politics and his time in the Soviet Union that spurred this shift in his work and in his conception of his role and duty as a writer by the mid-1930s. Lawrence’s stories modelled literature’s capacity to shock, to force new realisations, to affect the reader and (perhaps) to bring about real-world change. With the onslaught of the Depression and the goals and promises of the preceding decade – the brief moment ‘when the Negro was in vogue’ – fading to memory, Hughes was moved to find a new project and a new mode of expression.²⁹⁸ *The Ways of White Folks* embodies the irony of the post-Harlem Renaissance period; it scorns white patrons and seems to suggest that all relations between black and white in America are inherently rotten, racist or rooted (at best) in a primitivistic fascination, yet it was largely composed under the roof of Hughes’ white patron, Noel Sullivan and inspired by his reading of a white, European writer.

This chapter traces the various facets of Hughes’ response to *The Lovely Lady* in *The Ways of White Folks*. I begin with an overview of Hughes’ time in the Soviet Union and the ideas to which he would have been exposed, arguing that the specific circumstances in which Hughes encountered Lawrence’s work are crucial to

²⁹⁷ Smethurst, *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 93.

²⁹⁸ Hughes, *The Big Sea*, p. 175.

understanding how his impact manifests in the 1934 collection. I then move on to consider the formal and stylistic aspects of this influence. Highlighting the specific form and tone of Lawrence's late short stories, I argue that Hughes adopts the satiric voice, the fabulistic didacticism and the explosive endings of *The Lovely Lady* in order to shock his readers, recreating his own hair-raising response to Lawrence. The next section suggests the impact of Lawrence's depictions of possessive female power – filtered through the example of the liberated, unveiled women of his Soviet essays – upon Hughes' figuring of his female characters as central to racial liberation. In positioning female emancipation at the heart of racial liberation, I argue, Hughes not only overturns the possessive femininity of Lawrence's overbearing white women (and perhaps Mason's power over him); he also undermines a tendency to associate femininity with whiteness and consequently to equate the failings of the Harlem Renaissance with a loss of masculinity.

Finally, this chapter considers the unusual, pernicious familial relations at the heart of many of Lawrence's and Hughes' stories and particularly in Lawrence's "The Rocking-Horse Winner" and "Mother and Daughter" and Hughes' "Father and Son". I suggest that Hughes' depictions of unhealthy familial relations and issues of heredity – mirroring the issues raised by Lawrence – personalise the problem of racial segregation, discrimination and violence and reflect upon the cultural and political legacy of the Harlem Renaissance. All of these facets of Lawrence's impact combine in *The Ways of White Folks* to produce a powerful, arresting and often embittered collection that forces a reconsideration of the fundamental concepts and beliefs upon which the American nation, its idea of itself, its values and its treatment of racial minorities are built. Lawrence's example emboldened Hughes to tear a slit in the umbrella of American race consciousness: to expose in these stories the violence,

cruelty and chaos that belies the idea of the United States as a land of liberty and justice for all.

Black in the USSR: The Soviet Context

That Hughes had intended to write an article on Tashkent for *Izvestia* when he began instead to write short stories is immediately indicative not only of the power that Lawrence's collection quickly exercised upon his working practice, but of the close connection between Hughes' Soviet essays and experiences and *The Ways of White Folks*.²⁹⁹ Indeed, as I stress throughout this chapter, it is vital to read Hughes' 1934 collection as a response to both the Soviet Union and to the impetus of Lawrence's stories. It is also important to note, as well, that *I Wonder as I Wander* emerged in the midst of the staunchly anti-communist political context of the United States in the 1950s. Only a few years before, in 1953, Hughes had been called before Joseph McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations; he was forced to renounce all previous ties to the USSR and from this time onward distanced himself from radical politics. In recounting his Soviet experiences in his autobiography, Hughes was compelled to limit references to his own links to Communism and his writings for the official government newspaper. Thus, in evoking Lawrence as the key stimulus for these stories, Hughes may well be occluding the importance of his Soviet experiences.

²⁹⁹ *Izvestia* was the official Soviet government newspaper between 1917 and 1991.

Hughes' time in the Soviet Union coincided with a moment of transition. The progressive post-Revolution policies that promoted equality between the sexes, 'free love' and generally less regulated relationships between people, were on the cusp of being replaced, under Stalin, with a return to more rigid definitions of the family, marriage and community. Soviet ideas offered Hughes new ways of thinking about the nation and the family and about identity categories like race and gender, while his travels in Soviet Central Asia and beyond convinced him that African Americans were not the only group subject to the suffocating strictures of the 'color line'. The historical affiliation between the figure of the Russian peasant and the African American has been noted by a number of critics; Baldwin emphasizes the parallels between these two groups as 'involuntarily indentured servants who were emancipated from servitude at roughly contemporaneous moments'.³⁰⁰ Hughes himself had celebrated the 1917 Russian Revolution at Central High School in Cleveland; many of his (mostly white) classmates' parents had lived under the Tsar. Perhaps even at this early stage, Hughes recognised commonalities linking the suffering of the European peasantry and the black population in America. The parallels between these distant peoples sparked the interest of numerous African American intellectuals and artists; many travelled to the Soviet Union, including Hughes, McKay, Du Bois and Paul Robeson. Baldwin sees such encounters as 'a means of transforming exclusionary patterns into an internationalism that was a dynamic mix of antiracism, anticolonialism, social democracy, and international socialism'; it is important to see Hughes' travels in the Soviet Union as part of a wider countercultural effort.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*, p. 1.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

Hughes set sail for Moscow on June 14th, 1932 as part of a group of twenty-two African American intellectuals and artists. Their purpose was to make a film; *Black and White* was to depict the plight of southern African Americans, supporting the Soviet Union's project 'to portray itself [...] as the champion of oppressed and colored peoples around the world'.³⁰² The film was never made, but Hughes remained to travel in Central Asia. Usually closed to foreigners, Hughes' artistic and political credentials meant that he was permitted to travel freely throughout the Soviet Union. He did so for around four months between mid-September 1932 and late January 1933, taking in cities including Tashkent, Samarkand, Ashkhabad and Bukhara. As an official guest of the Soviet Writers' Union, he toured hospitals, schools and factories and was fascinated by the emerging cultural scene: theatre, music and dance especially.

Hughes' Soviet essays have long been neglected as significant sources and workshops for ideas developed in his later work on American race relations. Yet in essays treating topics from Uzbek theatre to the cotton industry in Turkmenia, Hughes continuously compares his experiences in Soviet Central Asia to the situation at home. He had come almost directly from a four-month tour of the southern United States, so these issues would have been painfully fresh in his mind upon arrival in Moscow in June 1932. In *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia* (1934) – a collection of his *Izvestia* articles – Hughes frequently highlights parallels and distinctions between the American South and post-revolution Soviet Central Asia. On travelling south, he affirms that '[t]o an American Negro living in the United States the word *South* has an unpleasant sound, an overtone of horror and of fear,' but in Central Asia he can board a train

³⁰² David Chioni Moore, "Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border: Langston Hughes' Relevance, 1933–2002", *Callaloo* 25.4 (2002) pp. 1115-1135 (p. 1116).

without giving a thought to his race.³⁰³ While in the American South, he declares, ‘the colour line is hard and fast, Jim Crow rules, and I am treated like a dog’, in Soviet Central Asia ‘Russian and native, Jew and gentile, white and brown, live and work together’.³⁰⁴ He describes the share-cropping system he witnessed in the South as ‘[a] modern legal substitute slavery’, while in Central Asia ‘[t]he beys are gone, the landlords done with forever’.³⁰⁵

Such a glowing report of countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in the 1930s – near the height of Stalinist repression – is likely to surprise the contemporary reader. Hughes was probably not fully aware of the realities of life under Stalin or of the atrocities occurring during his stay, when man-made famine killed millions in the major grain-producing regions of the Soviet Union.³⁰⁶ Yet it seems likely that Hughes’ silence on these issues was not merely a product of ignorance. Writing for the government newspaper, Hughes could not have overtly criticized the Soviet Union in these articles, but he was also constructing a narrative for his own purposes: one designed to shame the United States and bolster the fight against racial segregation. Such an effort required Hughes to overlook certain aspects of the Soviet experiment, as surely did many African Americans who travelled to the Soviet Union at this time in search of tools, stories, contacts and political means to effect change at home.

³⁰³ Hughes, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia, Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 71.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 71, 74.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 78.

³⁰⁶ Hughes acknowledges ‘the purge trials, the liquidations, the arrests and censorship’ in *I Wonder as I Wander*, but comments rather equivocally that ‘deplorable as these things were, I felt about them in relations to their continual denunciation in the European and American press, much as Frederick Douglass felt before the Civil War when he read in the slave-holding papers that the abolitionists were anarchists, villains, devils and atheists. Douglass said he had the impression that “Abolition – whatever else it might be – was not unfriendly to the slave”’, p. 212.

Several strands of Soviet thought current during Hughes' time in the USSR are particularly relevant here. The revolution marked a radical break from previous configurations of race, the role of women and the nature of the family. It gave rise to the 'new Soviet person' (the *novyi Sovetski chelovek*). The new Soviet person was emblematic of a new mode of identity and selfhood: this new archetypal person purported to be selfless, communitarian and devoid of race, class or gender. If the new Soviet person in practice was generally characterised as male, women were also crucial to the new Soviet vision. Following Revolution, women gained far more freedom than before; they were guaranteed equal rights, encouraged to gain education and to work outside of the home. Their reproductive rights were also considered; abortion was legalized in 1920. With women finally able to be equally educated and equally paid, the institution of marriage and thus of the traditional family unit, it was believed, would naturally wither away. Indeed, the establishment of a socialist society necessitated a complete overhaul of the institution of the family; the 1918 Family Code, as Rudolf Schlesinger explains, 'fundamentally altered all the previously existing relations, inherent in the Tsarist system and in all bourgeois countries, which derive from the axiom that the family is the primary unit – above all, a property-owning unit – on which bourgeois society is based'.³⁰⁷ The 1918 code advocated free love and paved the way for the end of the traditional family unit.³⁰⁸

Hughes' travels demonstrated to him that the African American experience of the colour line was not unique and was in fact endemic across the world. Yet the specificity of the Soviet Union is also significant here; neither 'European' nor immune

³⁰⁷ Rudolf Schlesinger, *The Family in the U.S.S.R.: Documents and Readings* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 83.

³⁰⁸ Things changed significantly shortly after Hughes' time in the Soviet Union, with Stalin's much more conservative Family Code of 1936.

to Western thought, the dual perspective of Leninist internationalism, as Baldwin notes, 'encouraged both the self-determination of peoples united by culture and yet oppressed by a national unit which excluded them, and the transnational alliance of peoples similarly excluded by ethnic absolutism'.³⁰⁹ This ambiguous and alternative international socialism, coupled with the new alternative Soviet model of subjectivity enabled African American intellectuals like Hughes to imagine new ways of configuring race and identity. Hughes' radical poetry around this time shows that he considered seriously this idea of new people, of black and white united under a red banner. In the 1934 poem "One More 'S' in the USA" he writes: 'Come together, fellow workers / Black and white can all be red'.³¹⁰ Yet, in his short story collection of the same year, there remains a question mark over whether such a coming together is really possible or desirable in the current American context; to his communist friends he inscribed *The Ways of White Folks* 'Black and White until the red book comes'.³¹¹

Form and Style

In *I Wonder as I Wander*, having recounted his Moscow discovery of *The Lovely Lady*, Hughes muses upon the short story as a medium for conveying tales told to him by people from his own life. By the time of his Soviet sojourn, he had ceased to write the blues and jazz poetry that made his name in the 1920s. His later 'revolutionary verse' reflected his increasing interest in radical socialism, but crucially, as Rampersad

³⁰⁹ Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*, p. 10.

³¹⁰ Hughes, "One More 'S' in the USA", *Collected Poems*, p. 176

³¹¹ Jackson, p. 30.

notes, 'such verse could not do justice to the complex of emotions and ideas generated by the troubling events of his life in this period.'³¹² Hughes was in need of a new form to give shape to the ideas nurtured during his travels; Lawrence's short stories offered just this:

It had never occurred to me to try to write short stories before, other than the enforced compositions of college English. But in wondering, I began to think about some of the people in my own life, and some of the tales I had heard from others, that affected me in the same hair-raising manner as did the characters and situations in D. H. Lawrence's two stories concerning possessive people like the lovely lady and neglective people like the parents of the "Rocking Horse Winner".³¹³

Very quickly, Hughes forges a connection between Lawrence's stories and the events of his own life, including the tales recounted to him by his own friends about similarly 'possessive' and 'neglective' people. In seeking to replicate the psychological power of Lawrence's stories, Hughes was naturally inspired to experiment with the short story form himself. What, then, makes the short story the ideal vehicle for both Lawrence's scathing portrayals of bourgeois society and Hughes' satires on American race relations? It is important to acknowledge the specific style of Lawrence's late short stories and the significant ways in which the stories of *The Ways of White Folks* diverge from Hughes' earlier (and later) forays into short fiction.

Though Hughes claims that '[i]t had never occurred to [him] to try to write short stories before', he had published at least two stories in his high school newspaper, including "Seventy-five Dollars" and "Mary Winosky". His reference to 'the enforced compositions of college English' most likely refers to the set of stories he began around

³¹² Rampersad, Introduction to *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 15: The Short Stories*, ed. by R. Baxter Miller (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) p. 3.

³¹³ Hughes, *I Wonder*, pp. 213-214.

1926 at Lincoln University; here he enrolled on a course called “The Short Story” and planned six stories based upon his experiences as a seaman onboard a freighter traversing the West African coast in 1923.³¹⁴ Hughes only completed four stories on this theme: “The Young Glory of Him”, “Bodies in the Moonlight”, “The Little Virgin” and “Luani of the Jungles”. All were set aboard the *West Illana* (modelled upon the *West Hesseltime*, the ship he sailed on to Africa) and were published in 1927 and 1928 in little magazines *Messenger* and *Harlem*. These stories of frustrated young love and interracial sexual intrigue differ considerably in tone, content and seemingly in purpose from those Hughes composed in 1933 and 1934. Indeed, *The Ways of White Folks* is unique among Hughes’ short story collections. The later collections, *Laughing to Keep from Crying* (1952) and *Something in Common and Other Stories* (1963), contain neither the unity of vision nor the bitterness or tragedy of the 1934 collection.

The specific nature and tone of *The Ways of White Folks* stems in part from the fact that these stories were written in quick succession in a concentrated period in 1933 and 1934, but the collection also reflects the particularity of Lawrence’s late short fiction. The stories of *The Lovely Lady* are not typical of the modernist short story. Lawrence was notably excluded from Dominic Head’s 1992 study on this topic on the grounds that ‘[his] stories are predominantly conservative in structure and form’; Head cites in particular Lawrence’s move in later stories ‘towards fable’ as proof that ‘his work in the genre is distinct from the modernist short story proper’.³¹⁵ In recent years, such delineations of the ‘modernist short story proper’ have fallen out of fashion as the

³¹⁴ Rampersad, *The Life*, Vol. 1, p. 139.

³¹⁵ Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 34-35; More recently, Head has somewhat tempered his position on Lawrence’s short fiction. See Head, “The Short Story” in Harrison, *D. H. Lawrence in Context*, pp. 101-100.

primacy of high modernism has been challenged; critics like Ann-Marie Einhaus have increasingly emphasized that '[t]raditional and experimental fiction existed side by side, and the boundaries between the two are often blurred.'³¹⁶ Indeed, Lawrence's later short stories evade easy categorization, falling somewhere between the outmoded idea of the 'modernist short story proper' and the traditional 'tale'. The African American short story has similarly been characterised as a form in which seemingly disparate cultural traditions converge; Bone describes it as 'a child of mixed ancestry' in which '[t]wo cultural heritages meet and blend': 'the one Euro-American, literary, cosmopolitan; the other African-derived, oral in expressive mode, rooted in the folk community'.³¹⁷ Hughes' short stories, mirroring the composite form of Lawrence's late short fiction, indeed demonstrate an accommodation with both the literary tradition of the short story and oral aspects of the form.

In his earlier years, Keith Cushman observes, Lawrence (much like Hughes) had been influenced by the realist short fiction of Maxim Gorky and de Maupassant.³¹⁸ However, as Head remarks, Lawrence's later short stories are often more 'fabulistic' than realist; titles from "The Woman Who Rode Away" to "The Man Who Loved Islands" (the final story of *The Lovely Lady*) 'betray a dependence on the traditional materials of short narrative'.³¹⁹ Indeed, these striking titles, naming simply 'The Woman' and 'The Man' follow in the fabulistic tradition of such titles as Aesop's "The Boy Who Cried Wolf", while their content also mirrors the moralising purpose of the

³¹⁶ Ann-Marie Einhaus (ed.), "The short story in the early twentieth century" in *The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) pp. 101-114 (p. 112).

³¹⁷ Bone, pp. xv-xvi.

³¹⁸ Keith Cushman, "The Young Lawrence and the Short Story", *Modern British Literature* (1978) pp. 101-112.

³¹⁹ Head, p. 34.

fable. Lawrence was not unique in this respect; the short form itself seems to invite, as Mary Louise Pratt observes, ‘revivals and remains of oral, folk and biblical narrative traditions, like the fairy tale, the ghost story, parable, exemplum, fabliau, animal fable.’³²⁰ In “The Lovely Lady”, the quasi-supernatural use of a drain-pipe as a listening device mocks the ghost story genre, while in “The Rocking-Horse Winner” the supernatural nature of a young boy’s ability – aided by his rocking-horse – to predict horse-racing results, is integrated seamlessly into an otherwise realistic plot. These stories, like fables, parables or exemplums, also offer moral lessons; “The Rocking-Horse Winner” warns of the corrupting influence of money, while “The Lovely Lady” cautions against the destructive power of possessiveness and “The Man Who Loved Islands” teaches the folly of egocentrism and idealism.

Hughes’ stories in turn contain more than a hint of the moralising fable; several, including “Cora, Unashamed”, “Home” and “Father and Son” warn of the deadly consequences (for black *and* white Americans) of maintaining rigid racial boundaries, while “Poor Little Black Fellow” and “Slave on the Block” caution against the racist attitudes underpinning white Christian ‘niceness’ and outward admiration of black culture. These stories – combining elements of first-hand accounts from ‘some of the people in [Hughes’] own life’ and second-hand ‘tales [he] had heard from others’ and modelling the diverse nature of real-world American race relations – are both realistic and fabulistic, literal and allegorical. Such a suggestion invites parallels with the

³²⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, “The Short Story: The Long and Short of it”, *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994) pp. 91-113 (p. 108).

postcolonial short story and with Jameson's much-debated contention that '[a]ll third-world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical.'³²¹

As many critics have noted, the short story has long been represented prominently in colonial and postcolonial cultures. In Jameson's configuration, 'the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.'³²² Of course, it would be unwise to conflate third-world postcolonial cultural contexts with African American ones. In the context not of a third-world culture but of a literary movement led by a racial minority emerging in a first-world society, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of 'Minor Literature' seems pertinent. Recently, critics like Paul March-Russell have linked this theory to the postcolonial short story, noting how Deleuze and Guattari's focus upon fragmentation and 'bricolage: the generation of something new from working upon the remains of culture' allows them to be read in relation to both postcolonialism and the short story.³²³ These ideas apply equally well to the African American short story and to Hughes' stories in *The Ways of White Folks*.

According to Deleuze and Guattari's definition, '[a] minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.'³²⁴ The 'cramped space' of minor literature 'forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics', so that 'in it everything takes on a collective

³²¹ Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism", *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-88 (p. 69); On the debate over this article, see Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'", *Social Text*, No. 17 (Autumn, 1987) pp. 3-25. See also Jameson's recent commentary upon the 1986 article in *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso, 2019) pp. 187-215.

³²² Jameson, "Third-World Literature", p. 69.

³²³ Paul March-Russell, *The Short Story: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) p. 248.

³²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16.

value'.³²⁵ Here the figuratively 'cramped space' of minor literature reflects the literal shortness of the short story, while the immediate connection to politics and the 'collective value' assumed by minor literature echoes Jameson's third-world allegory theory. For Adrian Hunter, applying this model of minor literature to the short story is useful and illuminating because it facilitates 'a more creative way of thinking about deficit, curtailment, lacking' in which the shortness of short fiction may be considered positively, not as a "partial object" but a "total object, complete with missing parts".³²⁶ Indeed, Hunter explains that '[t]he interrogative story's "unfinished" economy, its failure literally to express, to extend itself to definition, [...] becomes, under the rubric of a theory of 'minor' literature, a positive aversion to the entailment of "power and law" that defines the "major" literature.'³²⁷

The brevity and the fragmentariness of the short story then amplify its radical potential; as a 'total object, complete with missing parts', it eludes a sense of completeness or finality inherent in the dominant form of the novel and instead leaves the reader to fill the gaps. Its fragmentary nature renders the short story especially well-suited to the needs of the modernist writer and to modernist concerns; for Hunter, '[i]n the way that it makes an aesthetic virtue out of social phenomena of fragmentation, dislocation and isolation', the short story aids in 'acclimatizing the subject to the experience of technological modernity.'³²⁸ In doing so, it 'mimics the very forces of estrangement it describes'.³²⁹ Just as the form of the postcolonial short story is seen

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

³²⁶ Adrian Hunter, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 140.

³²⁷ Ibid, p. 140.

³²⁸ Ibid, p. 47.

³²⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

to mirror the circumstances of the marginalised societies and individuals it depicts, the short story itself emulates the alienating conditions of modernity.

The malleable short story is in contrast to the novel; Julio Cortázar uses the analogy of the photograph and the motion picture to describe this difference. The photograph, like the short story, is ‘an apparent paradox: that of cutting off a fragment of reality, giving it certain limits, but in such a way that this segment acts like an explosion which fully opens a much more ample reality.’³³⁰ Conversely in the film, as in the novel, ‘a more ample and multifaceted reality is captured through the development of partial and accumulative elements.’³³¹ The explosive intensity of the short story here is contrasted with the gradual, accumulative nature of the novel. In successful short stories, Cortázar argues, ‘something explodes [...] while we read them, and it offers us a kind of break in daily routine’.³³²

Reading Lawrence’s collection, of course, really did induce a ‘break’ in Hughes’ ‘daily routine’. The explosive potential of the short story renders it capable of eliciting the ‘hair-raising’ or ‘spine-tingling’ reactions Hughes experienced and wished to replicate in his own writing. Lawrence’s title story in particular ends in an explosive manner. Pauline Attenborough’s decline and death is extremely sudden; in the space of hours she loses her youthful appearance and begins to look ‘old, very old, and like a witch’; she soon ‘shrivel[s] away’, dying only days later.³³³ Several stories in *The Ways of White Folks* end in an explosive fashion; the crescendo to “Father and Son”

³³⁰ Julio Cortázar, “Some Aspects of the Short Story” in May, p. 246.

³³¹ Ibid, p. 246.

³³² Ibid, p. 247.

³³³ Lawrence, *The Lovely Lady* (London: Secker, 1932) pp. 36, 37; Instead of the Cambridge edition, the edition used here is the same that Hughes would have read in Moscow in 1933, featuring the shortened version of “The Lovely Lady” Lawrence produced at Cynthia Asquith’s request for publication in *The Black Cap* (1928).

is figured as a detonation of racial tension: '[t]he chemicals of their two lives exploded'.³³⁴ "Home" also has a sudden, shocking ending. Here Hughes combines modernist techniques with elements of the cautionary tale to produce a story in which the lynching of a black man – unfortunately not an incredible or terribly unusual event in 1930s America – is made shocking and 'new'.

When Roy Williams – a talented violinist recently returned from Europe to his Missouri hometown – shakes hands with a white woman on the street, he is immediately targeted by a passing crowd. They 'objected to a Negro talking to a white woman – insulting a White Woman – attacking a WHITE woman – RAPING A WHITE WOMAN' (*WWF*, 47-48). The increasing capitalisation here mirrors the sudden and escalating madness as the crowd attack Roy. In a chilling yet poetic final image, Roy's naked, battered body is left to hang all night from a tree on the outskirts of town, 'like a violin for the wind to play' (*WWF*, 49). In this vision, in which Roy's body fuses with his instrument, Hughes conveys an incredibly pessimistic message about the value and power of art in the battle against racial oppression. The lofty ideals upheld by those Harlem Renaissance artists and intellectuals who, like McKay, believed that art and culture could transcend racial boundaries, seem wholly dismissed in this harrowing image. Hughes' depiction of the mob scene in which Roy meets his end – combined with the short story's inherent explosive capacity – disrupts and heightens the effect of what might otherwise be an unexceptional scene. Hughes' technical innovation here heightens both the tragedy of Roy's death and its potential to shock his audience. By 'making it new' – to paraphrase that best-known modernist mantra – Hughes provides the 'break in daily routine', the 'slit in the umbrella', laying bare the

³³⁴ Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (New York: Vintage, 1990) p. 242.

warped logic by which a black man ‘talking to a white woman’ becomes a black man ‘RAPING A WHITE WOMAN’.

Such technical innovation forms part of Hughes’ efforts to shock his readers: to expose truths in an affecting, unexpected manner in the fashion of Lawrence’s late stories. It is not only the composite, malleable short story form that Hughes adapts from Lawrence in a bid to produce stories as affecting and explosive as those of *The Lovely Lady*. There are also significant parallels in terms of style, tone and authorial voice between these collections. Both authors employ a blunt, sardonic narrative voice and eschew authorial effacement. In “The Lovely Lady”, the narrator’s allegiances are clearly with Robert and Ciss and against Pauline: ‘But *what a devil of a woman!*’ (*LL*, 23). In “Slave on the Block” and “Rejuvenation Through Joy”, Hughes’ narrators mercilessly satirise the white modernist penchant for the primitive, parodying and mocking white admirers of black culture: those ‘who [go] in for Negroes’ (*WWF*, 19).

The narrator of “Rejuvenation Through Joy” – among the most satirical stories in the collection – is particularly sardonic and intrusive. In this story, instead of encountering Eugene Lesche, the phoney leader of the ‘Colony of Joy’, through the eyes of his adoring followers, we observe him through the skeptical eyes of the omniscient narrator: ‘Unfortunately, we did not hear Lesche’s lecture on “Negroes and Joy” [...] but he said, in substance, that Negroes were the happiest people on earth’ (*WWF*, 73). Lawrence’s narrators offer similarly glib insights; in “Things”, the narratorial voice continually mocks the pretensions of an idealistic, hypocritical New England couple who proclaim their indifference to material goods and their love of ‘Indian thought’, but finally succumb entirely to their thirst for material ‘things’ and the ‘cage’ it represents: ‘He was in the cage: but it was safe inside’ (*LL*, 177). The idealistic

yet insincere couple in “Things” are a potential model for the Carraways: the white admirers of black culture of “Slave on the Block”. The Carraways hire a young black man named Luther as a gardener, but it becomes clear that they see him primarily as an art object, a sexual fantasy and an artefact of ‘primitive’ black culture: “‘He is the jungle,’ said Anne when she saw him’ (*WWF*, 21). Like Lawrence’s materialistic couple, whose commitment to art and Eastern philosophy is revealed to be superficial and disingenuous, the Carraways’ love of African American culture (they are, of course, fans of Bessie Smith and Countee Cullen) is exposed as merely a façade.

Hughes and Lawrence are both intent upon unveiling the true nature of their subjects, whether hypocritical collectors of ‘things’ or domineering white patrons (or both). In these stories, they seek to puncture the known or current state of things in order to shock their readers into new realisations. The satiric voice of *The Ways of White Folks* is a linguistic expression of the realisation that the whole, coherent world that the nation purports to represent and underpin – like the painted underside of Lawrence’s umbrella – cannot exist in tandem with a world in which African Americans are considered second-class citizens, disowned and killed for the simple fact of their race. By revealing the true nature of life for these black and white characters, Hughes’ satiric voice – like Lawrence’s poet – offers a ‘glimpse of chaos’ which disrupts, subverts and exposes those dominant, distorted narratives undergirding the idea of the nation as a whole and healthy entity, of gender relations as fixed and fine, of the American family as a symbol of health and wholesomeness.

The inherently fragmentary nature of the short story then combines with a biting, satirical tone to produce a collection that is disruptive on multiple levels. For Hughes, the curtailed and inchoate short story offers an appropriate mode to communicate the African American experience as one also marked by disruption and dislocation. The

pliable and fragmented (yet complete) nature of the short story renders it an ideal vehicle for his satirical sketches: fragments which come together in *The Ways of White Folks* to construct a powerful, panoramic portrait of American race relations. As in McKay's Lawrence-inspired plotless novels, form and tone mirror content in Hughes' short stories; by portraying the disrupted and disruptive lives of these characters and the estrangement, violence and prejudice they encounter, Hughes cuts his slit in the umbrella of American race consciousness and lays bare the truly chaotic, disjointed nature of the African American experience.

Female Power and Self-Possession: “The Lovely Lady” and “Cora Unashamed”

In several stories in *The Ways of White Folks*, including “Home” and “Poor Little Black Fellow” – in which a cultural trip to Paris produces a racial awakening in a young black man – the international is presented as a means of countering white hegemony and American nationalism (though the consequences, as in “Home”, are sometimes tragic). Women also frequently act as agents of change and rebellion against racial oppression in this collection. Their function – mirroring Hughes' own – is to expose and disrupt the processes of this oppression: to unmask ‘the ways of white folks’. The centrality of black female characters differs considerably from much of Hughes' poetry of the 1930s, which – as Smethurst notes – is ‘almost always explicitly or implicitly in

a male voice and often addressed directly to a male listener'.³³⁵ The focus upon women as agents for change and racial liberation is also in contrast with the largely male-dominated New Negro movement.³³⁶ Though the Harlem Renaissance, as Wall affirms, was not 'a male phenomenon', it was very often – as in Locke's 1925 introduction to *The New Negro* – coded as masculine and characterised by masculinist rhetoric.³³⁷ Hughes' positing of the key role of black women then involves both a reconfiguring of the ways in which Harlem Renaissance leaders had characterised the new face of black America and a shift in the gendering of Hughes' own political and artistic schema.

The impetus behind this shift, I argue here, is rooted both in the liberated women Hughes met and wrote about in Soviet Central Asia and in the possessive, controlling older women he encountered in *The Lovely Lady*. Both examples offered Hughes a model of disruptive female power capable of challenging the dominant national and racial narratives he sought to contest. In Lawrence, 'strange *female* power' (*LL*, 92) is portrayed almost wholly negatively; it dominates and sucks life from its targets, while in the Soviet essays female empowerment is a source of joy and wonder for Hughes. In *The Ways of White Folks*, female power is presented alternately as a negative and smothering element (in domineering white patrons and callous, controlling white mothers) and as a potential key to racial liberation (in Hughes' disruptive, brave African American women). Hughes' black female

³³⁵ Smethurst, *The New Red Negro*, p. 57.

³³⁶ On black masculinity in the Harlem Renaissance, see Marlon B. Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004) and Anna Pochmara, *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

³³⁷ Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) p. 9.

characters, as the intermediaries between two worlds – the servants in white households and the mothers of mixed-race children – expose the hypocrisy of both and suggest means by which racial and social barriers might be overcome. Female power here is bound up in issues of self-possession and self-sovereignty. Where Baldwin argues that Lawrence's possessive women and Soviet ideologies around the 'reordination of selfhood' led Hughes to pursue something other than 'proper self-consciousness' or 'integrated selfhood' and instead promote a politics of 'self-dispossession', I contend that Hughes' Soviet essays and writings of this period demonstrate that he continued to employ the language of self-ownership and to prize the idea of self-possession as a key tenet of liberation.³³⁸ Here Hughes associates the literal unveiling of women – closely associated with post-Revolution developments which offered women greater personal and political freedom – with the project of racial liberation and a reformulation of the Du Boisian veil.

In his Soviet essays and journals, Hughes writes passionately on the transformative effects of Revolution upon the female experience in Central Asia. The 'liberation of the women', he writes in "Farewell to Mahomet", is one of the great epics of Soviet Asia'.³³⁹ In his journals, as well as noting details including working hours, holiday provision and trade union membership at the factories he visits, Hughes is consistent in his special interest in the female workers, demonstrating that the attitudes he displayed in published articles were likely not merely propagandistic. In Turkmenia, Hughes delights at a peasant woman reading on the edge of the cotton field; for him this is '[s]omething to unfurl red banners over! Something to shout in the face of the

³³⁸ Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*, p. 116; Baldwin, "The Russian Connection", p. 223.

³³⁹ Hughes, "Farewell to Mahomet", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 135.

capitalist world's colonial oppressor'.³⁴⁰ Here he hears stories of the time before the Revolution, 'when women were purchased for sheep or camels or gold'.³⁴¹ Hughes also relates the pre-Revolution practice whereby emirs and other wealthy or powerful men would keep harems of sometimes hundreds of women. The Emir of Bukhara, Hughes notes, had two or three hundred wives, though under Islam only four were considered official. The rest were locked away, fed meagrely and prevented from becoming literate. One such woman Hughes met, Zevar Razik, was part of the Emir's harem for five years until she was gifted to an elderly minister in 1917. The Revolution begun in Moscow took years to reach Bukhara, but with its arrival in the early 1920s, Hughes explains, Razik was set free. Able to gain an education, he writes, '[s]he got a job. She no longer hid her face from the world. She belonged to herself. She was free to do as she chose'.³⁴² In evoking this idea of belonging to oneself, Hughes was perhaps reflecting upon both the history and the contemporary situation of African Americans. He may well have marvelled at the swiftness with which women's lives had changed under the Soviet Union, while at home developments in race relations seemed to happen slowly and laboriously.

That Razik's freedom and self-possession seem contingent upon the fact that '[s]he no longer hid her face from the world' is indicative of the importance Hughes places upon unveiling in the Soviet essays. Here we see the genesis of his revision of the Du Boisian veil, this pervasive symbol of the colour line. The removal of the veil, or *paranja*, is central to Hughes' depiction of female liberation in these essays; he refers repeatedly to unveiling when recalling his meetings with women in Central Asia.

³⁴⁰ Hughes, *A Negro Looks*, p. 79.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 80.

³⁴² Hughes, "In an Emir's Harem", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 109.

The woman who most captivated Hughes on his travels was Tamara Khanum: the first woman to perform unveiled on a public stage. In “Tamara Khanum: Soviet Asia’s Greatest Dancer”, he posits Khanum as an emblem of recent societal change: ‘prior to the revolution, women were kept locked in harems and were never seen without the *paranja*, a long black veil from head to foot. Khanum’s appearance on the stage, unveiled and unashamed, marks the opening of the Uzbek theatre to women artists’.³⁴³ The word ‘unashamed’ here immediately links Khanum to Cora: the first and perhaps most powerful heroine of *The Ways of White Folks* who is also depicted as (metaphorically) unveiled.

Unveilings are closely linked to racial liberation for Hughes; his essays connect pre-Revolution gender segregation to racial segregation; Hughes’ association of unveiling with freedom is rooted in a desire to reformulate the Du Boisian veil. As Howard Winant argues, Du Bois’ concept of the veil is often understood in overly simplistic terms; in his later writings the veil in fact ‘represents both barrier and connection between white and black’ and is best imagined as ‘a filmy fabric, a soft and semi-transparent border-marker, that both keeps the races apart and mediates between them’.³⁴⁴ The veil, then, is both limiting and protective; it denotes both oppression and self-determination, facilitating separation as well as connection. Unveiling here is also an act of exposure: the artist’s act of revelation. The emancipation of Hughes’ black female characters in *The Ways of White Folks* – their ‘unveilings’ and rejections of Du Boisian double consciousness – thus provide both a

³⁴³ Hughes, “Tamara Khanum: Soviet Asia’s Greatest Dancer”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 124.

³⁴⁴ Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) p. 26.

Soviet-inspired model of racial liberation in America and an enactment of Hughes' desire to reveal what lies beneath.

Witnessing how the lives of cotton-pickers, women and the poorer populations had changed – and to his mind greatly improved following the Revolution – Hughes was compelled to wonder how a similar social shift at home might drastically alter the lot of African Americans. Having reflected upon the transforming status of women in Central Asia, in Lawrence's stories Hughes encountered powerful females who, like Razik, belong to themselves. Themes of self-possession and self-determination would have captured Hughes' attention as historical issues for both Russian peasants and African Americans. The overbearing, possessive, almost cannibalistic mother of "The Lovely Lady" seems far from the kind, nurturing, maternal Cora of "Cora, Unashamed". Yet, I argue, Pauline and Cora can be linked in several significant ways through the Soviet women who so captivated Hughes.

"The Lovely Lady" was originally written by Lawrence for publication in a murder mystery anthology being compiled by his friend Cynthia Asquith. She asked him to write something for this purpose in late 1926. Having been initially less than enthusiastic at the prospect, in February 1927 Lawrence sent her a first draft of "The Lovely Lady", which Asquith found far too lengthy.³⁴⁵ At her request, he reduced the text by more than a third. With Lawrence's revisions, the titular character was rendered even more inhuman than in the original. This story – like much of his late short fiction – is concerned with ageing and evidences the particular hostility towards elderly women that Lawrence exhibited in his final years. Lawrence may have been

³⁴⁵ Lawrence wrote to his sister, Emily King, on 25th January 1927 to complain of Asquith's request: 'Cynthia Asquith wants me to do a murder story – she wants to bring out a murder book. Bad to worse! I don't feel very murderous either', *Letters*, Vol. 5, p. 636.

thinking particularly of elderly female relatives – including his mother-in-law, Anna von Richthofen – when conceiving of the domineering older women of *The Lovely Lady*. In a 1929 letter, Lawrence declares: ‘Truly old and elderly women are ghastly, eating up all life with hoggish greed, to keep themselves alive. They don’t mind who else dies. I know my mother-in-law would secretly gloat, if I died at 43 and she lived on at 78.’³⁴⁶

The final published text of “The Lovely Lady”, which so struck Hughes, tells the story of Pauline and her demise. Undermining the traditional mechanisms of a murder story, in “The Lovely Lady” any murder is emotional rather than physical. Pauline is described as ‘a wonderfully preserved woman’ because ‘[a]t seventy-two, [she] could still sometimes be mistaken, in the half light, for thirty’ (*LL*, 11). She lives with her adult son, Robert, and niece, Ciss. Lacking a lover in later life, Pauline treats her own sons (the elder son, Henry, died of an undisclosed sudden illness) as replacement lovers. Thus, she captivates Robert’s attention in the evenings, thwarting her niece’s romantic intentions. The story is told from the point of view of Ciss; Lawrence’s narrator holds the lovely lady culpable of Henry’s murder through her extreme possessiveness. Henry had been in love with a beautiful actress, but his mother had so ‘despised him for the attachment’ that ‘the poison had gone to his brain and killed him’ (*LL*, 23). Ciss suspects that her aunt is attempting the same awful deed with Robert: ‘It was clear murder: a mother murdering her sensitive sons, who were fascinated by her: the Circe!’ (*LL*, 23). It becomes clear that Pauline gains her

³⁴⁶ Lawrence, Letter to Giuseppe Orioli, 2 August 1929, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 7, ed. by Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 400; Lawrence and his mother-in-law in fact both died in 1930: he at the age of 44 and she at 78.

youthfulness by absorbing the vitality of those around her; she feeds in an almost cannibalistic manner upon her children.

It was in the mysteriously youthful face of this extremely possessive woman that Hughes recognised his former patron. He had entered into a formal agreement with Mason in November 1927, by which she agreed to give him \$150 per month; Hughes' work would remain his own, but she was to be consulted on all important aspects of it. Mason's patronage allowed Hughes to live a relatively privileged life and Hughes was genuinely fond of his 'Godmother'. Yet eventually, as Rampersad notes, '[t]he need to write, to perform for Mrs Mason, began to tax Hughes; he was both contented and oppressed. [...] Godmother wanted Langston to put out, but her intensity often made him weak and tense.'³⁴⁷ Just as Pauline sucks the youth and energy from her young companions and absorbs their identities within hers, so Mason suffocated Hughes, sapping him of energy and artistic zeal and restricting his autonomy. His break from Mason in 1930 was extremely painful; he was physically drained by her loss. That Hughes had only recently escaped Mason's control (and that this experience had clearly affected him deeply) perhaps explains his strong reaction to the liberated women he encountered in Soviet Central Asia. He, too, had been denied his freedom and made to feel that he did not 'belong' to himself as part of his patron's 'harem' of black artists.

In reading "The Lovely Lady", then, Hughes may have identified with Robert, the meek, emasculated son too captivated by his mother to recognise the sinister nature of their relationship. Robert is only finally liberated and emboldened upon his mother's death. Ciss, having heard her aunt talking to herself through a drain-pipe,

³⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 167.

conspires to trick Pauline into thinking that she has heard Henry's ghost accuse her of causing his death. Almost immediately upon believing she has been condemned by her late son, her youthful vitality vanishes; she begins to look 'old, very old and like a witch' (LL, 36). As Pauline shrivels and nears death, Robert can only say of his mother that "She was beautiful, and she fed on life" (LL, 40). In "The Lovely Lady", then, as in Hughes' experience with Mason and his recent musings upon female selfhood in the Soviet Union and black self-determination in the United States, concerns with self-possession and autonomy loom large.

Issues of self-sovereignty were certainly at stake in the Soviet Union, where the value of the collective outweighed that of the individual and the social always came before the personal. Baldwin's contention that Hughes posits 'self-dispossession' rather than self-possession as a natural counter to 'the residual slave-owning structures underlying US attitudes toward property and likewise citizenship' would certainly tie with the other aspects of Soviet ideology that he appears to have embraced.³⁴⁸ The idea of Hughes abandoning self-ownership as a goal, adopting the selfless collectivism of the 'new Soviet person' and undermining liberal notions of self-ownership as essential to subjecthood (thus subverting the whole system in which African Americans were once considered property) is in many ways compelling. Yet it is not supported in *The Ways of White Folks* or in Hughes' Soviet essays. Indeed, Baldwin seems to overlook entirely Hughes' clear celebration of those women, like Razik and Khanum, who were once bought and sold like cattle but who finally 'belong' to themselves following the Revolution. The language of self-ownership here is unmistakable.

³⁴⁸ Baldwin, "The Russian Connection", p. 223.

For Hughes, the desire for self-possession and self-determination that he had earlier expressed in stirring terms in “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” – the yearning to be ‘free within ourselves’ – remains central. What appealed to Hughes about the model of selfhood he encountered in the Soviet Union was its radical divergence from both the (white) American model of the self (requiring the racial other for self-definition) *and* Du Boisian double consciousness. I agree with Baldwin, then, that in these stories Hughes seeks to posit an altered notion of selfhood independent of established white standards. Lawrence’s concerns with consuming, cannibalistic feminine power and sexuality thus emerge in a very different form in Hughes’ collection. Yet the model of selfhood Hughes puts forward is closer to an existentialist resolution to exist in one’s own fashion and to be one’s own self – irrespective of the events or conditions of one’s life – than to ‘self-dispossession’. What Hughes seeks is a self capable of transcending the conditions which produced it: a self uninhibited by the Du Boisian veil and the burden of double consciousness. By placing a black woman at the centre of the opening story of his 1934 collection, Hughes puts forward this alternative, liberating model of selfhood.

The title character in “Cora, Unashamed” is a member of the only black family in the small, charmless town of Melton; she works as a servant under a white family. The story was inspired in part by Hughes’ reminiscence of an anecdote recounted to him by his friend, Loren Miller, and relayed in *I Wonder as I Wander*:

He said that in one of the small towns in Kansas where he had lived during his childhood, there had been a very pretty colored girl who, as she grew up, attracted the amorous eye of the town’s only Negro doctor, the town’s only Negro undertaker, and the town’s Negro minister. All three of these men enjoyed her favors. The girl became pregnant. But by whom? At any rate, the doctor performed the abortion on her and she died. The undertaker who had courted her took charge of her body. The minister preached her funeral. Since all the colored people of the town knew that each of these men had been intimate with the girl, they wondered what

would happen at her funeral. All three men were present, but nothing happened. She was just buried.³⁴⁹

In Hughes' story, the black girl becomes the daughter of a white, middle-class family who becomes pregnant by a Greek boy. Jessie also has an abortion and dies, forced by her mother to avoid the shame and scandal of not only being an unmarried mother, but of being forever tied to a lower-class foreigner. At the centre of this story is self-sacrificing Cora. Cora's own child dies of whooping cough in infancy, but she acts as a mother to Jessie, the least favoured Studevant child.

Cora is aligned with the brave, liberated women of Hughes' Soviet writings. At the story's opening, she is presented as an individual dispossessed in social and economic terms: 'The Studevants thought they owned her, and they were perfectly right: they did' (*WWF*, 4). She is kept 'in their power practically all her life' by 'the trap of economic circumstance' (*WWF*, 4). Though effectively 'owned' by the Studevants for much of her life, Cora is decidedly independent in her thinking and cares little for what the white inhabitants of Melton think of her or her illegitimate, mixed-race child. The whites, she feels, are 'in another world' (*WWF*, 7). Thus, though she may be 'owned' in economic terms, her selfhood eludes the white characters who presume to possess her; their unknowing existence 'in another world' precludes Cora's true 'self-dispossession'.

Female sexuality in this story signifies radical disruption in both narrative and social terms. Cora, like Jessie, had also become pregnant by a 'foreigner', a white man 'of that other world' (*WWF*, 7). Her lover Joe is described as 'an I.W.W.', but 'Cora didn't care' (*WWF*, 6). As a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, Joe

³⁴⁹ Hughes, *I Wonder*, p. 214.

embodies a radical, socialist impulse and Cora's child, whom she names Josephine after her father, represents 'a living bridge between two worlds' (*WWF*, 7). Cora and Jessie, as women who transgress sexually in their relationships with 'foreign' men, become agents for disruption and change. Where Pauline's strange, possessive sexual power drained Robert of his vitality, in "Cora, Unashamed" female sexuality is figured as a means by which racial and class divides might be overcome. Jessie's mother, Mrs Studevant, then represents the other side of Hughes' reinterpretation of Lawrence's powerful women; in her need to take control of Jessie's life and body, she mirrors the lovely lady's poisonous maternal domination.

Jessie, like Robert, is a sensitive child crushed by the weight of possessive parental will. Cora's function here – mirroring Hughes' – is to expose and disrupt this process: to unmask 'the ways of white folks'. Hughes is also necessarily engaged in the task of revealing the ways of his black characters. He was not the first to assume this role; the 1912 preface to James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* claims that '[i]n these pages it is as though a veil has been drawn aside: the reader is given a view of the inner life of the Negro in America'.³⁵⁰ In the image of the 'veil [...] drawn aside', Johnson references the Du Boisian 'veil', which Cora and Hughes are also intent upon displacing. Subverting the Du Boisian formulation in which the 'veil' affects only black subjects, Cora ('unashamed' and 'unveiled') reveals the ways in which these white characters are also subject to the limiting strictures of the veil. Unlike Du Bois, she does not view herself 'through the revelation of another world' as some distorted image of herself.³⁵¹ Disregarding outside judgement, Cora

³⁵⁰ James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (New York: Dover, 1995) p. vii.

³⁵¹ Du Bois, *Souls*, p. 2.

sees her own pregnancy, like Jessie's, as a natural and beautiful occurrence; she cannot feel it a 'disgrace' (*WWF*, 7).

Jessie's mother, however, for fear of social stigma and scandal, takes Jessie away to Kansas City, where she forces her to abort the child. Their absence is publicly explained as 'an Easter shopping trip' and Jessie's subsequent sickliness is masked as 'an awful attack of indigestion' (*WWF*, 13-14). Through Cora, Hughes demonstrates that by concealing truths and so forcefully insisting upon racial and class difference and separation, 'white folks' also become victims of the veil; Jessie's death results from her mother's disgust at her lover's racial and social difference. The most striking example of Cora's unveiling of white hypocrisy takes place at Jessie's funeral. While silence was kept at the funeral of the real girl, at Jessie's funeral, Cora does speak up:

"They killed you! [...] They preaches you a pretty sermon and they don't say nothin'. But Cora's here, honey, and she's gone tell 'em what they done to you. She's gonna tell 'em why they took you to Kansas City." (*WWF*, 16-17)

The 'pretty sermon' is to Cora simply a façade concealing the truth behind Jessie's unnecessary death and an exemplification of the veil enacted by white middle-class femininity. This scene mirrors an event relayed in Hughes' essay, "The Soviet Theater in Central Asia"; here the funeral of Nurhan, a dancer killed by her parents for having appeared unveiled onstage, is 'made the occasion for a stirring appeal to all women to take off their veils, to refuse to remain in harems or to submit to slavelike customs of the past'.³⁵² In "Cora, Unashamed", Hughes intimates that these white characters' obsessions with keeping up appearances may be just as harmful and enslaving as the

³⁵² Hughes, "The Soviet Theater in Central Asia", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, p. 119.

Du Boisian veil or the historic repression of women in Soviet Central Asia. Cora's stand against the Studevants is also a rallying cry: an appeal imploring Americans to cast off the veil, to refuse to remain trapped in the Jim Crow law of the present and the remnants of slave-owning structures from the past.

These ideas linking female emancipation and racial liberation are clearly rooted in Hughes' Soviet essays. Khanum – the dancer who so impressed Hughes – is 'unveiled and unashamed' like Cora. For Hughes, she represents 'a living symbol of that new freedom that has come to the women of Soviet Asia'.³⁵³ She is also an agent of real social change:

After seeing her dance, some have been known to go home and definitely throw their veils forever into the fire, in spite of conservative and dangerous men-folk about the house. This dancer of Soviet Asia [...] illustrates very clearly what Soviet critics continually speak of – art that is also a social force, that changes lives, that makes it better.³⁵⁴

Cora's courage, unlike Khanum's, does not enact such far-reaching change. After her outburst at the funeral, she leaves the Studevants for an even more marginal existence on the fringes of town with her 'Ma' and 'Pa'. Nevertheless, 'on the edge of Melton,' they 'somehow manage to get along' (*WWF*, 18); Cora may be marginalised at the story's close, but she has also been emancipated by her unveilings. In Hughes' description of Khanum's wider significance, he also indicates Cora's role and his own artistic aims and purposes.

In "The Soviet Theater in Central Asia", Hughes quotes his Uzbek host, playwright Umarjan Ismailov, who explained the vital purposes of theatre in post-

³⁵³ Hughes, "Tamara Khanum", p. 127.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 127.

Revolution Central Asia: 'We must use the theater to teach our people how terrible and dangerous the beys and the priests and the Cossacks were in the past, and how beautiful life can be in the future when all workers get together'.³⁵⁵ In *The Ways of White Folks*, Hughes' purpose is surely almost exactly this: to showcase the dark, destructive nature of American race relations and to offer an alternative. In his depiction of the racialized but unveiled, unashamed female, Hughes posits a model by which American society and racial politics might be transformed. Just as Khanum's example was instrumental in breaking down 'old taboos', Hughes recognises in his female figure a radical and powerful – for marginal and liminal – potential which eludes both black masculinity and white femininity.

By positioning female emancipation as central to racial liberation, Hughes effectively undermines the tendency to associate femininity with whiteness and consequently to equate the failings of the Harlem Renaissance with a loss of masculinity. As Emily Bernard observes, '[v]irtually all crises in African American culture have been historically portrayed as crises in black heterosexual male authority'.³⁵⁶ Hughes himself emerges as an important case study around which 'the intersection of anxieties about black male heroism and homosexuality finds an important expression'; his 'status as a cultural hero, historically and presently, depends upon a public "whitewashing" of both 'his presumed homosexuality, and the degree and quality of his involvement with whites'.³⁵⁷ Somewhat ironically, then, it was through engagement with Lawrence's work that Hughes recognised the radical

³⁵⁵ Hughes, "The Soviet Theater", p. 121.

³⁵⁶ Emily Bernard, "A Familiar Strangeness: The Spectre of Whiteness in the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement", *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, ed. by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006) pp. 255-272 (p. 264).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 265.

potential inherent in black femininity that the New Negro movement had largely failed to recognise.

Mothers and Daughters, Fathers and Sons: Defamiliarizing the Family

Story titles in both of these collections betray their authors' preoccupations with the familial; Hughes' "Mother and Child" and "Father and Son" in particular mirror Lawrence's "Mother and Daughter". Indeed, many stories in these collections are concerned with parent-child interactions and often with unusual or damaged familial relationships. Lawrence and Hughes portray strange, unwholesome parent-child relations in particular. "The Lovely Lady" features the pernicious and somewhat incestuous relationship between Pauline and her son Robert; during their evenings together they experience 'the lovely glowing intimacy of the evening, between mother and son' (*LL*, 17). Similarly, in "Mother and Daughter" the title characters live 'more like a married couple' (*LL*, 91). These relationships that blur the line between parental and conjugal reflect Lawrence's bond with his own mother; in late 1910, days before her death, Lawrence said of their relationship: 'We have loved each other, almost with a husband and wife love, as well as filial and maternal.'³⁵⁸

Hughes' relationships with mother-figures were equally complex. Berry notes that much of his early life was spent 'under matriarchal influence'; he lived primarily with his grandmother until her death when he was twelve years old, his mother Carrie

³⁵⁸ Lawrence, Letter to Rachel Annand Taylor, 3 December 1910, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 190.

being frequently absent.³⁵⁹ As an adult, Berry explains, 'he maintained a latent dependency on a mother-figure'.³⁶⁰ Mason was undoubtedly one of these figures; though old enough to be his grandmother, she fulfilled a caring, motherly role that Carrie often had not. The resilient black mothers of *The Ways of White Folks* seem indicative of Hughes' desire to move further from his dependence upon his white patron, yet they also represent his continued attachment to the idea of a wholesome, self-sacrificing mother figure (something his own mother had rarely been).

In line with Soviet critiques of the family in Capitalist society as 'above all, a property-owning unit', Lawrence often portrays unsavoury familial relations as symptomatic of bourgeois society and its obsession with money. Such attacks on middle-class values are primarily levelled at female characters. "The Rocking-Horse Winner" depicts a mother unable to love her children, but obsessed with money, so much so that the very house is said to be haunted with cries of: 'There must be more money! There must be more money!' (*LL*, 64). In this story, a young boy seeks to raise funds to please his money-hungry mother by betting on horses. Hamalian claims that Hughes might have recognised something of his own early life in this disturbing tale; his own father, whom he disliked intensely, had been 'interested only in making money'.³⁶¹

The disturbing nature of "The Lovely Lady", "Mother and Daughter" and "The Rocking-Horse Winner" is in large part due to the strange manner in which, as Ronald P. Draper notes, 'the natural flow from mother *to* child is perverted into an absorbing of life by the mother *from* the child.'³⁶² Pauline and Rachel suck energy from their

³⁵⁹ Berry, p. 6.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

³⁶¹ Hamalian, "Black Writers", p. 588; Hughes, *The Big Sea*, p. 55.

³⁶² Ronald P. Draper, *D. H. Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1976) p. 141.

children and enjoy quasi-romantic relationships with them, while the all-consuming greed of Paul's mother leaves her "eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad" (LL, 87). The mother's traditional role as self-sacrificing nurturer and protector is entirely overturned by Lawrence, effectively 'defamiliarizing' the mother figure in these unsettling tales. In Hughes, conversely, the black mother figures depicted are generally caring and loving towards their children, and even, as in Cora's case, the children of others. Here the unusual or unhealthy familial situations are shown to be a product of racial barriers which disallow or complicate mixed-race relationships and families. The children – the products of these biracial relationships – are often consequently abandoned, disowned or even killed.

The figure of the child looms large in both collections. Eight of Hughes' fourteen stories feature children prominently. He uses children to reveal the condescension and ignorance of his white characters and to shock the reader into new realisations. Susan Neal Mayberry indeed argues that Hughes often takes on the role of the *eirōn* in these stories: a stock character of ancient Greek comedy who plays the innocent and feigns child-like naivety in order to elicit from other characters 'the shock of recognised truth that usually only the child can evoke'.³⁶³ Like Lawrence's poet, who reveals the chaos beyond the painted umbrella, the child-like voice of the *eirōn* questions what society has normalised, presenting it in unfamiliar terms and thus 'shocking' the reader into recognition.

In Lawrence, too, the child carries special significance. Paul is the most important child character of *The Lovely Lady*. Much like Hughes' ironic narrative voice, his innocent questioning reveals the hard-hearted mother's twisted logic and

³⁶³ Susan Neal Mayberry, "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Children and Narrative Voices in Hughes' *The Ways of White Folks*", *Griot*, Vol. 14, (Fall 1995) pp. 48-58 (p. 49).

materialist outlook: “If you’re lucky you have money. That’s why it’s better to be born lucky than rich” (*LL*, 66). To combat his father’s perceived unluckiness with money, Paul takes on the role of the adult and sets about raising funds for his mother. His father, emasculated by his inability to provide enough money for the family, is almost entirely absent in the story. In “*Fantasia of the Unconscious*” Lawrence explains that:

The child exists in the interplay of two great life-waves, the womanly and the male. In appearance, the mother is everything. In truth, the father has actively very little part. It does not matter much if he hardly sees the child. Yet see it he should, sometimes, and touch it sometimes, and renew with it the connection, the life-circuit, not allow it to lapse, and so vitally starve his child.³⁶⁴

Young Paul seems helplessly caught in the ‘interplay’ between these two less than perfect parents. In this story the unnatural mother-child relationship is troubling, but the shadowy, deficient figure of Paul’s unlucky father is equally unsettling. Paul dies, apparently doubly ‘vitally starve[d]’ of love from his mother and seemingly of any attention from his father.

Draper classifies the Lawrence stories discussed above as “‘mother’ tales’, but they are equally marked by the absence of fathers.³⁶⁵ Indeed, both collections depict several absent father figures; “*Cora, Unashamed*”, “*Red-Headed Baby*” and “*One Christmas Eve*” all feature children whose fathers are not present. Though fathers in these stories may be physically absent, in “*The Lovely Lady*” and “*Mother and Daughter*” there is evidence of a common motif describing the spiritual return or resurrection of the father in the child. As Reeve notes, in both Robert and Virginia, the daughter of “*Mother and Daughter*”, the spirit of the father appears to trigger ‘the

³⁶⁴ Lawrence, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious* ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 78.

³⁶⁵ Draper, p. 141.

dispelling of female power in the moment when the father's lineaments become unmistakably visible in the child's body' and the 'posthumous revenge of the father over the mother, triumphantly claiming the child as his own and liberating it from the mother's control.'³⁶⁶ In "The Lovely Lady", the eventual revelation of Robert's true father – an Italian priest with whom Pauline conducted a secret affair – is foreshadowed throughout the story. Robert's face is said to be 'sometimes suggestive of an Italian priest' (*LL*, 14), and during their evenings' entertainments mother and son are said to resemble 'a priest with a young girl pupil' (*LL*, 17). With the help of Ciss, Robert seems finally able to combat his devouring mother and pursue a more natural romantic relationship with a woman of a more suitable age (who is finally revealed to be no biological relation to him).

In "Mother and Daughter", Rachel sees in Virginia 'the continuation of [her] own self' and her '*alter ego*, her other self' (*LL*, 110). However, 'it was a half-truth':

Virginia had had a father. [...] Robert Bodoïn had been fully and deservedly knocked on the head by Rachel's hammer. Could anything, then, be more disgusting than that he should resurrect again in the person of Mrs Bodoïn's own daughter, her own *alter ego* Virginia, and start hitting back with a little spiteful hammer. (*LL*, 110-111)

There is a sense here of karmic retribution, of the tables turning and the hammer-wielding Rachel finally becoming the victim of her own methods. However, the daughter's 'little spiteful hammer' seems almost comical when compared with the earlier description of her mother's 'devastating' and 'merciless' humour, 'a ruthless hammer' which 'pounded [people] to nothing' (*LL*, 104).

³⁶⁶ Reeve, p. 121.

In the final bitter exchange between mother and daughter, both deny any resemblance between them; Rachel quips that her daughter is “just the harem type”, to which Virginia replies: “But I wonder where I got it? Not from you, mother” (*LL*, 126). Reeve detects in much of Lawrence’s later fiction ‘a newly anxious sense of the kind of leasehold one seems to have on one’s identity, once the body has started to show, in feature and gesture, the unmistakable marks of its heredity, and appears in momentary glimpses to be simultaneously one’s own and someone else’s.’³⁶⁷ In this last encounter, then, both women attempt to reclaim their own unique identity, denying the undoubted and unsettling power of heredity which renders them ‘stranger and replica in the same moment’.³⁶⁸

In a similar way, in “Father and Son”, Hughes intimates that although the white plantation owner Colonel Norwood does not consider his mixed-race son Bert to be ‘his real son’ (*WWF*, 207), he recognises aspects himself in the boy. Bert is ‘the most beautiful of the lot, [...] favouring too much the Colonel in looks and ways’ (*WWF*, 208). He is also the lightest of Norwood’s children with his black servant, Coralee; his skin is ‘a sort of ivory white. And as a small child, his hair had been straight and brown, his eyes grey, like Norwood’s’ (*WWF*, 221). That the boy resembles his white father ‘too much’: that he is ‘too smart’ and that he ‘had never learned his place’ (*WWF*, 210) is the root of the tragic end for father and son. Bert’s efforts at ‘familiarity’ with his father are deemed too taboo; on his return home he holds out his hand to greet Norwood, but this simple gesture signals trouble to the Colonel and to all around Bert. Such small gestures, Hughes implies, produce extreme reactions:

Oh, test tube of life! Crucible of the South, find the right powder and you’ll never be the same again – the cotton will blaze and the cabins will burn and

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. x.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 138.

the chains will be broken and men, all of a sudden, will shake hands, black men and white men, like steel meeting steel! (*WWF*, 228-229)

Hughes employs the metaphor of the chemical reaction to illustrate the volatile situation in which Bert finds himself and the fears and insecurities of the white population. As if on a knife-edge, things could change 'all of a sudden' and see black and white men shaking hands as equals, yet also as combatants, 'like steel meeting steel'. Such a tense atmosphere sees a simple argument over incorrect change at the post office spiral into violence amid fears of 'race trouble' (*WWF*, 235). Bert, being 'near-white' and '[a]n educated nigger, too!' (*WWF*, 234) is deemed especially threatening to the established order.

The final clash between Bert and the Colonel is described much like the 'steel meeting steel' of white and black shaking hands: 'The old man felt the steel of him standing there, like the steel of himself forty years ago' (*WWF*, 238). Hughes reverses Lawrence's idea of the dead father avenging himself on the mother through his child; here Bert's likeness to his father – his intelligence, looks and desire to be considered a true son – causes his father's death. Norwood is, in effect, killed by his inability to acknowledge his children. He might have shot his son and saved himself; Bert is puzzled that he did not: "He didn't want me to live. He was white. Why didn't he shoot then?" (*WWF*, 242-243). Hughes implies that the Colonel – though evidently angered by Bert's refusal to conform to racial expectations and respect boundaries – could not bring himself to kill this son who so resembles him. Much like the anxiety Reeve detects in Lawrence, Norwood seems vulnerable to this sense of a 'leasehold' on his identity: this physical resemblance which causes one's body to appear 'simultaneously one's own and someone else's'. Here, too, father and son are 'stranger and replica in the same moment'.

Lawrence and Hughes both recognise the destructive potential of heredity in these stories. For Hughes, these issues are bound up in issues of race; several stories in the 1934 collection depict mixed-race children with a black mother and a white father. "Passing" takes the form of a letter from a mixed-race son to his black mother. The son, Jack, is successfully passing as white and writes to apologise for not having acknowledged his mother on the street. He could not speak to her, he claims, because he was with his white girlfriend who is unaware of his race. Jack's life as a white man is going well, yet there is an uncomfortable irony in his sense that he no longer need concern himself with issues of race: 'why think about race anymore? I'm glad I don't have to, I know that much' (*WWF*, 53). He believes (naively, Hughes implies) that he has successfully escaped 'the mire of color': 'I'm free, Ma, free!' (*WWF*, 54). As in "Father and Son", Hughes suggests the potentially dangerous nature of heredity, its ability to unveil hidden truths and, like Lawrence's fathers who wreak revenge through their children, to punish those who seek to repress it. Jack's brother Charlie is said to be darker-skinned than his mother, so his own children with his white bride may equally betray his true racial heritage. Jack has already planned a course of action should such an event occur, however: 'if any of my kids are born dark I'll swear they aren't mine' (*WWF*, 54). Here, as in "Father and Son" and "Cora, Unashamed", Hughes figures the 'race problem' in deeply personal terms. By situating it within the matrix of the American family – historically an institution symbolising the health of the nation – he suggests the sickness of a society in which racial prejudice causes sons to kill their fathers, fathers to deny their children and mothers to bury theirs.

It is surely no accident that Hughes' collection begins and end with strong black women, both mothers who lose children. Both are domestic servants who have relationships with white men and bear mixed-race children. They are linked also by

their names: Cora Jenkins of “Cora, Unashamed” and Coralee Lewis of “Father and Son”. The two Coras bookend *The Ways of White Folks* and provide arguably the strongest models of black femininity in the collection. Yet in Hughes’ final story, attention passes from mother to son, to the next generation and to issues of legacy and inheritance. “Father and Son” ends with a newspaper report detailing Norwood’s death and the subsequent double lynching of Bert and his brother Willie. They are presented merely as ‘two Negro field hands’ (*WWF*, 254), while the use of their mother’s surname gives no indication that these are Norwood’s biological sons. The final line states: ‘The dead man left no heirs’ (*WWF*, 255).

“The Lovely Lady” similarly ends with details of Pauline’s will (in a final act of egotism, she leaves most of her wealth to the ‘Pauline Attenborough Museum’ (*LL*, 40)). Nearing death as he was, it is perhaps unsurprising that Lawrence should be preoccupied with thoughts of his possible legacy. That Hughes should choose to end the collection on a question of inheritance – or lack of it – indicates the centrality of this issue in his thinking about American race relations. As we have seen, Hughes’ satirical stories critique various aspects of the Harlem Renaissance and its key figures, from white patronage to the commercialisation of the primitive and from Du Bois’ veil to Locke’s ‘New Negro’ and what he saw in hindsight as its naïve hopes of racial uplift through art. The end of *The Ways of White Folks* sees Hughes feeling less than optimistic about movement’s legacy for the next generation of African American artists.

Having aimed to affect his readers in the same spine-tingling and hair-raising manner as Lawrence’s tales had affected him, Hughes produced an arresting and poignant collection. Yet his fiction has often been underrated and is still rarely granted

the serious critical attention it merits; Hughes' political message and purpose in this collection have equally been either underplayed or misunderstood since its publication. A contemporary British reviewer notes that 'Mr Hughes [does not allow] himself to give way to violent protest: on the contrary, his obvious good nature leads him mostly to indulge in kindly satire [...] it is not so much bitterness he expresses as the inexhaustible, noble and somewhat fatalistic patience of his long-suffering race.'³⁶⁹ Of course, Hughes was not aiming for 'kindly satire'. But *The Ways of White Folks* does not exhibit the same acrimony as Richard Wright's far more combative 1938 collection, *Uncle Tom's Children*. Some of Hughes' works of the later 1930s – when he moved on from the short story to work on plays and poetry primarily – are more overt and combative expressions of his revolutionary politics and Marxist leanings.

The 1934 collection marks a very particular moment in Hughes' career, one that has often been overlooked. But it is also, I have argued here, one in which Hughes' sense of artistic purpose was shifting. Hughes' travels in the Soviet Union and the political and personal changes they wrought are imprinted upon his 1934 collection and essential to its understanding. Yet without Lawrence, it seems highly improbable that the product of this moment would have been a short story collection at all, let alone one with 'psychic power' of *The Ways of White Folks*. Lawrence's posthumous collection, in the sardonic voice of his late style and dealing with issues oddly close to Hughes' own life experiences, was the catalyst here: the link between Hughes' personal and political awakening and his art.

³⁶⁹ William Plomer, Review of *The Ways of White Folks, Jonah's Gourd Vine, Pitch Lake and Black Girl, White Lady*, *The Spectator*, January 4, 1935, p. 25.

Part II: Confluence

Chapter Three

The Broken Circle: Jean Toomer

Connectedness, this was the great thing. Connectedness of core to core, not merely of shell to shell.³⁷⁰

The central law of all organic life is that each organism is intrinsically isolate and single in itself. [...]

But the secondary law of all organic life, is that each organism only lives through contact with other matter, assimilation, and contact with other life, which means assimilation of new vibrations, non-material. Each individual organism is vivified by intimate contact with fellow organisms: up to a certain point. (*SCAL*, 67)

Jean Toomer's *Cane*, the 1923 work often heralded as the founding text of the New Negro movement, is also widely deemed the most modernist Harlem Renaissance work. Divided into three parts and combining short stories, sketches, poetry and a dramatic piece, *Cane* is inherently a fragmentary work. Like Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), with which it is almost contemporary – and to which it has often been compared – it diagnoses a culture in ruins. In a 1922 letter to his friend and mentor Waldo Frank, Toomer describes its structure:

From three angles, *Cane's* design is a circle. Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up into the North, and back into the South again. [...] From the point of view of the spiritual entity behind the work, the curve really starts with Bona and Paul (awakening), plunges into Kabnis, emerges in Karintha etc. swings upward into Theatre and Box Seat, and ends (pauses) in Harvest Song.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ Jean Toomer, "Eight-Day World", Box 28, Folder 640, Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, p. 57.

³⁷¹ Toomer, Letter to Waldo Frank, 12 December 1922 in Frederik L. Rusch (ed.), *A Jean Toomer Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 26.

Further, Toomer explains, '[b]etween each of the sections a curve. These, to vaguely indicate the design.'³⁷² *Cane's* structure is, as Rudolph P. Byrd notes, in fact most appropriately figured as a 'broken circle', a description reflecting both the fragmentary nature of its form and the disconnected, disjointed lives it depicts.³⁷³ Yet *Cane* itself has widely been deemed an emblem of aesthetic wholeness and a work of genius produced by a curiously *unwhole* individual: a man divided within himself, who forsook his racial roots and, consequently, never again produced any art of note. Toomer has been cast as an embodiment of modern alienation and disconnection. But what connects him to Lawrence, this chapter demonstrates, are his efforts to get beyond these aspects of modern life: to achieve a sense of personal wholeness and a harmonious connection to others, to forge new ways of configuring identity and new ways of living.

This chapter considers Lawrence and Toomer as writers reacting to the problems they perceived as intrinsic to modernity and positing alternatives. Both were striving towards a profoundly different kind of society. Both men believed that a new life and new relations between people were possible; the main focus and aim of their art was to communicate this to others: to exemplify a life lived in harmony with other people and with what Lawrence called 'the circumambient universe'.³⁷⁴ After the outbreak of the First World War especially, Lawrence was often preoccupied by the need to 'create an idea of a new, freer life' and spurred by his 'vision of a better life' that, he told

³⁷² Ibid, p. 26

³⁷³ Rudolph P. Byrd, *Jean Toomer's Years with Gurdjieff* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990) p. 16.

³⁷⁴ Lawrence, "Morality and the Novel", *Study of Thomas Hardy*, p. 171.

Bertrand Russell in 1915, 'must include a revolution of society'.³⁷⁵ Toomer was also deeply concerned with creating a 'new, freer life' and new relations between people. For him, the foundation would be a new, unified people – neither black nor white, but merely American – a new race of which he was among the first conscious members.

These ideas about forging new ways of living, I demonstrate, are concerns that Toomer and Lawrence sustained throughout their lives. Toomer's career is often – somewhat artificially – divided into two periods: before and after his involvement with the Armenian mystic, George I. Gurdjieff. The period before – that which produced *Cane* – is conventionally figured as his most fruitful phase, in which his engagement with African American themes inspired a creativity he would never again match. Toomer's post-*Cane* career, conversely, is most often characterised as one of artistic failure and frustration, with his involvement with Gurdjieff key to the downturn in his writing career after 1923. I argue here, however, that *Cane* is best understood not as a singular work of genius produced by an artist who swiftly abandoned its themes and never lived up to the promise it indicated, but as a work in which Toomer presents a set of problems and provocations that his later life and work sought to answer. In order to understand Toomer as an artist and a thinker – and indeed in order to grasp *Cane's* true significance – it is vital to look beyond this one work and to Toomer's writings before and after *Cane*, many of which remain unpublished.

In positing Lawrence and Toomer as writers and thinkers fundamentally concerned with human connection, I identify in both a particular dialectical struggle epitomized in the second epigraph above (from Lawrence's essay on Edgar Allen Poe in *Studies*) inhering a negotiation between the intrinsic isolation and singularity of

³⁷⁵ Lawrence, Letter to Mary Cannan, 24 February 1915, *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 293; Lawrence, Letter to Bertrand Russell, 24 February 1915, *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 294.

every individual and the need for connection with others. For Lawrence, the individual can only be fulfilled and 'vivified' through contact and communion with others, but this cannot mean the sacrifice of one's own singularity; connection with others is productive and life-giving 'up to a certain point', but 'mixing and confusion' means death (SCAL, 67). Toomer's vision of a hybrid American race would seem the ultimate vision of connectedness, yet he was also frequently anxious about the dangers of too much connection, of losing one's own self and singular identity to another or to a group.

Perhaps the most salient example of this anxiety is Toomer's oft-cited conscious detachment from the New Negro movement and from his landmark work. *Cane* inspired and moved a generation of African American writers; Toomer was lauded as the best and brightest young black writer, but he was not interested in being defined in these terms. Exasperated by his publisher's insistence that he be marketed as a black writer in order to capitalise upon the 1920s New Negro vogue, he maintained his right to define himself and his race as he saw fit. Just before *Cane's* publication, he wrote to his editor, Horace Liveright, to make his position clear. He did not object, he said, to the use of 'whatever racial factors' that might aid in the book's marketing, but he was firm in declaring that he would not be made to emphasize his own blackness in advertisements, stating: 'My racial composition and my position in the world are realities which I alone may determine. [...] Whatever statements I give will inevitably come from a sympathetic human and art point of view; not from a racial one.'³⁷⁶ Thus, when Locke later published excerpts from *Cane* alongside Toomer's portrait in *The New Negro* without his consent, he was greatly annoyed. The New Negro movement he thought, by this time at least, 'a splendid thing', but 'something that had no special

³⁷⁶ Toomer, Letter to Horace Liveright, 5 September 1923 in Rusch, p. 94.

meaning for [him].³⁷⁷ By the 1930s Toomer would – whether in error or not – often misspell the title of his debut work as ‘*Cain*’: ‘*Cain* came out. The reviews were splendid.’³⁷⁸ The suggestion here of the biblical curse and mark of Cain indicates the extent to which Toomer came to see the 1923 work as an affliction that permanently ‘marked’ him as African American even as his own conception of his identity moved far beyond the need for racial classification.³⁷⁹

Toomer and Lawrence are often cited as writers for whom the concept of ‘wholeness’ was central; Toomer’s life in particular is regularly figured as a pursuit – or series of pursuits – of wholeness. From an early age, he was committed to an ‘ideal of man’ and throughout his life he sought an ‘intelligible scheme, a sort of whole into which everything fit’.³⁸⁰ As Cynthia Earl Kerman and Richard Eldridge note in their appropriately subtitled work, *The Lives of Jean Toomer: A Hunger for Wholeness* (1987), he was attracted by various ‘systems’ and regimens during his early life: ‘It was the *system* that gave socialism most of its appeal; it was the regimen of body building that seemed to promise a way out of a difficult habit.’³⁸¹ Of course, the system or philosophy with which Toomer is most often associated is that of Gurdjieff, whom he first met in New York in January 1924. Later, as Darwin T. Turner notes,

³⁷⁷ Toomer, quoted in Cynthia Earl Kerman and Richard Eldridge, *The Lives of Jean Toomer: A Hunger for Wholeness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987) p. 112.

³⁷⁸ Toomer, “On Being an American”, *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) p. 127.

³⁷⁹ In North America, the curse of Cain – often conflated with the curse of Ham – came to be associated with blackness and used by certain groups and churches as a justification for slavery. See, for example, Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁸⁰ Toomer, quoted in Byrd and Gates (eds.), Introduction to Norton Critical Edition of *Cane* (New York: Norton, 2011) p. lxii.

³⁸¹ Kerman and Eldridge, p. 121.

'[c]ontinuously seeking answers for a harmonious life, Toomer turned to the Society of Friends, Jungian psychology, psychoanalysis and Eastern mysticism.'³⁸² As a young man, he hoped that writing might make 'an integrated man' of him.³⁸³ He had been inspired particularly by his reading of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in 1920; in this work Toomer recognised 'the world of the aristocrat – but not the social aristocrat; the aristocrat of culture, of spirit and character, of ideas, of true nobility.'³⁸⁴ Having been previously engaged in musical work, he was convinced to abandon this to begin writing in earnest: 'I resolved to devote myself to the making of myself such a person as I caught glimpses of in the pages of *Wilhelm Meister*. For my specialized work, I would write.'³⁸⁵

Goethe's *Bildungsroman* is an intriguing analogy in a discussion of Toomer and Lawrence and their literary efforts to mend the 'broken circle'. Both men were deeply concerned with the 'responsibility' that their position entailed; both, in some ways saw themselves as mentors. Yet where the *Bildungsroman*, as Joseph Slaughter notes, produces an 'idealistic image of mutual accommodation between individual and society', Lawrence and Toomer produce quite the opposite.³⁸⁶ Bell indeed argues that 'Lawrence, like Nietzsche, runs significantly counter to the values of *Bildung*'; Lawrence's 'moment-by-moment wholeness of being is the chiasmic opposite of Goethe's cultivated completeness.'³⁸⁷ Toomer and Lawrence were not interested in

³⁸² Darwin T. Turner (ed.), *Wayward*, p. 5.

³⁸³ Toomer, "On Being an American", *Wayward*, p. 128.

³⁸⁴ Toomer, "The Years of Wandering", *Wayward*, p. 112.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 112.

³⁸⁶ Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007) p. 117.

³⁸⁷ Bell, *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J. M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 179, 187.

achieving 'accommodation' with society as it existed. Rather, both men were intent upon transforming society for (what they perceived to be) the better.

Like McKay and Hughes, Toomer is among the authors highlighted by Hamalian as 'black writers' who came under Lawrence's influence. The author of *Cane* seems indeed perhaps a more likely candidate than either McKay or Hughes. As a mixed-race writer enmeshed as much in the milieu of the so-called Lost Generation as he was – for a short time – in the New Negro movement, and later as one who counted the Taos crowd including Mabel Dodge Luhan, Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz as friends, Toomer's life in many ways intersects with Lawrence's more markedly than either McKay's or Hughes'. Though it seems unlikely that Toomer ever met Lawrence, as Hamalian claims, he would certainly have heard stories of the Englishman from Luhan and others.³⁸⁸ Hamalian also cites a review by Toomer of Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* for the *New Mexico Sentinel*.³⁸⁹ Toomer did not contribute to the *New Mexico Sentinel* until the 1930s, as Tom Quirk and Robert E. Fleming assert, and there is no evidence to suggest that Toomer ever reviewed *Studies*.³⁹⁰ He did, however, review a collection of three Lawrence novellas for *Broom*

³⁸⁸ Hamalian affirms that 'Jean Toomer [...] and his wife, Margery Latimer, met Lawrence and Frieda through Mabel Dodge Luhan in New Mexico, probably in 1924', "Lawrence and Black Writers", p. 585; Toomer certainly spent time at Luhan's ranch in Taos, where the Lawrences were resident for a time before she gifted them the Kiowa Ranch in 1924. He visited Luhan there for the first time in December 1925 and spent Christmas in Taos. During this visit he would not have met the Lawrences, who by this time had returned to Europe and settled in Italy. Hamalian's reference to Latimer also raises concerns; Toomer would not meet and marry her until 1931. Hamalian may be confusing Latimer with Margaret Naumburg, the wife of Waldo Frank, with whom Toomer had begun a relationship (initially in secret) in 1923.

³⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 585.

³⁹⁰ Tom Quirk and Robert E. Fleming, "Jean Toomer's Contributions to the *New Mexico Sentinel*", *CLA Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (June, 1976) p. 524; Though no review by Toomer of *Studies* survives, it is likely that he would have been aware of Lawrence's American essays, possibly through Frank. Lawrence had corresponded with Frank about them in 1917, explaining: 'I am writing a set of essays on "The Transcendental

in 1923. We can be certain, then, that Toomer did read at least some of Lawrence's work and knew of Lawrence the man through his friendship with Luhan.³⁹¹ Yet Hamalian's suggestion that *Cane* bears the clear mark of the English writer's influence – to the extent that his discussion of Toomer concludes by averring that '[i]f *Cane* fails in invention, it fails because Toomer is working too closely to Lawrence, too much in his shadow' – is at least hyperbolic if not entirely preposterous.³⁹² Unlike McKay and Hughes, who openly profess their indebtedness to, and admiration of, Lawrence in their autobiographies, Toomer's response to Lawrence is far more ambivalent and openly critical. His rather scathing *Broom* review, in which he castigates Lawrence for his over-use of symbols, his thin characterisation and his earnestness, does not read as the work of a writer 'working too closely' to the Englishman.

The transition from 'influence' to 'confluence' here is not a clean break between two writers inspired by Lawrence to two others where no hint of influence could be inferred. Influence and confluence, after all, are not at all mutually exclusive. As the following sections of this chapter demonstrate, many aspects of Toomer's thought align with Lawrence's. I do not discount the possibility of a Lawrentian influence (even an opposing or combative one) at work in Toomer's writings here. Rather, I focus upon the ways in which reading these two authors together enables one to build up a picture of two modernist artists acutely aware of the tensions and problems in the prevailing structures of thought around fundamental issues like race, human

Element in Classic American Literature", Letter to Waldo Frank, 15 September 1917, *Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 160.

³⁹¹ Correspondence between Toomer and Luhan confirms that they did discuss Lawrence and that he read *Lorenzo in Taos* (1932); in a letter of April 16, 1932, he writes: 'Your work on Lorenzo is a most vivid revealing work, a thing which no one but you could possibly have written. What two you were, you and Lawrence!', Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Box 34, Folder 993, Beinecke, Yale.

³⁹² Hamalian, p. 586.

connection and the future of society. If their work, like *Cane*'s 'broken circle', often diagnosed the fragmented and disconnected nature of modern life, Toomer and Lawrence also offered solutions to modern alienation. These solutions were not always viable, nor were Toomer and Lawrence always consistent in the views they espoused or the positions they presented, but both men strove to explore alternative ways of living and to put these into action; both dreamed of (and attempted to form) independent communities of like-minded people.

This chapter is divided into three parts, each exploring an aspect of the project described above. The first addresses the issue of race, a subject which – for both Toomer and Lawrence scholars – remains a contested and fraught topic. Considering *Cane*, "Blue Meridian" and Toomer's autobiographical work on race alongside Lawrence's writings on race and racial mixing in *Studies* and *The Plumed Serpent*, I argue that both men considered seriously new conceptions of race as potential means of regenerating modern society. Though Toomer's conception of a new America race is often figured as merely – or at least primarily – a solution to his own problems of identity, I argue here that it is also fundamentally a response to the conditions of modernity. Furthermore, although Lawrence was often uncomfortable about interracial marriage and miscegenation, I argue that both men came to see racial mixing as a potential way forward: a way of harnessing the best aspects of all races to produce a new, better, healthier society.

The following section considers another form of vital contact with which Toomer and Lawrence were often concerned: that between men and women. Reading Toomer's 1922 play *Natalie Mann* and his unpublished novel "Eight-Day World" alongside Lawrence's *Women in Love*, I argue that both writers sought a balanced form of romantic and sexual connection that did not involve the sacrifice of individual

selfhood. Furthermore, in addition to the 'perfected relation' between man and woman, both writers posit the importance of male friendship. Finally, I move on to consider real-world efforts to realise the new ways of living and new relationships that both men imagined and theorised in their work. I begin by considering the utopian projects both men pursued – Lawrence's *Rananim* and Toomer's *Portage* experiment – and move on to highlight the importance of Taos for Lawrence and Toomer as a location in which new forms of life seemed achievable. Although these projects were ultimately unsuccessful (or if successful, short-lived), they demonstrate a real commitment to transforming society and to reversing the pernicious effects of modern living upon human life and connection. At the same time, Toomer and Lawrence seem both ultimately to pull back from these commitments, to eschew connection in favour of isolation and individuality, to concede finally that the broken circle could not be mended.

The critical focus upon Toomer's race (including his perceived racial passing), his relation to the Harlem Renaissance and his later adherence to Gurdjieff – as well as the distinct lack of attention afforded to all but one of his works – has often precluded consideration of the wider themes and concerns that occupied Toomer before, after and during *Cane's* composition. Toomer, I argue here, should be considered not only as a somewhat enigmatic, liminal figure fully at home neither among the Harlem Renaissance writers with whom he is now most often associated nor among the Lost Generation writers he knew. He should be understood, this chapter posits, rather as belonging to a tradition of modernist thinkers who not only recognised and conveyed the experience of modernity as inherently alienating and fragmented, but who sought to demonstrate alternatives to this way of living. Reading Toomer alongside Lawrence complicates the still-dominant narratives that see him as

an artist who composed one great work and then forsook his race, who abandoned his African American heritage and identity in favour of Gurdjieffian philosophy, who 'passed' as white and denied his blackness. Read together, they emerge as modernists taking the exhortation to 'make it new' to its most extreme, utopian end; they sought, through their work, to make new people and new ways of living. If this project was not feasible, they sought at least to awaken their readers to the possibility and desirability of such change: to highlight the limiting and pernicious nature of the structures of the present and suggest potential ways forward in the future.

'Unlock the races'³⁹³

For quite different reasons, Toomer and Lawrence's positions on race have been widely discussed, almost as widely over-simplified and often condemned. I look here to complicate these responses, exploring how both authors conceived of new ways of configuring race and relations between races as responses to what they perceived to be the greatest problems endemic in modern, western society. During a period in which eugenicists like Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard were proclaiming the dangers of miscegenation, Marcus Garvey was promoting Earnest Sevier Cox's *White America* (1923), and nativist attitudes were becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States, Toomer and Lawrence portrayed communion across the colour line(s) as potentially regenerative. Indeed, I argue here, Lawrence and Toomer's views on race should be read against a background not only of eugenics, but of Latin

³⁹³ Toomer, "The Blue Meridian", *Wayward*, p. 225.

American '*mestizofilia*', which saw mixed-race individuals as the future and hope of the New World. Much as McKay and Lawrence, like Carpenter, saw non-normative sexuality as a radical way of subverting the current order, Toomer and Lawrence present 'unlocking' the races as a possible means of forging new ways of living and escaping the '*cul de sac*' (SCAL, 127) of modern civilization. Indeed, Toomer's conception of a new American race proposes a racial third way much like Carpenter's 'intermediate sex'.

For Toomer, I argue here, his idea for a new, hybrid race of Americans was not – as has often been claimed – merely an effort to abandon his blackness and 'pass' as white. The act of passing reinforces racial boundaries and binaries; Toomer's vision sought to dismantle such boundaries altogether and to posit racial hybridity as a force for national and global regeneration and unity. Lawrence's views on race and racial mixing – much like his thinking on many other issues – altered over the course of his life. Where Toomer's new race philosophy seems to posit sameness as the key to change, Lawrence was often far more interested in difference as a productive force. He believed, as he wrote in essays like "On Being a Man", that contact with other races could be transformative, but was also often repelled by racial difference and anxious about miscegenation. In America, however, which he thought 'so much worse, falsier, further gone than England' and consequently 'nearer to freedom', Lawrence did come to see racial mixing as a potential force for renewal.³⁹⁴

The issue of Toomer's own racial composition and allegiances has been a persistent and controversial topic of critical conversation ever since *Cane*'s appearance almost a century ago. Introducing the 2011 Norton Critical Edition of

³⁹⁴ Lawrence, Letter to Catherine Carswell, 7 November 1916, *Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 25.

Cane, Byrd and Gates propose that Toomer was 'passing' as white during several periods in his life. They reference the certificate of his 1931 marriage to Margery Latimer, on which both bride and groom are listed as 'white' – as well as several censuses where he is also recorded as 'white' – as proof that Toomer was passing and 'endlessly deconstructing his Negro ancestry'.³⁹⁵ In a formulation that (rather problematically) associates Toomer's perceived renunciation of his blackness with emasculation and erasure, Gates elsewhere describes Toomer's racial self-identification as an act of 'racial castration', which 'transformed his deep black bass into a false soprano'.³⁹⁶

Indeed, almost all accounts of Toomer's life and literary career – whilst generally acknowledging his ideas around race and the nature of his own identity – continue not only to adhere to and reinforce the strict racial categories that Toomer himself was intent upon reforming, but to figure Toomer's challenge to these categories as a self-sabotaging, career-ending betrayal. Byrd and Gates' comments suggest that in 2011 little had changed since the 1920s and 1930s, when, as Hughes recalls in *The Big Sea* (1940), Toomer's declaration of himself as neither white nor black 'put all the critics, white and colored, in a great dilemma. How should they class the author of *Cane* in their lists and summaries?'³⁹⁷ Their judgments upon Toomer seem not only unfair and inaccurate when one considers the author's own feelings about race and about his own identity, they seem also to perpetuate essentialist ideas

³⁹⁵ Byrd and Gates, Introduction to *Cane*, pp. lxvii-lxviii; That Toomer's mother's maiden name is recorded incorrectly on the 1931 marriage certificate indicates that he may not have provided the information himself; Byrd and Gates do not consider that the registrar may have assumed a light-skinned man marrying a white woman to be white.

³⁹⁶ Gates, *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 208.

³⁹⁷ Hughes, *The Big Sea*, p. 188.

about racial identity including the insidious ‘one-drop rule’: the fundamentally asymmetrical definition of race which ruled that anyone with any sub-Saharan-African ancestry (one drop of black blood) was to be considered black.

Toomer himself would no doubt have found accusations of ‘passing’ against him quite ridiculous: ‘I heard of “passing”. I heard that the white world was the world of opportunity, that the colored world was narrow and closed in. I heard of lynchings [...] but it never occurred to me that they might have some bearing on my personal career.’³⁹⁸ Toomer had throughout his life been so accustomed to moving between black and white ‘worlds’ that the idea of ‘passing’ was almost anathema to him. He had grown up mostly in all-white areas of Washington, D. C. and attended all-black schools. Born into a middle-class, mixed-race family, he was raised mostly by his mother and maternal grandparents; his grandfather, P. B. S. Pinchback – the son of a white planter and a mixed-race former slave – is known as the first black Governor of Louisiana.³⁹⁹ But as a child, he recalls in “On Being an American” (1934) – one of many (largely unpublished) autobiographical works – ‘[r]acial matters did not enter into [his] life’.⁴⁰⁰

If such claims seem naïve or disingenuous, they are in-keeping with the racial philosophy that Toomer adopted throughout his adult life. From at least 1920, when he began composing “The First American” – the first version (now lost) of the poem later published as “The Blue Meridian” in 1936 – Toomer espoused his vision of a new

³⁹⁸ Toomer, “On Being an American”, Box 20, Folder 513, JTP, pp. 20-21.

³⁹⁹ Toomer suggests in “On Being an American” that Pinchback may have affirmed his blackness opportunistically in order to further his political career and achieve notoriety: ‘He claimed he had Negro blood, linked himself with the cause of the Negro, and rose to power. How much he was an opportunist, how much he was in sincere sympathy with the freedmen, is a matter which need not concern us here’, JTP, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Toomer, “On Being an American”, JTP, p. 10.

American race that was to be neither white nor black, but merely American. While, with the first stirrings of the New Negro movement, young, black artists were starting to proudly proclaim their blackness, Toomer was seeking a very different identity. His vision was rooted firmly in racial mixing; the Americans he envisaged were the true products of the American melting pot. In “On Being an American”, he describes the utopian vision that inspired “The First American”:

a new type of man was arising in this country – not European, not African, not Asiatic – but American. And in this American I saw the divisions mended, the differences reconciled – saw that (1) we would in truth be a united people existing in the United States, saw that (2) we would in truth be once again members of a united human race.⁴⁰¹

His adherence to Gurdjieff, begun shortly after *Cane*'s publication, increased the fervour with which Toomer pursued this ideal; one of the chief appeals of Gurdjieffian philosophy was the belief that race did not exist, that the commonality of human existence was much more significant than the differences that divide men. Yet *Cane* also evidences Toomer's vision – expressed more explicitly elsewhere – of a distinctly new, hybrid American race: ‘a new type of man’.

Toomer indeed saw the 1923 work, as ‘a spiritual fusion analogous to the fact of racial intermingling’.⁴⁰² *Cane* was written in fragments over a period of 3 years, but largely inspired by a three-month stint in Sparta, Georgia in autumn 1921. During this time, when Toomer was acting principal of an agricultural school, he claimed to have connected to his African American roots and been stimulated by them as never before. In a letter to *The Liberator* in August 1922, he describes his ‘French, Dutch, Welsh, Negro, German, Jewish, and Indian’ heritage, but writes that: ‘my growing need for

⁴⁰¹ Toomer, “On Being an American”, *Wayward*, p. 121.

⁴⁰² Toomer, Letter to *The Liberator*, 19 August 1922 in Rusch, pp. 15-16.

artistic expression has pulled me deeper and deeper into the Negro group [...] I found myself loving it in a way I could never love the other. It has stimulated me and fertilized whatever creative talent I may contain within me.⁴⁰³ There is certainly a sense of spiritual homecoming in the way he describes his short time in Georgia; he was deeply moved and inspired by the southern black communities he encountered, their union with the land, their spirituals and their folk spirit.

Yet if *Cane* is the product of a period in Toomer's life during which he connected as never before or after with his African American roots, it cannot be read as a straightforward claiming of that identity. *Cane* is populated by individuals struggling to identify with others and with their environment, with lonely, disconnected mixed-race characters at home neither in the northern or southern United States. Like the reaper in "Harvest Song" – who yearns to connect with others but cannot see, hear, or call out to them (he is at once 'a blind man' whose 'throat is dry' and 'a deaf man who strains to hear the calls of other harvesters whose throats are also dry' (C, 69)) – the world of *Cane* seems inimical to any form of satisfying connection. The lives it depicts are inherently fragmentary and *Cane* itself is replete with binary oppositions: north and south, black and white, male and female, dusk and dawn. Byrd and Gates argue that Toomer posits the duality and fragmentation of African American life not in terms of Du Bois' 'double consciousness' – a malady that only de-segregation might cure – but in terms of modernity: 'Toomer [...] boldly declares that this fragmentation is, ultimately, the sign of the Negro's modernity, first, and that the Negro, therefore, is America's harbinger of and metaphor for modernity itself.'⁴⁰⁴ But *Cane* was not intended to be the herald of the 'New Negro' or a celebration of 'the Negro' as a

⁴⁰³ Ibid, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰⁴ Byrd and Gates, Introduction to *Cane*, p. lxiii.

'harbinger' of modernity; rather, as Toomer professed, it was 'a swan-song', 'a song of an end'.⁴⁰⁵ Toomer saw that the communities he knew in Georgia and the way of life they represented were disappearing, that '[t]he folk-spirit was walking in to die on the modern desert'.⁴⁰⁶

Cane, then, does not celebrate the split, divided, disconnected identities and lives of its characters, as Byrd and Gates suggest. Rather, it mourns the loss of wholeness and connection that modernity signifies. This loss of wholeness is registered in the 'broken circle' of *Cane's* form and in the fragmented lives it depicts. With two mixed-race characters in particular – both likely based in part upon Toomer himself – he gestures towards possible ways of circumventing modern alienation and fragmentation. Paul of "Bona and Paul" and Ralph Kabnis, the eponymous hero of *Cane's* closing piece, both embody something of the spirit of Toomer's 'new type of man'.

Written in 1918 and probably the earliest piece in *Cane*, "Bona and Paul" is the last story in *Cane's* second part, but the beginning of the spiritual curve Toomer described to Frank. In this story, the germ of Toomer's new race – the solution to *Cane's* 'broken circle' and to the isolation of its characters – is beginning to emerge. It depicts the complex relationship between Paul (who is mixed-race and passing as white) and Bona (who is white); they meet at a teacher training college in the north. Paul is 'cool like the dusk, and like the dusk, detached' (C, 73); other characters attribute his aloofness to his ambiguous race. Paul's dark skin marks him apart from the other students, particularly when he and Bona go to a white nightclub: Crimson Gardens. Here, surrounded by people speculating over his race, Paul realises

⁴⁰⁵ Toomer, quoted in Kerman and Eldridge, p. 85.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 85.

suddenly 'that he was apart from the people around him' (C, 74). On recognising his difference from the other patrons, Paul gains strength from their inquisitive glares: 'Their stares, giving him to himself, filled something long empty within him, and were like green blades sprouting in his consciousness. [...] He saw himself, cloudy, but real' (C, 74). The reflection of his own difference in the stares of these onlookers, rather than rendering Paul upset or embarrassed, in fact 'giv[es] him to himself', reinforcing his own sense of identity.

At the end of "Bona and Paul", Paul has an epiphany. Instead of following Bona out of the club, he stops to talk to the black doorman who regarded the couple with knowing eyes, like the other 'flushed and fidgety' youths he sees exiting together:

I came back to tell you, to shake your hand, and tell you that you are wrong.
That something beautiful is going to happen. [...] I came to tell you, brother,
that white faces are petals of roses. That dark faces are petals of dusk.
That I am going out and gather petals. That I am going out and know her
whom I brought here with me to these gardens which are purple like a bed
of roses would be at dusk. (C, 77- 78)

Here Toomer draws upon his love of Imagist poetry; he likens faces to petals much like Pound in "In a Station of the Metro": 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals on a wet, black bough.'⁴⁰⁷ In this speech Paul seems to have reconciled his own struggles with identity and, perhaps, the root of the imbalance between 'mental concepts' and 'blood'. Paul's 'petals of roses' and 'petals of dusk' represent another binary opposition in *Cane*; that he, as he announces to the doorman, plans to 'gather petals' signals his intention to accept and to merge all aspects of his racial identity. Yet when he goes to find Bona she has left without him; his vision of 'something

⁴⁰⁷ Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro", *New Selected Poems and Translations*, ed. by Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2010) p. 39.

beautiful' between them will be unfulfilled; Paul's efforts to make an integrated man of himself end in rejection.

Kabnis seems an even bleaker figure than Paul. A teacher at the story's opening, Kabnis is a northerner in Georgia. From the local men he hears of lynchings in the area and becomes paranoid that this fate will befall him. He is soon fired from his teaching job; Kabnis' drinking, the principal fears, will hinder the school's mission '[t]o prove to the world that the Negro race can be just like any other race' (C, 93). Kabnis abandons intellectual pursuits for more physical work and sinks further into debauchery. By the end of the story, he becomes child-like and dependent upon others, particularly Carrie K., the young and kindly sister of his friend Halsey. Critics disagree on the significance of "Kabnis" and its protagonist. For Baker, Kabnis is 'the knowing artist who confronts the desert places in himself' and 'a new-world creator ascending from the cellar as the herald and agent of the dawn'.⁴⁰⁸ Conversely, for Darwin T. Turner "Kabnis" is a 'morbid allegory of Negro impotence' and the title character himself is '[d]ebauched' and 'impotent'.⁴⁰⁹

Kabnis is the character in *Cane* who seems most to gesture towards Toomer's idea of a new, hybrid American race. His ancestors are both 'Southern blue-bloods' and 'black', but he argues that there '[a]in't much difference between blue and black' (C, 106). In Kabnis' quip on the scant difference between 'blue' and 'black', Toomer prefigures the idea of a 'blue race' posited in "The Blue Meridian". Like his protagonist, Toomer is looking to 'shap[e] words t[o] fit [his] soul' (C, 109), conscious that a new language is necessary to convey his sense of his own racial identity and more widely

⁴⁰⁸ Baker, *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) pp. 41-43.

⁴⁰⁹ Darwin T. Turner, "The Failure of a Playwright", *CLA Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (June, 1967) pp. 312-313.

to express his conception of a new race in America. The death of the old ways – the folk-spirit of which *Cane* is a ‘swan-song’ – opens the door for new people. Having begun with Karintha ‘carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down’ (C, 5), *Cane* ends with Kabnis rising from his basement prison as ‘[o]utside, the sun arises from its cradle in the tree-tops of the forest’ (C, 115). The new dawn here is figurative as well as literal. Kabnis, emerging from the cellar accompanied by the sun’s ‘birth-song’ (C, 115), signals the advent of the ‘new type of man’ Toomer envisaged.

If *Cane* is the ‘song of an end’ of a dying race culture, then “The Blue Meridian”, a long poem finally published in 1936, is the clarion call of Toomer’s new American race and a new American epoch. Here he projects his vision of America’s future in which a ‘blue’ race, an amalgamation of the African, European and native American races, has come into existence, confounding the limiting binaries that abound in *Cane*: ‘Black is black, white is white / East is east, west is west, / Is truth for the mind of contrasts; / But here the high way of the third, / The man of blue or purple.’⁴¹⁰ Echoing Rudyard Kipling’s “The Ballad of East and West” (1889), Toomer equates racial boundaries and categories with a prison-like confinement or enslavement from which America must be released:

Unlock the races,
 Open this pod by outgrowing it,
 Free men from this prison and this shrinkage,
 Not from the reality itself
 But from our prejudices and preferences
 And the enslaving behavior caused by them,
 Eliminate these—

⁴¹⁰ Toomer, “The Blue Meridian”, p. 232.

I am, we are, simply of the human race.⁴¹¹

Countering the racial typecasting of which Toomer himself had been a victim, in this poem he advocates the fusion of the races as key to America's regeneration. Toomer's dream of the American future in "The Blue Meridian" bears many similarities to Lawrence's vision of America in *Studies*. Both espouse the belief that the old, white consciousness must be abandoned and destroyed in order for a new consciousness to emerge. Where Toomer figures racial divisions as 'this prison and this shrinkage', Lawrence, describing the 'immortal friendship' of the white Natty Bumppo and the Indian Chingachgook in Fenimore Cooper's 'Leatherstocking Novels', declares that '[t]he old consciousness has become a tight-fitting prison to us, in which we are going rotten' (*SCAL*, 56). In "The Blue Meridian", the poetic voice avers that 'A million million men, or twelve men, / Must crash the barrier to the next higher form', while Lawrence declares that, in order to move forward as a culture in 'life-development', '[w]e may have to smash things' (*SCAL*, 127).⁴¹²

Toomer's vision is by no means identical to Lawrence's, however; the hybrid blue race he imagines is a product of the 'fusion in the flesh' that Lawrence cannot quite condone in his American essays. The unifying force that dominates the poem and produces the 'blue' race surely destroys the 'difference' that interested Lawrence and inheres the mingling and merging that he often repudiated. Indeed, "The Blue Meridian" bears the mark of Toomer's devotion to Walt Whitman, whose perceived eschewing of individuality in favour of the all-encompassing 'I' Lawrence criticised in *Studies*. Toomer's exhortations to 'Unlock the races' and 'Uncase, unpod whatever

⁴¹¹ Ibid, pp. 225-226.

⁴¹² Ibid, p. 214.

blocks' mirror Whitman's emphatic calls in "Song of Myself" (1855): 'Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!'⁴¹³ In *Studies*, though he affirms his fondness for Whitman, Lawrence is critical of the American's call for merging and his loss of individuality: 'Your mainspring is broken, Walt Whitman. The mainspring of your own individuality. [...] I am everything and everything is me and so we're all One in One Identity, like the Mundane Egg' (SCAL, 150). Lawrence cannot abide what he sees in Whitman as the abandonment of the self: one's isolate singularity baked into 'the awful pudding of One Identity' (SCAL, 150).

Lawrence's objections in the Whitman essay seem partly a symptom of his anxiety about racial mixing; the 'I' of "Song of Myself" proclaims to be '[o]f every hue and caste' and 'of every rank and religion'.⁴¹⁴ His opinions on this subject altered over the course of his life. He was often anxious about miscegenation and was initially disturbed by the relationship between Mabel and Tony Luhan; these anxieties are clearly evident in *Studies*.⁴¹⁵ In his essay on Herman Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo* (begun around 1919 and published in its final form in 1923) Lawrence writes of the 'gulf' between the white man and the people of the South Sea Islands; Lawrence cannot 'commingle [his] being with theirs', because to do so, he feels, would be to 'go back [...] towards the past, savage life' (SCAL, 126). The South Sea Islander woman

⁴¹³ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 48.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁴¹⁵ Lawrence is almost certainly referring to the Luhans when, in his reading of Cooper's 'White Novels' in *Studies*, he presents the ostensibly hypothetical situation of 'an Indian [who] loves a white woman, and lives with her' (SCAL, 44). In such a scenario, Lawrence feels, the Indian 'will probably be very proud of it, for he will be a big man among his people', but 'at the same time he will subtly jeer at his white mistress'; 'at the bottom of his heart he is gibing, gibing, gibing at her' (SCAL, 44). In this instance, '[t]here seems to be no reconciliation of the flesh' (SCAL, 44); It is important to note that the essays in *Studies* were composed and rewritten in several stages over several years. See the textual diagram in the introduction to the Cambridge edition (SCAL, xxiv-xxv).

'is nice', but Lawrence 'would never want to touch her'; to do so would be to go back to her 'uncreate condition' (*SCAL*, 127). Yet there is an unresolved tension here between 'going back' to 'savage life' – which Lawrence deems akin to choosing death – and 'living onwards, forwards' (*SCAL*, 127). Western civilization, Lawrence avers, has been 'living and struggling forwards' in 'life development'; it must continue onwards, but in a new direction, avoiding the '*cul de sac*' of modern culture and making 'a great swerve in our onward-going life-course now, to gather up again the savage mysteries' (*SCAL*, 127-128).

If Lawrence feels that commingling one's being with that of a 'savage' is deathly to all but the 'renegade' (*SCAL*, 126), then elsewhere in *Studies* he does seem, as Ruderman notes, to leave 'a path open to conjunction'.⁴¹⁶ In his essay on Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, Lawrence does not go so far as to revise his earlier position on the impossibility of 'reconciliation of the flesh' (*SCAL*, 44) between white and red. 'The Red Man and the White Man are not blood-brothers' and thus 'there can be no fusion in the flesh', he reiterates,

But the spirit can change. The white man's spirit can never become as the red man's spirit. It doesn't want to. But it can cease to be the opposite and the negative of the red man's spirit. It can open out a new great area of consciousness, in which there is room for the red spirit too.

To open out a new wide area of consciousness means to slough the old consciousness. The old consciousness has become a tight-fitting prison to us, in which we are going rotten. (*SCAL*, 56)

Bringing the 'white man's spirit' into harmony with that of 'the red man' is capable of producing a 'new wide area of consciousness' that is the opposite of the constraining, deadening 'old consciousness'. As in "On Being a Man", in which he posits the racial

⁴¹⁶ Ruderman, p. 194.

other as a source of transformation, Lawrence here sees the ‘immortal friendship’ Cooper depicts between the white Natty Bumppo and the Indian Chingachgook as transformative, emblematic of ‘a new human relationship’ and ‘the new nucleus of a new society’ (SCAL, 58). What is striking here – as in “On Being a Man” – is that the dynamic Lawrence describes is not a Hegelian or Fanonian dialectic: it is not a master/slave binary. Rather, it is a relationship of exchange and interchange between the races. Such a relation ‘asks for a great and cruel sloughing first of all. Then it finds a great release into a new world, a new moral, a new landscape’ (SCAL, 58).

Even in the earlier 1919 version of this essay, written before Lawrence had ever set foot on American soil, he sees in the friendship between the white frontiersman and the Mohican chief ‘the inception of a new psyche, a new race-soul that rises out of the [...] unknowable intercommunication of two untranslatable souls’ (SCAL, 222). From the communion of these ‘two isolated instances of opposite race [...] is procreated a new race-soul, which henceforth gestates within the living humanity of the West’ (SCAL, 222– 223). In America he sees ‘the pure landscape of futurity: not of our present factory-smoked futurity, but of the true future of the as yet unborn, or scarcely born, race of Americans’ (SCAL, 228). Lawrence’s idea of a ‘scarcely born’ new American race here as concomitant with a different kind of future aligns clearly with Toomer’s sense that from the death of the old ways and old types of men – ‘displaced by machines’ and ‘[s]mothered by a world too huge for little men’ – will emerge ‘a new people’.⁴¹⁷

In *Studies*, though, Lawrence’s vision – unlike Toomer’s – does not quite extend to miscegenation (‘reconciliation in the flesh’). However, shortly after the American

⁴¹⁷ Toomer, “The Blue Meridian”, pp. 215-217.

publication of *Studies* (in August 1923), Lawrence refers to his essay on *Typee* and *Omoo* in a letter to Luhan: ‘when I say in my book: “one cannot go back,” it is true, one cannot. But your marriage with Tony may even yet be the rounding of a great curve; since certainly he doesn’t merely draw you back, but himself advances perhaps more than you advance, in the essential “onwards.”’⁴¹⁸ Lawrence here recognises – as he could not in *Studies* – the regenerative potential of interracial relations; if Mabel’s marriage to Tony could be ‘the rounding of a great curve’, then communion between different races might be the way forward, the way to avoid the ‘*cul de sac*’ western civilization faces.

Lawrence scholars tend to agree that his views on miscegenation softened in the mid-1920s; most frequently cited in this regard is the transition from *Quetzalcoatl* to *The Plumed Serpent*.⁴¹⁹ In the earlier *Quetzalcoatl*, the protagonist Kate feels ‘that never, never could she give her blood in contact with [the Indian Cipriano]. As if, were she to do so, a stream of dark, corrosive effluence would enter her from him, and hurt her so much that she would be destroyed.’⁴²⁰ Marriage to Cipriano, she feels, would be ‘a false marriage’: ‘There was a gulf between him and her, the gulf of race, of colour, of different aeons of time. He wanted to force a way across the gulf. But that would only mean a mutual destruction’ (Q, 292). Kate’s aversions here mirror the anxieties Lawrence expressed in *Studies* about the results of racial mixing.

Indeed, the beliefs described in *Quetzalcoatl* were not at all uncommon at the time. There was, Roberts explains, an enduring ‘tendency to regard people of mixed race as “degenerate”’; South America was often highlighted as a prime example of

⁴¹⁸ Lawrence, Letter to Luhan, 17 October 1923, *Letters*, Vol. 4, p. 514.

⁴¹⁹ See Ellis, *Dying Game*, p. 113.

⁴²⁰ Lawrence, *Quetzalcoatl*, ed. by N. H. Reeve (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 205.

degeneration stemming from interracial mixing.⁴²¹ Well-known American eugenicists like Grant and Stoddard cautioned against the dangers of miscegenation in their respective books, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History* (1916) and *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920).⁴²² Both promoted the idea of a genetically superior ‘Nordic race’ and warned that this great race, ‘the *Homo europæus*, the white man par excellence’, was coming under threat due to racial mixing.⁴²³ For Grant, miscegenation inevitably ‘gives us a race reverting to the more ancient, generalized and lower type’.⁴²⁴ Mexico, Grant affirms, stands as an example of ‘[w]hat the Melting Pot actually does in practice’; in particular he highlights ‘its incapacity for self-government’.⁴²⁵

Lawrence’s negative opinions on racial mixing were clearly reflective of the beliefs and theories of many early twentieth-century thinkers, though, as David Game notes, Lawrence was not a supporter of the eugenics movement.⁴²⁶ By the time he rewrote *Quetzalcoatl* as *The Plumed Serpent*, he appears to have overcome – or at least tempered significantly – his opposition to interracial marriage. Indeed, the 1926 novel is reflective of a very different dialogue on racial mixing taking place in the early

⁴²¹ Roberts, p. 151.

⁴²² These works quickly made their mark upon popular culture; F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) features a thinly-veiled reference to Stoddard’s book in which Tom Buchanan refers positively to “‘The Rise of the Colored Empires” by this man Goddard’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 14.

⁴²³ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History*, (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1919) p. 167.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 17.

⁴²⁶ David Game, *D. H. Lawrence’s Australia: Anxiety at the Edge of Empire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015) pp. 39-45; A comment in a 1908 letter is often cited as evidence of Lawrence’s belief in eugenics: ‘If I had my way, I would build a lethal chamber as big as the Crystal Palace, with a military band playing softly, and a cinematograph working brightly; then I’d go out in the back streets and main streets and bring them all in, all the sick, the halt, and the maimed’, Letter to Blanche Jennings, 9 October 1908, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 81.

1920s. The merits of miscegenation were a live issue during Lawrence's time in Mexico; he visited the country several times between 1923 and 1925. Following a decade-long revolution, in the early 1920s Mexico was still reckoning with its new identity and with the role that native culture should play within it. Lawrence took a clear interest in these developments. He corresponded with the archaeologist Manuel Gamio in 1924; Gamio sent him a copy of his 1916 book *Forjando Patria* [*Forging a Nation*], in which he posits the fusion of Mexico's different races and cultural traditions as essential to the success of a Mexican nation. In the previous year, as Witter Bynner notes, Lawrence had attempted to set up a meeting with José Vasconcelos, the Mexican Education Minister, with whom he hoped to discuss the 'Indian revival'.⁴²⁷ Vasconcelos would later, in *The Cosmic Race* (1925), envision in Latin America 'the creation of a new race fashioned out of the treasures of all the previous ones: the final race, the cosmic race'.⁴²⁸

There is no evidence to suggest that Lawrence read *The Cosmic Race* while redrafting his Mexican novel, but *The Plumed Serpent* certainly registers the debates around racial mixing in this period as well as the author's shifting attitudes toward interracial marriage. In the 1926 novel, Kate *does* marry Cipriano. However, like the primitivism of this novel, Lawrence's views on racial mixing and intermarriage here seem also to be ambivalent, fluctuating and at times contradictory. References to miscegenation are sometimes coded, as in an early scene in which Mrs Norris complains of the difficulties of keeping her magenta bougainvillea away from her 'rust-

⁴²⁷ Witter Bynner, *Journey with Genius: Recollections and Reflections Concerning the D. H. Lawrences* (London: P. Nevill, 1953) p. 26; Vasconcelos failed to attend this meeting, a slight that enraged Lawrence.

⁴²⁸ José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, trans. by Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) p. 40

scarlet' bell-flowers; her solution is to 'strok[e] the little white roses to make them intervene' (PS, 39).

Julio Toussaint, a character whose sole purpose appears to be the following diatribe on racial mixing, argues that:

When you mix European and American Indian, you mix different blood races, and you produce the half-breed. Now, the half-breed is a calamity. [...] The blood of one race tells him one thing, his blood of another race tells him another. (PS, 64)

Kate's challenge to this contention – her observation that “Some of your serious-minded men [...] say the half-breed is better than the Indian” (PS, 66) – seems already to signal a shift in her ideas about miscegenation. Yet later, Kate is disturbed by the 'blood-familiarity' of her servants, who seem to demand 'her acquiescence to the primeval assertion: *The blood is one blood. We are one blood*' (PS, 416-417). She is happy to share her spirit, but her blood she feels to be 'absolutely her own, her individual own' (PS, 417). Her marriage to Cipriano, then, is perhaps not such a great shift from Lawrence's earlier barring of the possibility of 'reconciliation in the flesh'. Kate's union with Cipriano – much like Luhan's with Tony – is perhaps acceptable to Lawrence because it will produce no children. In this sense, it can be figured as a fusion in the spirit more than one in the flesh: as something like the 'perfect relation' of Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook.

If Lawrence appears in *The Plumed Serpent* to struggle throughout with the issue of miscegenation, by the end of the novel it seems to represent the only way out of the '*cul de sac*' of civilization. Here Lawrence envisages 'a new germ, a new conception of human life, that will arise from the fusion of the old blood-and-vertebrate consciousness with the white man's present mental-spiritual consciousness' (PS,

415). Seeming to echo and extend the ideas he had earlier explored in his American essays, Lawrence foresees the death of both the native culture and the white European culture, but he predicts that their fusion – ‘[t]he sinking of both beings’ – will produce ‘a new being’ (*PS*, 415). Lawrence seems here to reach a position much closer to Toomer’s; both see the future – especially the future of the so-called ‘New World’ – as dependent upon a fusion of old and new and a ‘great swerve’ in humanity’s trajectory to bring the different races into harmony.

Star-Equilibrium: *Women in Love* and *Eight-Day World*

“What I want is a strange conjunction with you —” he said quietly; “not meeting and mingling — you are quite right — but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings — as the stars balance each other.” (*WL*, 148)

Closely related to the ideas Lawrence and Toomer espoused about a new race and a ‘new kind of man’ were necessarily concerns with new relationships between people. Lawrence’s writings on race in *The Plumed Serpent*, *Studies* and elsewhere reveal a dialectic that shares much with his views on personal relationships. He resists any form of merging or mingling that might threaten the status and separateness of the individual, but he also rejects the idea of complete isolation. A very similar dialectic is evident in Toomer’s work. Though he repeatedly – in autobiographical pieces, non-fiction writings and literary work – calls for unity and connection, for the removal of ‘whatever blocks’, he also exhibits an anxiety much like Lawrence’s at the prospect of being possessed by another or of losing one’s own identity to love.

By the mid-late 1920s, Lawrence was convinced that man's neurosis – his fragmented sense of self and false belief in his own absoluteness – could be cured if he could restore his relations with other men and women. In his 1927 review of Trigant Burrow's *The Social Basis of Consciousness*, Lawrence affirms that '[t]he real trouble lies in the inward sense of "separateness," which dominates every man.'⁴²⁹ Here Lawrence also expounds the origins of man's split consciousness and its consequences:

At a certain point in his evolution, man became cognitively conscious: he bit the apple: he began to know. Up till that time his consciousness flowed unaware, as in the animals. Suddenly, his consciousness split. [...] Suddenly aware of himself, and of other selves over against him, man is a prey to the division inside himself. Helplessly he must strive for more consciousness, which means, also, a more intensified aloneness, or individuality; and at the same time he has a horror of his own aloneness, and a blind, dim yearning for the old togetherness of the far past, what Dr Burrow calls the preconscious state. What man really wants, according to Dr Burrow, is a sense of togetherness with his fellow man, which shall balance the secret but overmastering sense of separateness and aloneness which now dominates him.⁴³⁰

Lawrence's review of Burrow reveals much about his own thinking on man's relation to himself and to others. Here the focus is on society and social problems as the root of man's divided self. For Lawrence, '[s]o long as men are inwardly dominated by their own isolation, their own absoluteness, [...] nothing is possible but insanity more or less pronounced.'⁴³¹ Lawrence himself often yearned for connection with others. He wrote in a July 1926 letter: 'I should love to be connected with something, with some few

⁴²⁹ Lawrence, Review of *The Social Basis of Consciousness* by Trigant Burrow, *Introductions and Reviews*, pp. 329-336 (p. 332).

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 332-333.

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, p. 336.

people, in something. As far as anything matters, I have always been very much alone, and regretted it.⁴³²

In *Women in Love*, Birkin's desire for a perfected relation between the sexes finds expression in the concept of 'star-equilibrium' described above. It is in direct contrast to Ursula's conception of love as an 'absolute surrender'; should Birkin give himself to her entirely, she would be 'his humble slave – whether he wanted it or not' (*WL*, 265). But what Birkin wants is not submission or possession; he cannot abide '[t]he merging, the clutching, the mingling of love' (*WL*, 200). He desires rather a constellation or polarization of two individuals in which each maintains their discrete oneness: 'two pure beings, each constituting the freedom of the other, balancing each other like two poles of one force' (*WL*, 199).

The exploration of star-equilibrium in *Women in Love* was a late addition to the novel included around the time Lawrence began his American essays. It marks a distinct transition from *The Rainbow* in which, as Kinkead-Weekes notes, 'it was Tom and Lydia's willingness to abandon themselves to each other (though firmly founded in themselves) that became the measure of the worsening later relationships. Now it seems that what is being emphasized above all is a singleness that must precede, and be the condition of, relationship in reverence.'⁴³³ Lawrence's American essays register this shift. In the first version of his essay on Edgar Allen Poe (1919), Lawrence declares:

the triumph of love, which is the triumph of life and creation, does not lie in merging, mingling, in absolute identification of the lover with the beloved. It lies in the communion of beings, who, in the very perfection of communion, recognise and allow the mutual otherness. There is no desire to transgress

⁴³² Lawrence, Letter to Rolf Gardiner, 22 July 1926, *Letters*, Vol. 5, p. 501.

⁴³³ Kinkead-Weekes, "The Genesis of Lawrence's Psychology Books: An Overview", *D. H. Lawrence Review* (27:2-3) [1997-1998] 153-170 (pp. 156-157).

the bounds of being. Each self remains utterly itself – becomes, indeed, most burningly and transcendently itself in the uttermost embrace or communion with the other. (*SCAL*, 240)

Here Lawrence envisions human connectedness without the dreaded ‘merging’, the loss of individual selfhood: a ‘communion of beings’ in which the self ‘remains utterly itself’. He seeks a middle way, an alignment much like that he describes between Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook: a ‘perfect relation’ symbolising ‘the new nucleus of a new society’ (*SCAL*, 58). What Birkin desires with Ursula is described in very similar terms: “‘It’s a perfected relation between you and me, and others — the perfect relation — so that we are free together’” (*WL*, 316).

Toomer was also deeply concerned with human connection, with relationships between men and women. His 1922 play, *Natalie Mann*, reveals a set of characters and concerns analogous to Lawrence’s in *Women in Love*. Set in the middle-class African American community of Washington D. C., where Toomer grew up, *Natalie Mann* explores a range of issues around human connection and the nature of male-female relationships. The characters in this play persistently question how manhood and womanhood should look and what constitutes a ‘home’. Nathan Merrill and Natalie Mann are clear counterparts. Nathan, the Toomer-figure, is marginally older, but meddling minor characters persistently tell Natalie that she is too much of a woman for him, and he too little a man.

Like Ursula and Birkin, Nathan and Natalie reject the older characters’ valorization of traditional marriage and home; at the suggestion that she marry anyone at all but Nathan and start a home, Natalie announces: ‘I would rather die outright, be burnt or lynched, than to build myself such a sepulchre, to cheat death by calling it home’ (*NM*, 296). Nathan’s aloofness and his proselytizing on the correct nature of

life, love and personal development align him with Birkin as well as with Toomer. Robert B. Jones also makes this connection, calling Nathan a 'kindred spirit' of Lawrence's Birkin.⁴³⁴ Just as Birkin desires "an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings" (*WL*, 148), Nathan persuades Natalie that her life should not revolve around a man. Natalie's desire to 'melt [herself] into [him]' (*NM*, 299) is analogous to Ursula's wish for self-abandonment in love. Nathan sees Natalie's ardour, her complete absorption in him, as a symptom of her 'present unawakened condition' (*NM*, 294).⁴³⁵ He warns her: 'You haven't learned to use your energies. You think they all focus on me. You're wrong' (*NM*, 298). For Nathan, Natalie's complete submission to him in marriage would constitute '[a] one-sided destruction, annihilation or absorption' (*NM*, 299) and violate 'the principle of integrity, the principle that is the foundation of every individual life' (*NM*, 299). He feels that she would become a 'spiritual eunuch'; he cannot allow this: 'I will not let you. Life lies outside of me' (*NM*, 300).

Toomer would later make issues of human connection and autonomy central again in "Eight-Day World", the unpublished novel he considered his masterpiece. He had written "Transatlantic", an earlier version of the novel, in seventeen days during a 1929 stay in Fontainebleau.⁴³⁶ Set onboard a transatlantic liner, Toomer had high hopes for the novel; he proposed it to the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* as the first of a series of stories set aboard their ships. The idea was swiftly rejected; Toomer

⁴³⁴ Robert B. Jones, *Jean Toomer and the Prison-House of Thought* (The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, 1993) p. 30.

⁴³⁵ Even before having become involved with Gurdjieff, Toomer seems here to utilise Gurdjieffian language in Nathan's diagnosis of Natalie's immaturity; the mystic described the desired state of 'cosmic consciousness' as being fully 'awake' (most people, he claimed, exist habitually in a state of 'waking sleep' or 'hypnotic sleep').

⁴³⁶ Kerman and Eldridge, p. 188.

blamed the 'mark of *Cane*', claiming that '[o]ne of the men had read a French review of *Cane*. [...] It called me a black poet, grouping me with Walrond and McKay. What prestige would come to the French Line by having a black poet write of life on one of their ships?'⁴³⁷ By 1933, he had substantially revised and expanded "Transatlantic", which he now called "Eight-Day World" (the transatlantic crossing depicted spans eight days).⁴³⁸

The revised novel – Toomer's longest – follows a diverse group of passengers aboard the *S. S. Burgundy*. The ship, Toomer's narrator stresses throughout, is supposed to represent a microcosm of American society, with a mixture of classes, races and personalities onboard. But the liner is also figured as a kind of floating hospital; its passengers are all – for various reasons – deeply dissatisfied with their lives and in need of rejuvenation. "Eight-Day World" is an odd, meandering work combining satire and allegory with Toomer's philosophical musings and posturings. Like *Natalie Mann*, it is concerned with the nature of both male-female and male-male relationships. Again, parallels with *Women in Love* suggest themselves. The two male protagonists, Hod Lorimer and Hugh Langley – linked like Nathan and Natalie by their matching initials – are opposing personalities like Gerald and Birkin. Hod is described as a 'puritanical sensualist'; he represents 'the steamroller type of American masculinity', while Hugh is 'a suspicious philosopher' (*EDW*, 2-3). Much like the 'strange enmity' between Gerald and Birkin 'that was very near love' (*WL*, 33), Hod

⁴³⁷ Toomer, quoted in Michael Nowlin, "The Strange Literary Career of Jean Toomer" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 2011) 207-235 (p. 223).

⁴³⁸ Toomer revised "Eight-Day World" again and had substantially reduced it by 1935. The longer 1933 version of the novel is cited here.

and Hugh are initially described as 'two men, hostile, friendly, each strong in his own way' (*EDW*, 95).

The characters in "Eight-Day World" are all attempting to achieve a balance between separateness and merging, between remaining entirely alone and aloof in the world and being possessed by another. In rhetoric reminiscent of both Birkin's diatribes on 'star-equilibrium' and Lawrence's pronouncements in *Studies* upon the seemingly contradictory laws of 'organic life', Hugh philosophizes that:

We have two main forces in us, two directions which are opposed, though not necessarily in conflict. [...] The first involves all that living can give, the desire for it, the hunger, the drive to participate in and partake of the life of natural man in the fullest possible way. The second involves a withdrawal from life, a pursuit of special experiences, work according to an austere discipline, the wish for the unattainable. [...] The aim, then, is to balance them, to be able to follow one without forsaking the other, to make them complement rather than contradict or negate each other. (*EDW*, 407)

Hod and Hugh in particular are caught between these opposing forces. Hod is desperate to connect with others, to 'surrender' himself, but struggles: "I want to be a part of things. Yet, try as I will, I do not mix, I do not blend" (*EDW*, 118). Hugh is even more remote and removed from others. Both men flit between a series of relationships and dalliances with fellow passengers (often with the same women) in search of real connection.

At the novel's opening, Hod is torn between two women who represent two very different modes of love: his wife, Barbara and another woman, Vera. Much like Hermione, who possesses 'a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being' (*WL*, 160), Barbara 'is 'unformed, unfilled, no more than a piece of a woman with which a whole woman might be made' (*EDW*, 152). Vera, conversely, is 'already made' (*EDW*, 152). She is 'in the relentless stream, moving, striving onward with individuality through its

swirls and cross-currents', while Barbara, 'less individualized, is whirled and eddied by the stream' (EDW, 149). Comparable to Lawrence's quasi-cannibalistic lovely lady, Barbara is described as 'a spiritual bloodsucker, a new kind of vampire, living on the souls of others' (EDW, 176). But Vera is also possessive: "I'm going to hold and claim you relentlessly, blood, body, everything" (EDW, 22).

Much as Birkin laments that 'woman was always so horrible and clutching, she had such a lust for possession' (WL, 200), throughout "Eight-Day World", possessiveness in love is often at issue. Hod wants to set Barbara free, to let her 'belong to herself': "I won't try to possess you. I belong more to myself, and I can let you belong to yourself" (EDW, 167). But later, when *Hugh* falls in love with Barbara, he complains that '[t]he beauty in her is not a thing to be possessed. [...] marriage with her would not place the thing I love in my possession. It would still be off there, like a star' (EDW, 394). Unlike Birkin's desired 'star-equilibrium', Hugh mourns the impossibility of possessing Barbara, who is 'like a star'. Hugh thus moves on to Vera, who he finds more willing to offer herself up: 'She gave him herself. And they were claimed by the great stream of all living and all binding' (EDW, 402). He comes to realise that 'Barbara and Vera were at opposite poles. They evoked totally different, perhaps complementary parts of himself' (EDW, 438).

The clear preoccupation in the unpublished novel with reformulating relationships and quelling female possessiveness aligns "Eight-Day World" not only with *Women in Love*, but with the three novellas Toomer reviewed in *Broom* magazine in 1923. In *The Captain's Doll*, *The Fox* and *The Ladybird*, Lawrence diagnoses the brokenness of male-female relationships in the post-war period. Like the characters in *Natalie Mann*, Lawrence is concerned in these stories with how proper relations between men and women should look. He had written the three stories in late 1921

and determined to keep them together. The war looms large in all of these stories; here Lawrence depicts not only literal dismemberment and physical injury as natural consequences, but also a culture and a people blown apart: relationships and gender roles irrevocably transformed. *The Captain's Doll* and *The Ladybird* in particular deal with issues of possessiveness and power in male-female relationships.

In *The Captain's Doll*, the titular Captain Hepburn seeks a new kind of relationship with a German aristocrat, Hannele, who has made a doll of him: a symbol of her will to possess him. Hepburn wants badly to reverse this dynamic: to possess Hannele, 'to make her love him so that he had power over her' and to 'bully her, physically, sexually, and from the inside'.⁴³⁹ After they climb a glacier together in a symbolic scene, Hepburn decides to marry Hannele, but he does not desire a marriage based upon love. Rather, he explains: 'I want a woman to honour and obey me' (Fox, 150). 'If a woman loves you,' Hepburn believes, 'she'll make a doll out of you. [...] And when she's got your doll, that's all she wants. And that's what love means' (Fox, 151). Similarly, in *The Ladybird*, a young woman whose husband (Basil, a prisoner of war at the story's opening) adores and worships her is seduced by a convalescing German soldier, the mercurial Count Psanek. He proposes an alternative view of love. For the Count, love is not 'the great power that draws human beings together' (Fox, 201). Rather, man's will is 'absolute to him. Beyond the interference of any other creature' (Fox, 201). Daphne's shift from Basil's self-sacrificing adoration to the Count's dark possessiveness ('[i]n the dark you are mine. And when you die you are mine' (Fox, 216)) is indicative of a wider shift in post-war gender relations.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Lawrence, *The Fox, The Captain's Doll, The Ladybird*, ed. by Dieter Mehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 139.

⁴⁴⁰ See Lawrence, "The Risen Lord", *Late Essays and Articles*, pp. 265-273.

Toomer does not appear to have recognised the parallel concerns between Lawrence's novellas and his own work in his 1923 review. "Notations on *The Captain's Doll*" is formulaic in structure and scathing in tone. Toomer brings to bear a long list of grievances regarding Lawrence's style and characterization in particular. Among them are the Englishman's over-use of symbols and a 'descriptive faculty that tends to overshadow or ignore the essential progression of the characters'.⁴⁴¹ Relations between lovers thus appear especially absurd to Toomer. 'In fact', Toomer opines, 'the element of absurdity is so near the surface of these tales, that one with difficulty restrains the conviction that Mr. Lawrence is laughing all the while.'⁴⁴² Yet Toomer also complains of 'an evidently earnest purpose that destroys the fun one might have from those incidents that are frankly absurd', referencing the odd portrait of Captain Hepburn, sunflowers and a poached egg on toast.⁴⁴³ In conclusion, he judges that '[t]his seriousness will not permit of the volume being taken as a bit of incidental writing. Unfortunately, on no other basis can one claim for it a literary value.'⁴⁴⁴

Ironically, the author of *Cane* – widely deemed the most modernist Harlem Renaissance text – seemingly fails to identify Lawrence's modernist satire in this volume. But Toomer is also insightful in his critique of these stories which together 'convey a serious sense of the unusual'.⁴⁴⁵ He recognises the unusual and ambiguous tone of these works which many Lawrence scholars have also struggled to articulate. Granofsky indeed notes that these stories are in many ways 'typically Lawrentian', but they also contain 'much that is unusual for Lawrence' and 'much that strongly suggests

⁴⁴¹ Jean Toomer, "Notations on *The Captain's Doll*", *Broom*, Volume 5, Number 1, August 1923, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 47.

an uncertainty, a groping for rather than an advocacy of a new way'.⁴⁴⁶ The same might be said of "Eight-Day World". Indeed, aspects of Toomer's unpublished novel are far more absurd than anything in Lawrence's novellas.

Hugh and Barbara eventually achieve something approaching Birkin's 'star-equilibrium'. Finally, they do not surrender themselves to one another or seek to possess each other: 'All was for her, all of him, coming into her. A surrendering, yes; but more a surrendering of herself *to herself* than to him. [...] At the first touch of her body he knew the experience was not for him, but through him' (*EDW*, 599). Yet this, Toomer suggests, is not quite the ideal relation Hugh seeks. It is not the 'melting into pure communion' in 'the fire of [...] extreme sensual love' that Lawrence deems the only thing that can 'fuse us from the chaos into our own unique gem-like separateness of being'.⁴⁴⁷ Barbara is still 'and always will be starry and baffling' to Hugh, while Hod feels that Vera has not relinquished her possessiveness and domination of him: "Everytime I'm with her now, [...] she pins me, slows me down, makes me feel guilty" (*EDW*, 605).

Both relationships are ultimately unsatisfying and unbalanced. Indeed, in "Eight-Day World", the most 'perfect' relation develops between Hugh and Hod. Where Birkin's desired *Blutbrüderschaft* with Gerald is ultimately unfulfilled, Toomer's male protagonists – having overcome initially stormy relations – can proclaim themselves "brothers by blood and soul and all that's binding" (*EDW*, 609). At the novel's end, with the transatlantic crossing complete, Hugh comes to feel that life onboard the *Burgundy* has all been '[n]othing but titillation' (*EDW*, 621); he can commit

⁴⁴⁶ Granofsky, *D.H. Lawrence and Survival: Darwinism in the Fiction of the Transitional Period* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003) p. 43.

⁴⁴⁷ Lawrence, "Love", *Reflections*, p. 10.

to neither Barbara nor Vera nor Hod. Finally, he forsakes connection for isolation; rather than joining the other ex-passengers for dinner, he resolves to go off alone.

S. P. Fullinwider, among the first critics to read “Eight-Day World” after Toomer’s papers were acquired by Fisk University in the early 1960s, affirms that the unpublished novel ‘ended as Toomer had ended, with all problems solved, with everyone satisfied. The artist could no longer express modern man’s restlessness and lostness. His work had become smug – and dead.’⁴⁴⁸ The ending of “Eight-Day World” (unaltered in the shortened 1935 version) *is* something of an anti-climax. Yet the conclusion solves nothing of ‘modern man’s restlessness and lostness’. Hugh – Toomer’s sensitive philosopher character – in particular seems an embodiment of modern discontent and alienation. At the end of the ‘eight-day world’ of the ship – during which a sense of community and connection had seemed possible (‘all of them were together, interwoven, blended, electrically awake’ (*EDW*, 611)) – he senses the disintegration of these bonds and of the life he had lived onboard the ship: ‘This was a breaking world’ (*EDW*, 615). Only within the limited temporal and spatial confines of a transatlantic crossing, it seems, can connection be achieved.

⁴⁴⁸ S. P. Fullinwider, “Jean Toomer: Lost Generation, or Negro Renaissance?”, *Phylon*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1966) pp. 396-403 (p. 402).

‘[A] new life amongst us’⁴⁴⁹: Rananim, Portage and Taos

Toomer had been composing “Eight-Day World” during a real-world experience testing the possibilities of living in an isolated community: the 1931 Portage experiment. Indeed, so connected were the two projects that Toomer – the group leader and main focus of the experiment – titled himself ‘Captain’ and christened his car the *S. S. Burgundy*. Like Birkin, Lawrence and Toomer both believed in the utopian potential of a few like-minded people living together, thinking and working towards new ways of living. Their real-world efforts to put into practice what they preached in their writing were largely unsuccessful. Again, in seeking to transform and regenerate society, both men were torn between their desire for meaningful connection with others and their need for independence. Yet throughout their lives they remained committed to the idea that the development of an ideal community and of transformed people was possible. At certain points in their lives, the locus of these ideas for both men was Taos, New Mexico.

Since adolescence, Lawrence had expressed the desire to establish an independent community; first, as he explained to Jesse Chambers, he imagined a group of like-minded people gathered in a big house in Nottingham.⁴⁵⁰ Later he would dream of Rananim: the quasi-utopian society he wished to create with other writers and artists. The importance of Rananim to Lawrence’s vision of a transformed society has long been emphasized by Lawrence scholars, but Rananim was never a fixed idea; its location, its composition, its purpose and its values changed and evolved over

⁴⁴⁹ Lawrence, Letter to Ottoline Morrell, 1 February 1915, *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 271.

⁴⁵⁰ Chambers, p. 49.

Lawrence's life. In the space of only a few days in January 1915, Lawrence offered three rather different visions of Rananim in his letters. He described his ideal community to S. S. Kotliansky (Kot) as 'an Order of the Knights of Rananim' with the motto "Fier"; the badge would be a phoenix rising from the flames.⁴⁵¹ On the same day, he suggested to Ottoline Morrell that his personal motto would be 'Fierté, Inégalité, Hostilité' and expressed his desire to 'rally against humanity'.⁴⁵² He portrayed his 'pet scheme' quite differently two weeks later to Willie Hopkin, expressing a desire 'to gather together about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor' to found a small 'colony' where there was to be 'no money, but a sort of communism'.⁴⁵³ The community Lawrence describes here is rather like the utopian 'nowhere' ('nowhere' being almost a translation of the Greek word, meaning 'no place') Birkin imagines, "where one needn't wear much clothes—none even—where one meets a few people who have gone through enough" (*WL*, 316). At various times in his life, he envisaged Rananim as a remote island or a 'floating Utopia' (a boat); several other locations were also considered, including Florida, the Andes, the South Sea Islands. Even Cornwall for a time seemed a possible site for Lawrence's ideal community; he invited Katherine Mansfield and John Middleton Murry to live next door to he and Frieda in 1916, but this venture was short-lived as strains in their relations developed quickly. Later, Lawrence tried to convince friends to join them in Taos; only Dorothy Brett did after an eventful night at the Café Royal.

In 1931, Toomer would attempt an experiment that had much in common with Lawrence's vision of Rananim. His venture, in Portage, Wisconsin, was in many ways

⁴⁵¹ Lawrence, Letter to S. S. Kotliansky, 3 January 1915, *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 252.

⁴⁵² Lawrence, Letter to Ottoline Morrell, 3 January 1915, *ibid*, p. 254.

⁴⁵³ Lawrence, Letter to Willie Hopkin, January 18, 1915, *ibid*, p. 259.

more successful. Along with Latimer, he gathered people from Chicago, Portage and the surrounding areas to an isolated cottage. Toomer was the leader and focus of the two-month experiment; he gave readings and impressed listeners with his charisma and delivery as much as with the unconventional philosophy he described. The aim of the summer experiment, as Kerman and Eldridge note, was 'to explore the individual's ability to break away from behavioural patterns that by cultural expectations or by personal habit had constrained human potential.'⁴⁵⁴ Though perhaps more regimented and certainly more clearly based in a particular philosophy (Gurdjieff's) than the community Lawrence imagined, the Portage experiment was at base also an attempt to escape from the pressures and strictures of mainstream modern life and live harmoniously with others.

The summer project was generally considered a success. As Toomer wrote in "Portage Potential", a thorough account of the experiment written during winter 1931, '[t]he experiences of the summer had convinced [him] that the sharing of a common existence for purposes of self-development and group development was not only possible but fruitful.'⁴⁵⁵ Spurred by this success, Toomer looked to establish a permanent institute, a house where some of his followers would live together and a 'tangible manifestation of his universal vision.'⁴⁵⁶ This, however, proved impossible; there was little money for such a venture and Toomer's participants, though grateful for the summer, were eager to get back to their own homes and normal lives.

Thus, like Lawrence's Ranim, Toomer's realisation of his ideal community was ultimately frustrated. Perhaps the closest either ever came to a long-term

⁴⁵⁴ Kerman and Eldridge, p. 195.

⁴⁵⁵ Toomer, "Portage Potential", Box 35, Folder 750, JTP, p. 181.

⁴⁵⁶ Kerman and Eldridge, p. 199.

realisation of their imagined society was in Taos. Indeed, in both writers' lives, their experiences of Taos had a profound and wide-ranging impact. Both had been summoned by Luhan, who saw Taos as a potential site for the Western world's redemption. She gathered people there whom she felt would spread word of Taos and make it known throughout the world as a centre for spiritual development and regeneration. In particular, she gathered men whom she deemed capable of translating and vivifying her vision. For Lois Palken Rudnick, 'Mabel turned to men like Lawrence because [...] [t]hey could stimulate that part of her which never ceased wanting to know, control, and shape other lives. There was, however, only one time when her marriage was seriously threatened by such a man.'⁴⁵⁷ Toomer was this man; Rudnick further notes that Lawrence's departure 'seems to have stimulated her attentions to a man who she believed might assuage the spiritual hunger that Lawrence left unsatisfied.'⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, she appears to have recognised similar qualities in Lawrence and Toomer; both she considered highly intelligent, powerful men through whom she might achieve her own goals.

Lawrence's utopian project was often associated with America, where he believed, as he wrote in 1922, 'one can catch up some kind of emotional impetus from the aboriginal Indians and from the aboriginal air and land, that will carry one over this crisis of the world's soul depression, into a new epoch'.⁴⁵⁹ In a 1921 letter to Luhan, before having ever visited, Lawrence seems open to the idea of Taos as a potential site of racial fusion and rebirth: 'I believe what you say – one must somehow bring together two ends of humanity, our own thin end, and the last dark strand from the

⁴⁵⁷ Lois Palken Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1984) p. 226.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 224.

⁴⁵⁹ Lawrence, Letter to Thomas Seltzer, 9 January 1922, *Letters*, Vol. 4, p. 157.

previous, pre-white era. [...] Is Taos the place?’⁴⁶⁰ For Lawrence and Toomer, as for Luhan, Taos would indeed come to represent a place in which disparate things could be brought together and cultures could combine in a ‘spiritual renaissance’.⁴⁶¹ In Taos at least, new ways of living seemed possible.

In a late essay, Lawrence describes New Mexico as ‘the greatest experience from the outside world that I have ever had.’⁴⁶² He explains that ‘[c]urious as it may sound, it was New Mexico that liberated me from the present era of civilization, the great era of material and mechanical development. [...] the moment I saw the brilliant, proud morning shine high up over the deserts of Santa Fe, something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend.’⁴⁶³ The essay was written in Europe in 1928 after Lawrence’s final departure from New Mexico, so it may be an idealising, nostalgic view of his New Mexican experience. Yet the significance of New Mexico for Lawrence and its impact upon his later works cannot be overestimated. A few months after his death, Frieda wrote to Luhan of the profound importance of Taos for Lawrence: ‘He could never have written *Lady C* – nor the “Apocalypse” nor died so unflinchingly in utter *belief*, if he hadn’t known Taos & *lived* it.’⁴⁶⁴

Taos would also exercise a considerable influence upon Toomer. He had first visited the region, like Lawrence, at Luhan’s invitation. Toomer had met the Luhans in New York at a group set up by A. R. Orage, a prominent English disciple of Gurdjieff, in November 1925. Luhan had first discovered Gurdjieff in the winter of 1924; she was immediately taken with the young Toomer. The youthful disciple was a mesmerising

⁴⁶⁰ Lawrence, Letter to Luhan, 5 November 1921, *ibid*, p. 111.

⁴⁶¹ Kerman and Eldridge, p. 146.

⁴⁶² Lawrence, “New Mexico”, *Mornings in Mexico*, p. 176.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 176.

⁴⁶⁴ Frieda Lawrence, Letter to Luhan, 3 July 1930, Box 23, Folder 633, MDLP.

speaker; upon hearing his public orations and later speaking in private with him, Luhan became convinced that Toomer could be the man, and Gurdjieff's teachings the system, to assist her in finally reaching her potential.

Shortly after their first encounter, Luhan wrote to Toomer 'to tell him that he called forth in her a desire to communicate more deeply, intensively, and significantly than she ever had.'⁴⁶⁵ Losing interest in her husband, she became obsessed with Toomer, whom, she thought, could 'transmute' her fire 'to another centre where it is no less fire but is burning somewhere else' in 'a more lofty region'.⁴⁶⁶ Toomer does not appear to have matched the intensity of Mabel's feelings (though he did not discourage her), but he did develop an intense connection to the people and the landscape of the Southwest. In a letter to Mabel written during his train journey back from Taos after his first visit, he writes: 'To leave was like leaving home. This is the first time in years that I've experienced an emotional attachment to place and people. Only, what I experience is not emotional in the old sense; it is something different, more magnetic and conscious, no sentiment, and more complete.'⁴⁶⁷ Luhan knew that the way to Toomer was through his spiritual leader; she offered him \$14,000 to start a Gurdjieff centre in Taos. Toomer took the money, but the centre was never established.⁴⁶⁸

Toomer would return periodically to Taos several times in the years after his initial visit. In September 1934, he returned to marry his second wife, Marjorie Content. By this time, he had become estranged from Gurdjieff, though he never repudiated his

⁴⁶⁵ Rudnick, p. 228.

⁴⁶⁶ Luhan, Letter to Toomer, quoted in *ibid*, p. 228.

⁴⁶⁷ Luhan, Letter to Toomer, 9 January 1926, Box 34, Folder 993, MDLP, Box 34.

⁴⁶⁸ Luhan wrote asking him to return the money in 1929, and again in 1932. It appears that Toomer never paid her back, but the two continued to correspond until at least 1937.

philosophy. During this trip, he wrote “A Drama of the Southwest”, a play set in an artistic community in Taos. The play was never finished and what does exist of it is not the homage to the Southwest that one might expect (nor is it much of a drama).

Yet Toomer’s notes to the play do reveal more of what Taos meant to him:

Taos is an end-product. It is the end of the slope. [...] It must be plowed under. Out of the fertility which death makes in the soil, a new people with a new form may grow. I dedicate myself to the swift death of the old, to the whole birth of the new. In whatever place I start work, I will call that place Taos.⁴⁶⁹

Taos, for Toomer, is a place of death and rebirth. Much as Lawrence envisaged Taos as a location where the ‘two ends of humanity’ might be brought into harmony, Toomer imagined his vision of the new raceless America as a real possibility there. The borderland of New Mexico can accommodate the racially indeterminate as *Cane’s* settings could not.

Toomer elaborates upon this theme in “New Mexico After India” (written around 1940), a short piece recounting the occasion upon which – much like Lawrence when he first went to Taos – Toomer arrived in the Southwest after a period spent in India and Ceylon. He figures Taos here as a young, growing, changeable part of the world. While in India, Toomer avers, the hills ‘looked so tired, sunbaked, and ancient’, the New Mexican landscape ‘looked recently formed, unspent, active’.⁴⁷⁰ He positions the Southwest as a location midway between New York and India, as a crossroads and an intersection; where the labyrinthine Indian caste system seems to Toomer to be ‘a social complexity which no one could unravel’, the situation in the Southwest is

⁴⁶⁹ Toomer, “A Drama of the Southwest (Notes)”, Box 44, Folder 913, JTP.

⁴⁷⁰ Toomer, “New Mexico After India” in Rusch, p. 250.

comparatively 'simple and free'.⁴⁷¹ He ends this short piece by noting the significance of New Mexico for him, in terms evocative of Lawrence's description above:

I have never tried to put in words the unique gift of New Mexico to me. [...] Something of New Mexico came to me for the first time fifteen years ago. It was a penetration deep under the skin. Ever since there has existed a special polarization between this human being and the people and earth of the Southwest.⁴⁷²

The language of polarization here is strikingly similar to that employed by Lawrence in *Studies* and in his writings on psychoanalysis. It is replicated in Toomer's "Unidentified Draft", in which he describes his conflicted feelings about the region: 'I am attracted and repelled, attracted by the actual magnificence of physical New Mexico, attracted by my visions of the potentialities of life here, yet repelled by a number of trivial matters'.⁴⁷³ He considered seriously buying land in New Mexico and searched for several years: 'My wife and I are looking at land. We looked last year. We will look the next.'⁴⁷⁴ But Toomer never did make a permanent home in Taos.

After leaving New Mexico for the last time in mid-1925, Lawrence appears to have accepted that his ideal community would not be possible: 'That Rananim of ours', he wrote to Kot in January 1926, 'has sunk out of sight'.⁴⁷⁵ Yet Lawrence did not abandon his utopian dreams entirely. The 1927 unfinished short story, "A Dream of Life", depicts a utopian future in which men and women live in harmony with nature and with each other.⁴⁷⁶ Having sketched the broken culture of his native English

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, p. 251.

⁴⁷² Ibid, p. 252.

⁴⁷³ Toomer, "Unidentified Draft", Box 48, Folder 1014, JTP, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁵ Lawrence, Letter to S. S. Kotliansky, 4 January 1926, *Letters*, Vol. 5, p. 367.

⁴⁷⁶ Lawrence left the story untitled and it is also commonly known (as in the Cambridge *Late Essays and Articles*) as '[Autobiographical Fragment]'.

midlands, in this vision of the distant future (the narrator falls asleep in 1927 and wakes up in 2927), Lawrence imagines a return to wholeness, to the individual who is 'like a whole fruit, body and mind and spirit, without split'.⁴⁷⁷ As Booth notes, the unfinished story can be read as a response to William Morris' utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1890); though incomplete, "A Dream of Life" demonstrates that 'Lawrence's commitment to bringing about a transformed society remained resolute even as it became harder and harder for him to imagine how it could be brought about, as he acknowledged that he would not belong in a new world'.⁴⁷⁸

Toomer also remained resolute in his belief that real change was possible, even as the world seemed to be sinking into greater depths of chaos. In an undated, handwritten notebook (probably from around 1947), Toomer combines an apocalyptic outlook with a steadfastly utopian one. Taos, again, is the backdrop:

I expect that before I finish writing this book something will happen in the world, something momentous. Either we shall be transformed, lifted above these selves into larger beings, raised above these problems into a unity with all creation; or the Third World War will begin. Either men and women with Christ-like qualities will appear in every country, or the atom bombs will begin to fall. [...]

I grant it is more probable that we shall have a third World War than that there shall be a Christ in every country. Yet new men and women are as possible as war. I will hold to the faith that we will be reborn until I see destruction sweep the earth and I am knocked to smithereens.⁴⁷⁹

For Lawrence and Toomer, in contrast to many of their modernist contemporaries, utopian impulses seem always to trump dystopian fears.

⁴⁷⁷ Lawrence, '[Autobiographical Fragment]', *Late Essays and Articles*, p. 62

⁴⁷⁸ Booth, "Dreaming Better Dreams: D. H. Lawrence, the Wilkinsons, and William Morris", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 36.2, Autumn 2011, 27-42 (pp. 28, 38).

⁴⁷⁹ Toomer, "The Dust of Abiquiu" in Rusch, p. 244.

Their efforts to forge a new way of living in harmony with others were ultimately frustrated and incomplete, but they never gave up hope that change was possible. Neither ever stopped searching for meaning in life: for a sense of wholeness. The realities of their lives and work of course did not always amount to the wholeness they craved. Both men were in fundamental ways *unwhole*. Toomer professes his contradictory personality in “Reflections of an Earth-Being”: ‘I am a home-man and a wanderer, a patriarch and a lone nomad. [...] A devil and a saint.’⁴⁸⁰ Lawrence accepted that ‘[t]he whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another. Me, man alive, I am a very curious assembly of incongruous parts.’⁴⁸¹

For Gorham Munson, writing in 1968, the year after Toomer’s death (and the year *Cane* was re-issued), Toomer was ultimately ‘a casualty on the bridge of Estador. His significance abides in his valiant attempt to “Walk high on the bridge of Estador, / No one has ever walked there before.”’⁴⁸² The image of the ‘bridge of Estador’, a reference to an unpublished poem by Munson and Toomer’s mutual friend Hart Crane, symbolises Toomer’s pursuit of new ways of living, his striving to reach the ‘Promised Land’.⁴⁸³ Similarly, in “Climbing Down Pisgah” (1924), Lawrence references the mountain from which Moses saw the ‘Promised Land’. Previous generations of writers, he affirms, wrote in order to give their readers ‘a sense of wholeness’ and ‘a oneness with the vast invisible universe.’⁴⁸⁴ But now, Lawrence avers, ‘[t]he game is up’; ‘[w]e reached the top of Pisgah, and looking down, saw the graveyard of

⁴⁸⁰ Toomer, “Reflections of an Earth-Being”, *Wayward*, pp. 21-22

⁴⁸¹ Lawrence, “Why the Novel Matters”, p. 196.

⁴⁸² Gorham Munson, quoted in Kerman and Eldridge, p. 391.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

⁴⁸⁴ Lawrence, “Climbing Down Pisgah”, *Reflections*, p. 225

humanity'.⁴⁸⁵ The role of the writer, then, is no longer to provide a sense of wholeness and oneness – or, like Goethe, of man's accommodation with society.

Neither Toomer nor Lawrence would ever achieve 'mutual accommodation' with society. For Lawrence, an ex-teacher, and Toomer, whose writings became increasingly didactic after his discovery of Gurdjieff, a sense of responsibility toward others and the belief that people – given some direction – could 'alter, and have more sense' were significant motivations for their writing.⁴⁸⁶ Both expended much time and energy in trying to communicate to others how they might find wholeness, but never succeeded in finding it for themselves. In a similar way, as Bell notes, '[i]n so far as the *Bildungsroman* survives into modernity, [...] it is largely by reflecting on the paradox of its own combined impossibility and necessity.'⁴⁸⁷ Efforts to form a new society and new people seem inevitably plagued by a comparable paradox.

Lawrence and Toomer were restless thinkers, embracing various 'systems' and philosophies only to abandon them and perhaps revisit them years later, as the 'broken circle' of Toomer's life saw him return to Gurdjieff in later life. At each stage of their literary and philosophical development, they held steadfastly to a vision of a transformed society, new people and new forms of connection, but they themselves were not the model members of the new society they imagined: they could not always connect. Like E. M. Forster, whose famous epigraph to *Howards End* (1910) – 'Only connect...' – appears both to epitomize the author's belief in the supreme value of indiscriminating human connectedness and to cast doubt upon the possibility (or, indeed, desirability) of such connection, Toomer and Lawrence seem ultimately to

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 226

⁴⁸⁶ Lawrence, Letter to Arthur McLeod, 23 April 1913, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 544.

⁴⁸⁷ Bell, *Open Secrets*, p. 11.

suggest that the conditions of modernity make any form of 'accommodation' with society – any true connectedness – almost impossible.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000) p. xxxii.

Chapter 4

'Becoming [the superwoman] you are'⁴⁸⁹: Zora Neale Hurston

We [...] *want to become those we are*— human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.⁴⁹⁰

Of the four Harlem Renaissance writers discussed in this thesis, Hurston is surely Lawrence's most unexpected interlocutor. They certainly appear an unusual pairing: one, a writer implicated in what Frances Beal would later describe as the 'double jeopardy' of being both black and female; the other, a white male author now frequently tarred with both the racist and misogynist brush. One is a much-loved icon of the Harlem Renaissance, posthumously recognised as 'A Genius of the South', while the other remains a controversial figure for many.⁴⁹¹ Indeed, if Hurston, as Carla Kaplan affirms, has 'often been loved too simply', Lawrence has perhaps been loathed too simply.⁴⁹²

I position Hurston and Lawrence here as modernists for whom the same philosophical and ontological issues were often central, although they lived and worked in strikingly different contexts. Specifically, I argue that Lawrence and Hurston can both be read as belonging to a vitalist tradition and I ask what this means for the

⁴⁸⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, trans. by Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. 31.

⁴⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 266.

⁴⁹¹ 'A Genius of the South' forms part of the inscription Alice Walker chose for Hurston's gravestone after discovering her unmarked grave in 1973.

⁴⁹² Carla Kaplan (ed.), *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* (New York: Doubleday, 2002) p. 30.

way we view Hurston, in particular. Hurston's thought aligns with Lawrence's in a surprising number of ways. Both were committed individualists often sceptical of the masses and of organised religion, yet they also share a vitalist belief in the connectedness of all things. Much as Toomer sought to escape limiting racial binaries and to form a new kind of community, Hurston maintained a similarly utopian belief in the importance of the individual: she also desired to break away from constraint, from the duties and restrictions applied to her as an African American woman writer. Read together, Hurston and Lawrence disrupt the contexts in which they have routinely been interpreted and trouble modernist delineations, demonstrating how artists separated by factors of race, nationality and gender worked in linked relationship to create modernism.

Hurston has not always been considered a co-creator of modernism. Wall noted in 2006 that Hurston had 'just recently been recognized as a modernist.'⁴⁹³ Today, Hurston is increasingly being read within a wider context of not only American modernism but Afromodernisms, transatlantic modernisms and global modernisms.⁴⁹⁴ Yet – as the recent marketing and reception of *Barracoon* demonstrated – the tendency to figure her as a folk artist and writer in the vernacular tradition, largely divorced from the wider concerns of modernist thought and western philosophy, endures. This chapter aims to counter this simplistic view of Hurston, which seems as much a product of her own self-fashioning as of those, like Alice Walker, who have shaped her image since the 1970s.

⁴⁹³ Wall, "Zora Neale Hurston: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*", *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, ed. by David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) p. 376.

⁴⁹⁴ See Fionnghuala Sweeney and Kate Marsh (eds.), *Afromodernisms: Paris, Harlem and the Avant-Garde* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Here I posit the Nietzschean model of self-creation, of ‘becoming what you are’, as an over-arching theme uniting these two authors. Nietzschean philosophy is merely one strand of thought connecting Hurston and Lawrence, but it encompasses many of the common themes that emerge when reading them together. Among them are a committed individualism, a rejection of ‘herd morality’, a sceptical view of Christianity and an interest in pre-Christian, polytheistic forms of religion. Vitalism – the philosophy by which living organisms are attributed a certain vital force or *élan vital* distinct from merely chemical or physical processes – emerges as a key and recurring theme; it celebrates the whole, undivided individual whilst simultaneously emphasizing man’s connectedness to nature and to the wider cosmos. Vitalism was hugely popular and influential amongst Edwardian radicals.⁴⁹⁵ However, as Anne Fernihough notes in *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (2013), ‘[m]any literary historians have argued that philosophical vitalism, together with the optimistic message it seemed to contain about the importance and potential of the individual, were quashed by the First World War.’⁴⁹⁶ Drawing upon Fernihough’s contention that in fact post-war modernism on both sides of the Atlantic was deeply influenced by Edwardian thought and that many so-called ‘high modernist’ texts thus continued to be ‘rooted in an anarchistic vitalism’, this chapter traces certain key aspects of the vitalist tradition in Hurston and Lawrence.⁴⁹⁷

I am not the first to suggest a connection between these authors. Herschel Brickell, a contemporary *New York Post* reviewer, compared Hurston favourably to Lawrence,

⁴⁹⁵ Henri Bergson was the leading proponent of vitalism in the Edwardian period; *élan vital* was his concept, first featured in *L’Evolution Créatrice* (1907).

⁴⁹⁶ Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 25.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 111.

praising the 'earthy wholesomeness' of her 'healthy', 'normal' characters in contrast to Lawrence's death-loving 'pseudo-primitives'.⁴⁹⁸ Harold Bloom, writing almost 70 years later, affirms that '[Hurston's] vitalism allies her art to D. H. Lawrence's'; he concedes that '[t]he madness of [...] *The Plumed Serpent* might have amused her, yet', he declares, 'I think of Lawrence at times when I reread *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or "Sweat," the most memorable of her short stories.'⁴⁹⁹ Bloom evokes Lawrence again in connection with Hurston in the introduction to a 2008 edited collection on *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; here he identifies parallels between Hurston's protagonist and two of Lawrence's most celebrated female characters: 'What is strongest in Janie is a persistence akin to Dreiser's Carrie and Lawrence's Ursula and Gudrun, a drive to survive in one's own fashion. Nietzsche's vitalistic injunction, that we must try to live as though it were morning, is the implicit basis of Hurston's true religion, which in its American formulation (Thoreau's), reminds us that only that day dawns to which we are alive.'⁵⁰⁰ 'Despite the differences in temperament', Bloom avers, Hurston and Lawrence can both be considered 'heroic vitalists'.⁵⁰¹

Bloom's brief, yet striking, comments serve here as starting points for a much larger discussion of Hurston, Lawrence and vitalism. The time is ripe for such a dialogue, as scholars today increasingly look to complicate distinctions between Edwardian and modernist. Fernihough's study is among the first and most prominent to demonstrate

⁴⁹⁸ Herschel Brickell, Review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *New York Post*, 14 September 1937; In his seminal biography of Hurston, Robert Hemenway considers Brickell's evaluation as one of many instances in which '[t]he white establishment [...] liked the story, but usually for the wrong reasons', *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977) pp. 240-241.

⁴⁹⁹ Harold Bloom, *Harlem Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004) p. 1.

⁵⁰⁰ Bloom (ed.), *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008) p. 3.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

the continuity of thought between these seemingly discrete periods and literary movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet her efforts do not extend to an African American context. Indeed, in the postscript to *Freewomen and Supermen*, citing the example of Du Bois, Fernihough suggests the fundamental incompatibility of vitalist philosophy with African American thought and with the greatest concerns of the African American artist and intellectual in the early twentieth century.

Her conclusions may accurately reflect the incompatibility of vitalism – and its particular focus upon the individual – with Du Bois' view of the role of the African American artist. However, this should not, I argue, be taken to suggest that all African American writers of the early twentieth century subscribed to this logic. Equally, given the limits of this project, I do not claim to pronounce upon the wider significance of vitalism in the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. Fernihough herself admits that '[t]he role of vitalist philosophy within African American culture during this period would require an entire study in itself.'⁵⁰² My purpose here then, primarily in this chapter's first and second sections, is to demonstrate that the hyper-individualism of Edwardian vitalism finds clear expression in Hurston's work and thought. Thus, where Fernihough's formulation of post-war modernism as a continuation of pre-war Edwardian thought aids in dispelling the perceived autonomy and isolation of those few (almost exclusively white and male) authors considered 'high modernists', I look here to posit an even more radical alteration of this narrative. The inclusion of Hurston as a writer belonging to the vitalist tradition inevitably raises complex questions: what does it mean for an African American writer in this period to prize the individual above the group? How does one square a committed individualism with the expectations

⁵⁰² Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, pp. 255-256.

and duties of the New Negro writer? Vitalism, in this context, is both liberatory and problematic.

I posit Nietzschean vitalism and the ‘drive to survive in one’s own fashion’ that Bloom evokes as intimately linked to the project of ‘becoming who you are’. The idea of ‘becoming who you are’ seems in some ways paradoxical given the juxtaposition of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’; how can we *become* what we already are? In an aphorism in *The Gay Science* titled “Long Live Physics”, Nietzsche argues that ‘becoming who you are’ is not a passive act. As Paul Franco notes, for Nietzsche, ‘[t]he self we become is ultimately made, not found.’⁵⁰³ Becoming what, or who, one is thus entails self-creation of unique, new individuals who make and adhere to their own set of rules for living. It means eschewing the laws and morals enforced by society and creating one’s own; it means creating a new and unique individual who does not simply conform to that which society demands of them.

Nietzschean becoming aligns in some ways with the New Negro project, with its emphasis upon the self-creation of a new, autonomous, self-defining black identity.⁵⁰⁴ It is worth noting that many figures with strong links to the Harlem Renaissance were readers and admirers of Nietzsche.⁵⁰⁵ Yet in many respects Nietzschean vitalism and becoming, as Fernihough suggests, runs entirely counter to the New Negro ethos and to Du Bois’ ‘Talented Tenth’: to the idea that the duty of the elite is to uplift the rest. This conflict plays out clearly in Hurston’s life; she felt strongly that her role as an

⁵⁰³ Paul Franco, “Becoming Who You Are: Nietzsche on Self-Creation”, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Volume 49, Issue 1, Spring 2018, 52-77 (p. 69).

⁵⁰⁴ On Nietzsche and African American thought, see Jacqueline Scott and A. Todd Franklin (eds.), *Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and African American Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).

⁵⁰⁵ Perhaps most notably, the West Indian-American writer, lecturer and activist Hubert Harrison – the founder of the Liberty League and *The Voice* newspaper once labelled the ‘Father of Harlem Radicalism’ – was a devoted reader of Nietzsche.

African American writer should not automatically render her a representative of her race or responsible for its advancement. It plays out, too, in her most famous work. Read within the context of Nietzschean becoming and vitalism, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* acquires new significance as not merely the story of a woman's quest for selfhood, or love, or a voice within her community, but as an account of a woman's efforts to rise above her community and assert her individuality and independence from the group.

In this chapter, a series of Nietzschean concepts serve as starting points for exploring intersections between Lawrence and Hurston's work and thought. The first and second sections read Lawrence's *The Rainbow* alongside Hurston's opus, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Expanding on Bloom, in the first section I posit Hurston's Janie and Lawrence's Ursula as Nietzschean 'superwomen' following closely in the tradition of the 'freewoman' as popularised by Dora Marsden in a British periodical of the same name, highlighting in particular their connection to nature. The following section considers both authors' views and depictions of 'the masses' or, in Nietzschean terms, 'the herd'. I argue that Hurston and Lawrence, though both often figured as representatives of their backgrounds and champions of the people, in fact reject the masses and will not be held accountable for them. A paratactical reading of these two novels as documenting the development of a vitalist 'superwoman' counters both those readings that see *Their Eyes* as a story in-keeping with the traditional aims of black feminism (individual self-fulfilment balanced with accountability to the group) and those – perhaps most notably Jennifer Jordan – who figure Janie as in fact a character who eschews her community and who never truly achieves self-

realisation.⁵⁰⁶ Finally, I look at Lawrence and Hurston in relation to Nietzsche's anti-Christian sentiments; here I argue that aside from merely exhibiting a loss of faith or misotheism (as did so many modernists), both authors gesture toward a pre-Christian form of religion and an almost pagan polytheism. Pre-Christian, polytheistic forms of religion represent for both a possible way forward: a way of reconciling their committed individualism with their wider belief in the connectedness of all things.

The use of Nietzschean ideas as springboards for these readings should not be seen as merely a way of suggesting a Nietzschean influence upon both writers, though such a study may have value. Nietzsche's influence upon Lawrence has been widely discussed; many critics have identified significant (and sometimes exaggerated) similarities between Nietzschean and Lawrentian thought.⁵⁰⁷ We know that Lawrence was familiar with several of Nietzsche's key works; Rose Marie Burwell's "Checklist of Lawrence's Reading" suggests that by mid-1915 he had read or at least knew works including *The Will to Power*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science*.⁵⁰⁸ Kingsley Widmer goes so far as to declare Lawrence 'an English Nietzsche'.⁵⁰⁹ We know far less about Hurston's knowledge of Nietzsche, but she has also been aligned and compared with the German philosopher (if far less frequently). Sean McCann cites Hurston's 'attraction to the pagan underside of Christianity' and her admiration of

⁵⁰⁶ Jennifer Jordan, "Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1988), 105-117.

⁵⁰⁷ See, for example, Colin Milton, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) and Keith M. May, *Nietzsche & Modern Literature: Themes in Yeats, Rilke, Mann and Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

⁵⁰⁸ Rose Marie Burwell, "Checklist of Lawrence's Reading" in Keith M. Sagar (ed.), *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982) pp. 59-125 (pp. 72, 84, 83).

⁵⁰⁹ Kingsley Widmer, "Lawrence and the Nietzschean Matrix", *D. H. Lawrence and Tradition*, ed. by Meyers (London: The Athlone Press, 1985), pp. 115-131 (p. 121).

'strength and vitality' in his claim that she 'resembles nothing so much as an American answer to Nietzsche', while Deborah G. Plant, acknowledging that 'Hurston never mentions or directly alludes to Nietzsche in her work', nevertheless deems it highly probable that she studied and discussed him in her intellectual circles.⁵¹⁰

It is telling that Lawrence and Hurston have been described, respectively, as 'an English Nietzsche' and 'an American answer to Nietzsche'. But the aim of this chapter is not to measure these writers against the German philosopher or to judge them by his terms. Instead, the sections to follow use Nietzschean ideas to foster and enlighten a dialogue between Lawrence and Hurston, tracing the confluence of thought between two of the past century's major writers in a bid to demonstrate a continuity of thought across racial and national demarcations.

⁵¹⁰ Sean McCann, "The Cruelty of Zora Neale Hurston," *The Common Review*, 2.3 (Fall 2003), 6-15 (p. 12); Deborah G. Plant, *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995) p. 52.

‘Superwomen’⁵¹¹: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Rainbow*

There will form a new aristocracy, irrespective of nationality, of men who have reached the sun.⁵¹²

“Ah done been tuh de horizon and back [...]”⁵¹³

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), Nietzsche describes the *Übermensch* – or the ‘superman’ or ‘overhuman’ – as a goal for humanity and an earthly overcoming of the human: “*I teach to you the Overhuman. The human is something that shall be overcome.*”⁵¹⁴ The superman became arguably the best-known of Nietzsche’s concepts, but it is never clearly defined and remains open to many opposing interpretations. In United States, as Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen notes, the translation of the German *Übermensch* to ‘superman’ or ‘overman’ in English, led many to question whether the concept might be applied to (super)women as well as men.⁵¹⁵ The German philosopher’s sexist remarks elsewhere led many to believe that women were excluded from his definition of *Übermensch*.

Indeed, in a section titled “On Old and Young Little Women”, Zarathustra implies that women should hope to breed supermen, rather than aspiring to

⁵¹¹ The idea of the ‘superwoman’ here is not analogous to the myth of the black superwoman discussed in Michele Wallace’s *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Verso, 1979). Here Wallace argues that during the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the black woman was deemed ‘too domineering, too strong, too aggressive, too outspoken, too castrating, too masculine. She was one of the main reasons the black man had never been properly able to take hold of his situation in this country’ (p. 91).

⁵¹² Lawrence, “Aristocracy”, *Reflections*, p. 376.

⁵¹³ Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago, 2007) p. 257.

⁵¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 11.

⁵¹⁵ Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) p. 114.

Übermensch status themselves: 'Let your hope be: "May I give birth to the Overhuman!"'⁵¹⁶ Women are valued by Zarathustra only for their biological potential: as a vessel for *Übermenschlich* offspring and a 'plaything' for men.⁵¹⁷ Yet Ratner-Rosenhagen notes that many feminists, including famed birth control activist Margaret Sanger, took up Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch* as a tool 'to critique the bankrupt Western morality that undergirded the repression of women by church and state' and 'an aspirational idea for achieving a woman's right to bodily self-sovereignty'.⁵¹⁸ The Nietzschean superman/woman is free to fashion their own system of values and holds him/herself to their own moral standards; Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God surely also signalled the death of traditional, absolutist morality. For many radical thinkers, Nietzschean philosophy thus opened up new ways of thinking about self and society; it suggested, as Sanger affirmed in a 1914 speech, that 'the individual is the original source and constituent of all value'.⁵¹⁹

For many of the same reasons, in Britain the *Übermensch* concept captured the imagination of intellectuals including Dora Marsden, editor of the *Freewoman* and A. R. Orage of the *New Age* magazine.⁵²⁰ With its focus upon an earthly overcoming of the human and a higher human free to fashion their own system of values, the *Übermensch* aligned extremely well with the tenets of vitalism, which, as Fernihough

⁵¹⁶ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 57.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 57.

⁵¹⁸ Ratner-Rosenhagen, p. 115.

⁵¹⁹ Margaret Sanger, quoted in *ibid*, p. 115.

⁵²⁰ Marsden founded the *Freewoman* (later renamed as the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist*, a reflection of Marsden's increasing commitment to individualism and her break from the women's movement) in November 1911, while Orage – later connected to Jean Toomer through the Gurdjieff work – was editor of the *New Age* from 1907 to 1922. Lawrence certainly knew the *New Age*, which was often read and discussed at the radical discussion group in Eastwood of which he was a member during his youth. See John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

notes, was ‘such a powerful discourse amongst Edwardian radicals that it impacted upon almost every topic touched on in magazines such as the *New Age* and the *Freewoman*’.⁵²¹ Nietzsche appealed to Orage and Marsden because, as David S. Thatcher affirms, like them he ‘despised the democratic spirit latent in English ethical thought, with its small-minded ideals of herd happiness and the easy, push-button obliteration of any distinction of rank between one man and another’.⁵²² The *Freewoman*, as Maroula Joannou notes, became an arena for a passionate ‘war of ideas’ which illustrated ‘the sharp contradistinction between the ideals and aspirations of feminists and social reformers on the one hand, and the philosophical anti-capitalist individualism of some of [Max] Stirner and Nietzsche’s English adherents on the other.’⁵²³ Indeed, the *Freewoman* magazine and the associated concept of the freewoman that Marsden put forth demonstrate the ways in which Edwardian radicalism managed to be both feminist and anti-feminist.

Marsden explains the ‘freewoman’ in relation to ‘bondwomen’: ‘women who are not separate spiritual entities – who are not individuals’ but ‘complements merely’.⁵²⁴ Freewomen here are not clearly defined, perhaps because, Marsden hazards, ‘[t]here must be, say, ten in the British Isles.’⁵²⁵ But the distinction seems fairly clear; freewomen are to bondwomen as Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* are to the masses. They are rare creatures ‘distinguished [...] by a spiritual distinction’; they are individuals who create and cultivate their own identities rather than ‘round[ing] off the personality of

⁵²¹ Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, p. 25.

⁵²² David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) p. 21.

⁵²³ Maroula Joannou, “The Angel of Freedom: Dora Marsden and the transformation of *The Freewoman* into *The Egoist*”, *Women’s History Review*, Volume 11, Number 4, 2002, 596-611 (p. 606).

⁵²⁴ Dora Marsden, “Bondwomen”, the *Freewoman*, 23 November 1911, p. 1.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1

some other individual'.⁵²⁶ David Eder, in the following week's edition, would describe the freewoman – somewhat disparagingly – as 'an entity separate from all other human entities, with relationships towards no other individuals, associating with none, linked to none, bound to nothing.'⁵²⁷

If *Women in Love* is most often cited as the work in which Lawrence engages – often critically – with Nietzschean concepts including the *Übermensch* and the will to power, *The Rainbow* is surely the novel in which he explores most seriously the potential of the Nietzschean superwoman. Fernihough indeed recognises in the 1915 novel 'a Nietzschean sense of selves restlessly striving to reach their full potential.'⁵²⁸ 'At the level of both form and content,' she observes, *The Rainbow* 'perfectly exemplifies the vitalist ideologies promoted by Marsden and Orage'; Ursula in particular, the character who dominates the latter part of *The Rainbow*, seems a clear embodiment of Marsden's exceptional freewoman.⁵²⁹ Building upon Fernihough's contention, I argue here that *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is equally infused with vitalist ideologies and that Janie can also be usefully considered as a figure following closely in the tradition of the freewoman. Indeed, a paratactical reading of *Their Eyes* and *The Rainbow* reveals the extent to which Ursula and Janie both embody the rare, distinct, unbound figure of the superwoman. In these works, Hurston and Lawrence posit new ways of figuring female fulfilment and the role of the individual; in Hurston's case, this has important implications pertaining to both the role of the African American writer and to Hurston's relation to black feminism.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, p. 1

⁵²⁷ M. D. Eder, "Doth a Man Travail with Child?", the *Freewoman*, 30 November 1911, p. 33.

⁵²⁸ Fernihough, p. 121.

⁵²⁹ Ibid, p. 121.

Both novels conform to Lawrence's idea for the germ of *The Rainbow* as he explained it in a 1914 letter: 'woman becoming individual, self-responsible, taking her own initiative'.⁵³⁰ Ursula and Janie are both intent upon following this trajectory of becoming. From a young age, they are set apart from their peers and distinctly individual. Ursula considers herself so superior to other children that she cannot believe they might dislike her: 'How could any one dislike *her*, Ursula Brangwen?' (*R*, 311). Aware 'that she was a separate entity in the midst of an unseparated obscurity' (*WL*, 263), at school she declares herself above the rules; she 'exist[s] for herself alone' and feels instinctively that she has a higher purpose to fulfil, that 'she must go somewhere, she must become something' (*WL*, 263). Like Ursula, Janie feels different to those around her in her youth, though only after seeing a photograph of herself among her white playmates does she realise that she is black: "'before Ah seen de picture Ah thought Ah was just like de rest'" (*TEWWG*, 12).

In Hurston's protagonist, like Lawrence's, there is a tangible sense of a self 'restlessly striving to reach [its] full potential'; at sixteen Janie 'wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her' (*TEWWG*, 15). As a young girl she imagines 'the horizon' as a great gleaming vision of possibility. Indeed, the horizon becomes a recurring and unifying trope signifying change, the unknown, adventure and experiences yet undiscovered. The horizon image features in the opening paragraph of the novel, in which ships with 'every man's wish on board' sometimes 'come in with the tide', but '[f]or others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation' (*TEWWG*, 1). In her 1942 autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston figures the horizon as a symbol of her

⁵³⁰ D. H. Lawrence, Letter to Edward Garnett, 22 April 1914, *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 165.

childish longing to see the world. Climbing to the top of a chinaberry tree, '[t]he most interesting thing that I saw was the horizon. [...] It grew upon me that I ought to walk out to the horizon and see what the end of the world was like'.⁵³¹ Janie exhibits a similar yearning; she leaves her first husband, Logan Killicks, to be with Joe Starks because 'he spoke for the horizon [...] for change and chance' (*TEWWG*, 39).

Janie's pursuit of selfhood and thus her freewoman status are closely aligned with her vitalist connection to nature. She possesses an innate knowledge of the natural world: 'She knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind. She often spoke to falling seeds and said, "Ah hope you fall on soft ground," because she had heard seeds saying that to each other as they passed' (*TEWWG*, 33). *Their Eyes* is replete with botanical imagery; the most significant is the pear-tree, a symbol both of Janie's sexual awakening and her journey towards self-realisation. In an early scene, her first sexual experience takes place beneath a pear tree:

She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (*TEWWG*, 15)

This sexual awakening in nature is both a 'marriage' and a 'revelation' to Janie. Wall sees in this early scene a 'vision [...] at once spiritual and erotic'.⁵³²

Wall invokes Audre Lorde's "The Uses of the Erotic", in which Lorde describes the erotic as 'a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of

⁵³¹ Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006) p. 27.

⁵³² Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*, p. 192.

our strongest feelings'; 'Janie's vision', Wall argues, 'encapsulates this moment of self-recognition.'⁵³³ Her quest for self-definition, her journey to the horizon, is thus inextricably linked to this early vision: this sexual initiation which takes place not in the arms of a lover, but in nature. She soon learns that real-life human marriage is not the stuff of her pear tree fantasy. But all of her later relationships, which fuel her quest for selfhood, are measured against this early vision. Only Tea Cake – her third, much younger husband – lives up to the pear tree fantasy; strongly aligned with nature: 'He could be a bee to a blossom – a pear tree blossom in the spring' (*TEWWG*, 142).

Ursula also has a special connection to nature. At college, botany is 'the one study that lived for her' because '[s]he had here a glimpse of something working entirely apart from the purpose of the human world' (*R*, 404). While examining a 'plant-animal' in the lab, she is troubled by an earlier conversation with Dr Frankstone (a 'woman doctor of physics' whose name recalls Mary Shelley's Dr Frankenstein). Ursula is disturbed by Frankstone's description of life as merely 'a complexity of physical and chemical activities' which does not merit the 'special mystery' (*R*, 408) that many ascribe it. This anti-vitalist stance does not ring true to Ursula. Gazing upon the unicellular object of her study, she ponders a series of questions regarding the nature of its existence and, by extension, her own life and purpose.

She wonders if she might be, like electricity, 'an impersonal force, or conjunction of forces'; she questions the purpose and intention of the life under her microscope: 'What was its intention? [...] Was its purpose just mechanical and limited

⁵³³ Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic", *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007) p. 54; Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*, p. 192.

to itself? It intended to be itself. But what self?' (*R*, 408). This pondering leads Ursula to a moment of vague realisation:

She could not understand what it all was. She only knew that it was not limited mechanical energy, nor mere purpose of self-preservation and self-assertion. It was a consummation, a being infinite. Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity. (*R*, 409)

In Ursula's vitalist vision, even this unicellular organism is imbued with the vitality and the significance of its connection to all other beings, to the infinite. An earlier variant of this scene features a much longer discussion resembling one of Lawrence's philosophical essays on the nature of human life and being. Indeed, Ursula's voice withdraws as Lawrence's narrator professes their infinite relatedness to the tiger and the ape and asks:

Is there not room for all, within me, so long as none shall prevent me from becoming more and more myself? I am tiger, I am ape, I am savage man, I am monk and medieval swashbuckler, I am puritan, and profligate, and scientist, I am myself in the fullest of my knowledge, and I have within me my unfulfilled being which shall be fulfilled, singled out. (*R*, 655)

The 'whole sequence of creation' lies within the individual; even a 'God' is 'at the same moment the ape and the tiger', for '[t]he stream that flows into Paradise is flowing unbroken through the jungle and the plain, through filth and bloodiness and the greasy wharves of Commerce' (*R*, 656). The 'I' here aligns itself with the whole of human and non-human history, but this does not change the fact of its individuality or hinder its effort to become ever more itself: 'I am I, pushing on into the unknown' (*R*, 656).

That Ursula sees being oneself as concomitant with 'a oneness with the infinite' and that Lawrence's narrator in the earlier variant sees the individual as an unbroken

stream flowing through every inlet of lived experience seem indicative of a progression toward Lawrence's later conviction, expressed in *Apocalypse*:

I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. My soul knows that I am part of the human race, my soul is an organic part of the great human soul, as my spirit is part of my nation. In my own self, I am part of my family. There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

So that my individualism is really an illusion. I am a part of the great whole, and I can never escape. But I can deny my connections, break them, and become a fragment. Then I am wretched.⁵³⁴

Becoming what one is, to Ursula and to Lawrence, means 'consummation' and connection with the infinite. It means acknowledging one's place in the universe, or else becoming 'wretched'. Hurston espouses a similar belief in her autobiography; she affirms that she does not feel the need to pray because '[w]hen the consciousness we know as life ceases, I know that I shall still be part and parcel of the world. [...] I am one with the infinite and need no other assurance' (*DTR*, 226). This shared vitalist and pantheistic belief in the connectedness of all things recalls Nietzsche's concept of the 'eternal recurrence' as well as the Spinozan belief that 'in Nature there exists only one substance, and that it is absolutely infinite.'⁵³⁵

Benedict de Spinoza is one of Hurston's few acknowledged influences. She refers to him directly in her 1942 autobiography; imagining her old age she envisions that '[w]hen I get old, and my joints and bones tell me about it, I can sit around [...] and re-read Spinoza with love and care' (*DTR*, 231). Her knowledge and evident

⁵³⁴ Lawrence, *Apocalypse, Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, ed. by Mara Kalnins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 149.

⁵³⁵ Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996) p. 7.

admiration of Spinoza connects Hurston directly to a history of European philosophy. Spinoza, of course, also had a considerable influence upon Nietzsche, though Nietzsche was often scornful of the Dutch philosopher. Both men, along with others including Henri Bergson, are recognised as influences upon Deleuze, whose later work on vitalism reignited many of the debates initiated on the subject in the early twentieth century. Plant notes that '[I]ike Spinoza, [Hurston] believed in the "indivisibility of substance" and the ever-changing same that characterized existence.'⁵³⁶ In *Dust Tracks*, she expresses her conviction that 'nothing is destructible; things merely change forms' (*DTR*, 226). Going a step beyond Lawrence's belief in himself as 'part of the sun', Hurston avers: 'I shall [...] still exist in substance when the sun has lost its fire' (*DTR*, 226).

Ursula's revelation in the botany lab and Janie's awakening under the pear tree are vitalist visions of cosmic consummation: epiphanic moments in which the means of self-creation and becoming are revealed. Like Ursula, Janie recognises and values life's 'special mystery'. This involves the rejection of her grandmother's materialist view of life, which led her to impose a loveless, stultifying marriage upon her granddaughter for largely economic reasons. Only later, after Joe's death, does Janie realise the disservice Nanny has done her:

She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizons in search of *people*; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her. But she had been whipped like a cur dog, and run off down a back road after *things*. (*TEWWG*, 120)

She comes to hate her grandmother for having 'twisted her so in the name of love' (*TEWWG*, 120). Nanny's dream of material comfort – of sitting on a porch all day – is

⁵³⁶ Plant, *Every Tub*, p. 50.

not Janie's dream. Like the Edwardian vitalists' rejection of a materialist assessment of the world, Janie seeks a different kind of fulfilment rooted not in measurable acquisitions but in a more profound, sensual and equal connection to others and to the wider world. With every relationship, every husband abandoned or dead, Janie comes closer to herself, to 'oneness with the infinite'. Her 'struggle with life' eventually leads her to what seems a more equal and fulfilling union. It is finally through Tea Cake, aligned with nature in both his name (Vergible Woods) and his legacy (a packet of seeds), that Janie seems to achieve the 'marriage' she had earlier imagined under the blossoming pear tree. By marrying Tea Cake – a figure closely associated with the natural world – and becoming Janie Woods, Hurston's protagonist effectively seals her communion with nature.

The Herd

The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd – but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions.⁵³⁷

If Lawrence and Hurston were both proponents of the Spinozan belief in the connectedness of all things, they also evidently believed that some individuals were destined to rise above others: to separate themselves from 'the herd'. Implicit in the figure of the 'freewoman' or 'superwoman' is a repudiation of what Nietzsche calls 'herd morality': the democratic impulse to reduce (or elevate) everyone to mediocrity.

⁵³⁷ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans, by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968) p. 162.

This, of course, has particular implications for Hurston: what does it mean for an African American writer to rise above ‘the herd’ rather than ‘uplifting’ it?

Raised in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, Hurston was one of the few Harlem Renaissance artists who considered herself a true representative of the working-class folk of the American South. Lawrence, famously the son of a Nottinghamshire coalminer, was similarly one of very few writers of his generation and stature to come from a working-class background. Neither repudiated their roots – indeed, they made their hometowns the settings for many of their best-known works – but they would not be limited by their backgrounds. Robert Hemenway acknowledges this tension in his seminal biography of Hurston:

How can Zora Hurston express herself as both one of the folk and someone special? [...] How can Hurston claim identity with the masses, yet affirm the supremacy of the individual?⁵³⁸

Almost the same questions could be posed to Lawrence: how can his protagonists proclaim their ‘oneness with the infinite’ and elsewhere declare – as Gudrun and Birkin do – the nothingness of most people and a desire for total destruction? For both Hurston and Lawrence, this conflict between society and the exceptional individual – between the masses and the ‘super[wo]man’ – bespeaks at once a deeply personal and political conflict at the heart of much of their literary output. This is an inevitable, if seemingly paradoxical, result of Nietzschean vitalism, which encourages strident individualism whilst also stressing the relatedness of all things.

In her autobiography, Hurston seems clearly to mirror Nietzsche’s conviction that ‘the strong are as naturally inclined to *disperse* as the weak are to *congregate*.’⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ Hemenway, p. 283.

⁵³⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 114.

She explains her reasons for not joining the protest organizations with which many of her contemporaries were engaged: 'Many people have pointed out to me that I am a Negro and that I am poor. Why then have I not joined a party of protest? I will tell you why. I see many good points in, let us say the Communist Party' (*DTR*, 262). 'But', she claims, in quasi-Nietzschean terminology, 'I am so put together that I do not have much of a herd instinct. Or if I must be connected with the flock, let *me* be the shepherd my ownself. That is the way I am made' (*DTR*, 262-263). This unapologetic declaration of her own composition seems almost an attempt to absolve herself from the perceived duties of a black artist and intellectual at this time. Hurston feels herself neither a constituent of the masses nor a suitable leader or role model for them: 'I know that I cannot accept responsibility for thirteen million people. Every tub must sit on its own bottom regardless' (*DTR*, 249). Race pride and race or class prejudice are useless concepts to Hurston; she calls them 'scourges of humanity' which permit '[t]he solace of easy generalization' (*DTR*, 248). Upon abandoning these falsities, Hurston affirms, she 'received the richer gift of individualism', explaining that '[w]hen I have been made to suffer or I have been made happy by others, I have known that individuals were responsible for that, and not races. All clumps of people turn out to be individuals on close inspection' (*DTR*, 248).⁵⁴⁰

Yet those individuals – like Hurston, Janie and Ursula – who attempt to rise above the herd are almost inevitably despised. Nietzsche explains in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) that 'everything that raises an individual above the herd and causes

⁵⁴⁰ Here Hurston seems to reiterate the point made by her sometime friend and mentor Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture*: that '[s]ociety [...] is never an entity separable from the individuals who compose it', (Boston: Mariner, 2005) p. 253.

his neighbour to fear him is henceforth called *evil*.⁵⁴¹ The German philosopher also distinguishes between ‘master morality’ and ‘slave morality’ in this work:

The noble type of person feels *himself* as determining of value – he does not need approval [...] he knows that he is the one who causes things to be revered in the first place, he *creates values*. [...] It is different with the second type of morality, *slave morality*. [...] The slave’s eye does not readily apprehend the virtues of the powerful: he is sceptical and distrustful, he is *keenly* distrustful of everything that the powerful revere as ‘good’ – he would like to convince himself that even their happiness is not genuine.⁵⁴²

This master/slave morality is acted out in *Their Eyes* in the reactions of the people of Eatonville to Janie’s return. Her neighbours make ‘burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs’ (*TEWWG*, 2). Like the ‘slave’ described above, the inhabitants of Eatonville distrust a woman who does not conform to the restrictions of her gender and class: “‘What she doin’ coming back here in dem overhalls? [...] why she don’t stay in her class?’” (*TEWWG*, 2). They exhibit the *ressentiment* that Nietzsche identifies as typical of *sklavenmoral*: this tendency to project one’s own painful failure or shortcoming onto another.

Hurston would surely consider herself the ‘noble type’ who ‘does not require to be approved of’. In “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” (1928), she declares:

I AM NOT tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. [...] I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all but about it.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 88.

⁵⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 154-155.

⁵⁴³ Hurston, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me”, *I Love Myself when I Am Laughing ... and Then Again when I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, ed. by Walker (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1979) p. 153.

This seems a clear rejection of Nietzsche's 'slave morality' and a repudiation of the complaints of those 'weakest' men described in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, who lament their situation but make no effort to ameliorate it: "I wish I were anyone but myself! [...] *I have had enough of myself!*"⁵⁴⁴ Hurston did not indulge in such self-pity, refusing to become bitter about the past or overly resentful of discrimination she faced in the present. She quips in "How It Feels to Be Colored Me": 'Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How *can* any deny themselves the pleasure of my company? It's beyond me.'⁵⁴⁵ Yet Hurston's comical bravado here – seeming to parallel Ursula's childish thought: 'How could any one *dislike her*, Ursula Brangwen?' – also perhaps betrays a lack of compassion for those whom discrimination affects more seriously than herself. Her determination to shrug off assumptions of bitterness or regret, to reject the 'sobbing school of Negrohood', often led Hurston to appear insensitive to the continuing effects of slavery and historical discrimination upon communities.

This attitude also aligns with the Nietzschean concept of *amor fati*. In *Ecce Homo*, he explains: 'My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: not wanting anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just enduring what is necessary, still less concealing it [...] but loving it.'⁵⁴⁶ In *Dust Tracks*, though Hurston acknowledges (in muted terms) the horrors of the past and of slavery, she again stresses her desire to focus upon the present:

I see no reason to keep my eyes fixed on the dark years of slavery and the Reconstruction. I am three generations removed from it, and therefore

⁵⁴⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 101.

⁵⁴⁵ Hurston, "How It Feels", p. 155.

⁵⁴⁶ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 35.

have no experience of the thing. From what I can learn, it was sad. [...] I want to get on with the business in hand. (*DTR*, 254)

But this desire to cast off and ‘forget’ the suffering of the African American past also constituted, as Plant notes, ‘part of the process of resistance and “self-overcoming” for Hurston.’⁵⁴⁷ Through self-definition, focusing upon the present and adhering to her own system of values and morals, Hurston places her fate in her own hands. This seems indicative of Hurston’s efforts to fashion herself as a Nietzschean superwoman: desiring to live by her own set of values and her own moral code.

Lawrence also reviled the herd mentality that threatened to denigrate the individual; in a 1917 letter he declares: ‘I disbelieve utterly in the public, in humanity, in the mass. [...] The herd will destroy everything.’⁵⁴⁸ During the war, especially, Lawrence was disgusted by the mob mentality on display. He despised those figures like David Lloyd George and Horatio Bottomley (editor of the jingoistic *John Bull* magazine) whom he regarded as demagogues feeding the public’s nationalistic fervour and inciting enthusiasm for a war he found increasingly horrifying. These sentiments are evident in *Kangaroo*, when, in the chapter entitled “The Nightmare”, the protagonist remembers the ‘reign of Terror’ in England from 1916 to 1919: the torture which aimed ‘to break the independent soul in any man who would not hunt with the criminal mob.’⁵⁴⁹ Somers ‘had no conscientious objection to war. It was the whole spirit of the war, the vast mob-spirit, which he could never acquiesce in’ (*K*,

⁵⁴⁷ Plant, *Every Tub*, p. 58.

⁵⁴⁸ Lawrence, Letter to Waldo Frank, 27 July 1917, *Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 143.

⁵⁴⁹ Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 212.

213). For Somers, then, it is the extent to which the war robbed men of their individuality, their 'manly isolation' and 'integrity' (K, 213), that was truly unacceptable.

In *Their Eyes* and *The Rainbow*, these aversions to the herd morality manifest in the alienation of the protagonists and their indifference to the community and to wider political issues. Janie's individual effort to rise above others – to become superwomanly – leads her away from identification with the community and into isolation. Conforming to both Nietzsche's view that 'standing alone and needing to live independently are integral to the concept of "greatness"' and to Eder's characterisation of Marsden's freewoman, by the end of the novel Janie does become practically 'an entity separate from all other human entities'.⁵⁵⁰ During her marriage to Joe, Janie is prevented from involvement in the community's rites and rituals; as the mayor's wife she is expected to remain aloof and separate from the 'mess uh commonness' (*TEWWG*, 80). With Tea Cake 'on the muck', she has the chance to integrate with a community; she even labours in the fields with her husband. Yet finally, Janie confides only in her best friend Pheoby and is alone as she 'pull[s] in her horizon like a great fish-net' (*TEWWG*, 259). Janie may have risen above those around her as a kind of Nietzschean superwoman, but now, able to live her life as she sees fit, she is once again cut off from Eatonville's communal life. Isolation seems inevitable, though; Hurston, like Lawrence and Nietzsche, sees the vital progress made by women like Janie and Ursula as impossible for the masses.

Like Janie's isolation from the community, Ursula's professed disinterest in politics – and especially in abstract concepts like the nation and democracy – aligns her closely with Marsden's freewoman. In adolescence, Ursula refuses to be

⁵⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. and trans. by Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 106.

subsumed under the auspices of the 'nation'; she protests her lover Anton Skrebensky's declaration: 'I belong to the nation and must do my duty by the nation' (R, 289). Commitment to the nation above the self seems anathema to her; without it, she feels sure that she 'should still be [her]self' (R, 288). In a later episode she declares, to Skrebensky's horror: "'I hate democracy'" (R, 426). "'Only the greedy and ugly people come to the top in a democracy', she feels, 'because they're the only people who will push themselves there. Only degenerate races are democratic'" (R, 427). Here Ursula seems clearly to express the anti-democratic arguments that Fernihough identifies as typical of Edwardian radicals, who often presented democracy as 'the product of a pernicious "intellect", a mental faculty that could only perceive the world in terms of physical, measurable entities'.⁵⁵¹ Ursula would have 'an aristocracy of birth' (R, 427) rather than a system based on money. Lawrence echoes this idea in his later essay "Aristocracy" (1925); here he argues that 'there is *natural* aristocracy' and that '[m]an is great according as his relation to the living universe is vast and vital.'⁵⁵²

Western democracy runs directly counter to the values of the superman/woman. Indeed, Fernihough avers, '[j]ust as space deformed time for Bergson, so democracy deformed the Nietzschean *Übermensch*.'⁵⁵³ Ursula's interest in a more organic sense of human hierarchy explains her disinterest in suffrage. The right to vote is important for her friend Maggie, but for Ursula 'the vote was never a reality. She had within her the strange, passionate knowledge of religion far transcending the limits of the automatic system that contained the vote' (R, 377). The

⁵⁵¹ Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, p. 26.

⁵⁵² Lawrence, "Aristocracy", pp. 368, 371.

⁵⁵³ Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, p. 53.

Freewoman was opposed to suffragism and indeed to any form of ‘organized feminism’.⁵⁵⁴ “‘Voting’”, Marsden declares, ‘is no attribute of a “master” mind, nor even of a “free” mind.’⁵⁵⁵ Ursula, like Marsden’s freewoman, is concerned with more profound issues than the ‘rough and ready expedient’ of voting.⁵⁵⁶ She seeks a different life: something apart from the system which confines those around her. She sees Maggie happily ensconced within this ‘automatic system’, but Ursula feels that she must liberate herself. In leaving the school, ‘Ursula broke from that form of life wherein Maggie must remain enclosed’ (*R*, 382). ‘In effect,’ Fernihough affirms, ‘Ursula is pushing at the doors of Marsden’s “superworld”.’⁵⁵⁷

Janie’s estrangement from her community seems analogous to Ursula’s indifference to the suffrage movement and to Hurston’s own disinterest in acting as a representative of her race. Yet Ursula’s lack of commitment to politics – like Marsden’s eventual rejection of organised feminism – seems far less problematic than the individualism of Hurston and Janie. For critics like Jordan, Janie’s prizing of individuality over community plays into ‘[o]ne of the major issues in the redefinition of black womanhood’: ‘the role of individualism in a minority literature that has from its inception emphasized group development and salvation.’⁵⁵⁸ For Jordan, Janie ‘fails to achieve a communal identification with the black women around her or with the black community as a whole’; by ultimately choosing ‘isolation and contemplation’ over ‘solidarity and action’ at the end of the novel, she effectively eschews ‘group

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 12.

⁵⁵⁵ Marsden, “Notes of the Week”, the *Freewoman*, 23 November 1911, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁷ Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, p. 122.

⁵⁵⁸ Jordan, p. 107.

development and salvation'.⁵⁵⁹ This implied responsibility to the group, of course, is exactly what Hurston rejected in her own life.

Their Eyes is frequently explained as the story of a woman's quest for community and for a voice within that community. But this understanding of the novel, as well as Jordan's criticism of it, does not acknowledge the extent to which Hurston's 'site of resistance', as Plant avers, 'though grounded in the community, was located within herself'.⁵⁶⁰ If we understand Hurston as belonging to a vitalist tradition, then this position seems entirely natural and in-keeping with vitalism's emphasis upon 'the perfectly individuated, indivisible self'.⁵⁶¹ The elitist feminism embodied by the vitalist 'freewoman' seems to run directly counter to what elder African American intellectuals like Du Bois had seen as the purpose and duty of black art and of the black artist. In the wake of the Harlem Renaissance – dominated by men and masculinist discourse and by Du Bois's 'Talented Tenth' – Hurston declares her indifference to the project of racial uplift and rejects Du Boisian 'double consciousness' in an individuated, undivided female character for whom race and group development are *not* central issues.

This is in direct contrast to Du Bois's own 'resourceful response to vitalism', as Fernihough terms it; in his first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), he posits a reversed model in which the vitalist heroine (unlike Janie or Ursula) can also be committed to a cause and act as a race representative.⁵⁶² Citing Du Bois' concepts of 'double consciousness' and the 'veil', Fernihough argues that for him 'the vitalist emphasis on the perfectly individuated, indivisible self was highly problematic: he felt

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 107, 108.

⁵⁶⁰ Plant, *Every Tub*, p. 33.

⁵⁶¹ Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen*, p. 255.

⁵⁶² Ibid, p. 256.

his own identity to be premised on dualism and self-division'.⁵⁶³ Fernihough further maintains that Du Bois, who was 'well aware of the way in which the vitalist philosophies fashionable in the period could be harnessed to a sometimes disabling opposition between the individual and the mass,' also 'understood only too clearly how, within this schema, African Americans were usually assimilated to the mass.'⁵⁶⁴ Du Bois thus responds to vitalism in *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* by emphasizing the vitality of the black characters and the comparatively inert deadness of the whites he depicts.⁵⁶⁵ The whites have 'things – heavy, dead things', but 'black folks [have] the *spirit*.'⁵⁶⁶ Here the tendency to group all African Americans together as part of a homogenous mass is reversed and 'tense silent white-faced men' are instead figured as a soulless 'swarm who felt no poetry and heard no song'.⁵⁶⁷ The protagonist (coincidentally a 'child of the swamp' named Zora) raises a symbolic cotton crop, pursues love and finally devotes herself to founding a black 'free community'. Having become educated, Zora valiantly dedicates her talents to the betterment of her community.

Hurston does not subscribe to this alternative model of a vitalist 'superwoman' which seems to limit the strong African American heroine to one who places the needs of the community above her own. Indeed, she consciously and forthrightly rejects this role. Hurston believed, as she wrote to Annie Nathan Meyer in 1925, that '[t]he failure to reach those things we crave lies in ourselves. There is another reason for the lower class of society besides the greed of the ruling class, and it is the lack of something in

⁵⁶³ Ibid, p. 255.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 255.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 256.

⁵⁶⁶ Du Bois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (New York: Dover, 2008) p. 29

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 35.

the ruled.⁵⁶⁸ She seems here to hint at an idea approaching the distinction between the *Übermensch* and *Untermensch*, the 'freewoman' and the 'bondwoman' and Lawrence's 'natural aristocracy'. Hurston, unlike Du Bois' Zora, did not see why her talent should require her to be a responsible representative and champion of her race. For her, all art needed not be propaganda; Janie did not need to pour her entire acquired wealth and knowledge into a racial cause in order to be a strong, successful black heroine. As Hurston once informed a critic, she was interested in 'writing a novel and not a treatise on sociology'.⁵⁶⁹

Janie and Ursula's staunch individualism and repudiation of the herd extends to a rejection of children and childbearing. By the end of *The Rainbow*, when Ursula miscarries Skrebensky's child, pregnancy has become a perverse, degenerative experience; Lawrence's modern superwoman, he seems to suggest, merits an identity which is not merely that of mother or wife (as Zarathustra would have it be). The celebratory images of fertile womanhood of the earlier sections of the novel, most notably the scene in which a pregnant Anna dances naked, 'lifting her knees and hands in a slow, rhythmic exulting' (*R*, 170), are replaced, as Candis Bond notes, by 'decay and death' suggestive of the 'deeply flawed' nature of a modern culture which fosters 'disembodied, damaged selves and relationships'.⁵⁷⁰ At *The Rainbow's* close, Ursula is able to envision 'a new germination' and 'a new growth' (*R*, 459) which does not issue from procreation but from the loss of her unborn child.⁵⁷¹ No children result – either – from Janie's three marriages. In *Their Eyes*, pregnancy and childbirth are

⁵⁶⁸ Hurston, Letter to Annie Nathan Meyers, 18 July 1925, in Kaplan, p. 62.

⁵⁶⁹ Hurston, quoted in Hemenway, p. 42.

⁵⁷⁰ Candis Bond, "Embodied Love: D.H. Lawrence, Modernity, and Pregnancy", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016), 21-44 (p. 30).

⁵⁷¹ There is a suggestion, though, that Ursula may not have been pregnant and experienced a 'phantom pregnancy'.

similarly consistently associated with suffering and degradation. Both Janie and her mother are the product of coercive, unequal relationships with a white master and a schoolteacher. Janie's purpose – like Ursula's – is to break this cycle. By depicting her heroine as a childless and ultimately husbandless woman who nevertheless achieves self-realisation, Hurston affirms that female self-discovery need not be reliant upon another.

Subverting the traditional vision of female fulfilment – almost inevitably involving child-bearing – Hurston and Lawrence gesture towards a different future for their female protagonists. Lawrence's novel ends with the eponymous rainbow, in which Ursula sees 'the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away' (*R*, 459). And *Their Eyes* – following a rabid Tea Cake's unfortunate death by Janie's hand and her acquittal by an all-white jury – closes with Hurston's protagonist pulling in 'her horizon like a great fish-net' from 'around the waist of the world' (*TEWWG*, 259). In this final image, Hurston suggests that Janie has attained selfhood. The horizon at which she gazed for so long, which she knew first only in her imagination and through Joe's talk of it, is now hers and a part of her; she no longer needs to search beyond herself. The rainbow and the horizon – the dominant symbols here – both seem redolent of an untouchable, sublime, unreachable aspect of life; something one may gaze upon but never possess. Both signify hope that 'life will never be destroyed, or turn bad altogether'.⁵⁷²

Yet the endings of *The Rainbow* and *Their Eyes* seem both hopeful and unnerving, utopian and potentially dystopian. Both novels' endings seem to predicate a future dependent upon spiritually elite, individual women. That these women

⁵⁷² Lawrence, Letter to Dollie Radford, 24 February 1917, *Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 97.

repudiate procreation as a means of self-fulfilment and that they are indifferent to the fate of 'the masses' would seem to cast doubt upon the future of humanity. Lawrence's novel ends with a powerful yet necessarily ephemeral symbol, while Hurston's ends with Janie pondering a solitary, introspective future. The optimism of *The Rainbow's* ending does not carry through to *Women in Love*, nor does Ursula live up to her freewomanly potential in the later novel. At the end of *Their Eyes*, the possibility lingers that Hurston's heroine may have been infected with rabies; Tea Cake, after all, dies with his teeth biting the flesh of her forearm. Lawrence and Hurston then seem to acknowledge the dead-endedness of vitalist individualism and Nietzschean becoming. What, after all, is the purpose of the exceptional individual who does nothing for her community and bears no children? Where does one go from there?

'God is Dead. [...] And we have killed him'⁵⁷³

There is, I believe, a great strike on in heaven. The Almighty has vacated the throne, abdicated, climbed down. It's no good looking up into the sky. It's empty.⁵⁷⁴

I have seen that it is futile for me to seek the face of, and fear an accusing God withdrawn somewhere beyond the stars in space. (*DTR*, 248)

The horizon – in *Their Eyes* and *Dust Tracks* a symbol of 'change and chance', of adventure and possibility – is also the image employed by Nietzsche in *The Gay*

⁵⁷³ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 181.

⁵⁷⁴ Lawrence, "On Being Religious", *Reflections*, p. 189.

Science to explain the feelings of ‘philosophers and “free spirits”’ on hearing that “the old god is dead””.⁵⁷⁵ ‘At long last’, he declares, ‘the horizon appears free to us again [...] all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea.’⁵⁷⁶ With God ‘dead’, human possibilities are greatly expanded. For Nietzsche, Hurston and Lawrence, religion was one of the greatest barriers to the goal of self-creation: to ‘becoming what you are’ and to the individual formulating and living by their own rules. Nietzsche’s famous pronouncement: ‘God is dead’, has often been misunderstood as the epitome of his atheism. Eric von der Luft argues, though, that ‘[w]hen he says "God is dead!" he means no more than that "transcendence is lost" – and not only lost, but purposefully done away with.’⁵⁷⁷ Humans, by force of will, have ‘done away with’ God by refusing to believe in Him. The ‘death’ of God clears the way for the Nietzschean superman/woman.

Lawrence and Hurston’s childhoods were both steeped in Christianity. Yet both, from an early age, questioned the religion that so dominated life in Eastwood and Eatonville. Hurston came to believe, as Nietzsche did, that Christianity was a religion for the weak. Like Nietzsche, she felt Christian morality to be a manipulative force that controlled and constrained those unable to assert their own will. She concludes in *Dust Tracks* that: ‘People need religion because the great masses fear life and its consequences. Its responsibilities weigh heavy’ (*DTR*, 225). The idea of a transcendent God with a divine plan absolves the individual of responsibility; the unknown and unknowable nature of God is thus strangely comforting. Indeed, Hurston

⁵⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 280.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 280.

⁵⁷⁷ Eric von der Luft, “Sources of Nietzsche's ‘God is Dead!’ and its Meaning for Heidegger”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April – June 1984), 263-276 (p. 268).

affirms in *Dust Tracks* that ‘heavens are placed in the sky because it is unreachable. The unreachable and therefore the unknowable always seem divine – hence, religion’ (*DTR*, 226). She believes in an unknowable, untouchable God and speaks of ‘an accusing God withdrawn somewhere beyond the stars in space’.

Much criticism has considered Lawrence’s often ambiguous relation to religion, but Hurston’s views have received relatively little attention. Much like her eschewal of ‘group development’, Hurston’s criticisms of organised religion and of those who partake in it seem to contravene the expectations of an African American writer in this period. Consequently, there remains much to explore regarding Hurston and religion. Two relatively recent examinations of Hurston’s views on God have cast her alternatively as a deist and a misotheist. Christopher Cameron (2016) argues that Hurston’s ‘ideas about God and prayer show her to be a Deist’: one who believes ‘that while there may be a god, this deity is not a providential force in human life but rather a force that created the world and let it run according to the natural laws’.⁵⁷⁸ Bernard Schweizer (2010) sees Hurston as a misotheist – a hater of God(s) – arguing that ‘[a]lthough this attitude remained mostly hidden, those looking for evidence of Hurston’s negative assessment of God will find it everywhere.’⁵⁷⁹ Anti-God and anti-Christian sentiments are certainly detectable throughout Hurston’s work, though this aspect of her thought has rarely been highlighted. Hurston never did put forward an overtly atheist agenda, which would likely have outraged the African American community. More than misotheism or anti-Christian statements, I am interested here

⁵⁷⁸ Christopher Cameron, “Zora Neale Hurston, Freethought, and African American Religion”, *Journal of Africana Religions*, Volume 4, Number 2, 2016, 236-244 (p. 239).

⁵⁷⁹ Bernard Schweizer, “Faith, Doubt, and Zora Neale Hurston’s Resistance to God”, *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 103-126 (pp. 110-111).

in how Lawrence and Hurston figure pre-Christian religions and polytheism as potential routes to 'oneness with the infinite'.

As she explains in a finally censored section of *Dust Tracks*, Christianity to Hurston is 'an oriental concept which the sons of hammer-throwing Thor have no enzymes to digest' because '[i]t calls for meekness, and the West is just not made meek.'⁵⁸⁰ In this reference to 'hammer-throwing Thor', Hurston implicates a pre-Christian polytheism which is also evoked in her 1934 novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. In this novel, which draws heavily upon her father's life and her parents' marriage, Hurston highlights the continuity of the pre-Christian African religious tradition in African American cultural and religious practices. During a night's raucous entertainment on Alf Pearson's cotton plantation, 'white' instruments like guitars and fiddles are discarded in favour of drums:

With their hands they played upon the little dance drums of Africa. [...] The drum with the man skin that is dressed in human blood, that is beaten with a human shin-bone and speaks to gods as a man and to men as a God.⁵⁸¹

These drums are closely associated with the human body, with Africa; this is 'the instrument they had brought to America in their skins' (*JGV*, 29). The music and singing combine with '[h]ollow-hand clapping' and '[h]eel and toe stomping' (*JGV*, 30). The genealogy of this celebration is made clear; these are 'Congo gods talking in Alabama' (*JGV*, 30). This passage reads rather like one of Hurston's ethnographical observations; her narrator becomes a fascinated witness to this ritualistic revelry in which African, pre-Christian religious traditions converge in an almost paganist

⁵⁸⁰ Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Holograph Manuscript, Box 1, Folder 9, Zora Neale Hurston Collection, Beinecke, Yale.

⁵⁸¹ Hurston, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008) p. 29.

celebration of the cotton season's end. With the festivities over, '[t]he shores of Africa receded' (*JGV*, 31).

Hurston's protagonist, John Pearson, later becomes a charismatic and successful preacher. Recalling the earlier celebratory scene, when called to preach John 'rolled his African drum up to the alter, and called his Congo Gods by Christian names' (*JGV*, 88). His 'barbaric poetry' is so compelling that on one occasion 'three converts came thru religion under the sound of his voice' (*JGV*, 88). Hurston here demonstrates, as McCann notes, that the black preacher's power does not derive from 'the paltry "wine and flowers" of polite Christianity, [...] but from the "grandeur" of the black church's underlying "reversion to paganism."' ⁵⁸² John is later killed when his car is hit by a train and his funeral ends 'in rhythm'; 'With the drumming of the feet, and the mournful dance of the heads, in rhythm, it was ended' (*JGV*, 202). Again, the pre-Christian origins of Pentecostalism are evoked.

In *Barracoon*, an account of a series of meetings with former slave Cudjo Lewis (also known as Oluale Kossola, the last survivor of the *Clotilda*, which transported African slaves illegally to the United States in 1860) Hurston expresses surprise at the ease with which her interviewee adapted to Christianity. In her preface to this book-length account (completed 1931), questions around religion are among the most pressing she wishes to answer. She asks: 'How does a pagan live with a Christian God? How has the Nigerian "heathen" borne up under the process of civilization?' ⁵⁸³ Cudjo's response to Hurston's questioning – "But didn't you have a God back in Africa?" – is emotional and defensive. ⁵⁸⁴ He replies that the god he knew in Africa

⁵⁸² McCann, p. 12.

⁵⁸³ Hurston, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Slave* (London: Harper Collins, 2018) p. 16.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 18.

was called 'Alahua', but feels compelled to explain that "'po' Affikans we cain readee de Bible, so we doan know God got a Son. We ain' ignant – we jes doan know."⁵⁸⁵ The survivors of the *Clotilda* and the founders of Africatown, Alabama built their own church – the Old Landmark Baptist Church – where Cudjo became sexton. Yet Cudjo's Christianity slips very easily into the rhythms of his old religion. At his daughter's funeral he recalls that the congregation sang the hymn "Shall We Meet Beyond the River"; having long been a Christian and a church-goer, Cudjo explains that he knew "de words of de song wid my mouth, but my heart it doan know dat. Derefo' I sing inside me, 'O todo ah wah n-law yah-lee, owrran, k-nee ra ra k-nee ro ro.'"⁵⁸⁶ Cudjo's Christian belief, then, is perhaps also something he feels and knows 'with his mouth'. But inside he continues to connect, through music, to his African religion and culture.

Hurston also stresses the significance of music and rhythm in later writings on the 'sanctified' church. In "The Sanctified Church", the product of fieldwork undertaken in 1938, Hurston affirms that '[t]he rise of the various groups of "saints" in America in the last twenty years is not the appearance of a new religion as has been reported. It is in fact the older forms of Negro religious expression asserting themselves against the new.'⁵⁸⁷ 'In fact,' Hurston avers, 'the Negro has not been christianized as extensively as is generally believed. The great masses are still standing before their pagan altars and calling old gods by a new name.'⁵⁸⁸ She cites the 'drum-like rhythm of all Negro spirituals' as evidence of African origins.⁵⁸⁹ These ideas around the

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 19.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 74.

⁵⁸⁷ Hurston, "The Sanctified Church", *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1983) p. 103.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 103.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 103.

African and pre-Christian roots of the 'Sanctified Church' were crystallised in part by Hurston's earlier anthropological work in the late 1920s – including her meetings with Cudjo Lewis from 1927 – demonstrating that these were long-held views. Her correspondence with Boas regarding *Mules and Men*, her 1935 folklore collection, reveals the extent to which these views were suppressed by her mentor. In an April 1929 letter to Boas, she poses a series of questions revealing both her reliance upon his approval and her convictions regarding the essentially paganist and pantheistic origins of Christianity in the African American communities she was studying:

Is it safe for me to say that baptism is an extension of water worship as a part of pantheism just as the sacrament is an extension of cannibalism? Isn't the use of candles in the Catholic church a relic of fire worship? Are not all the uses of fire upon the altars the same thing? Is not the Christian ritual rather one attenuated nature-worship, in the fire, water, and blood?⁵⁹⁰

Boas replies that she may *not* say these things; he finds that her questions 'contain a great deal of very contentious matter.'⁵⁹¹ But Boas' response did not dampen Hurston's belief; she wrote to Hughes only a few days later that 'Christianity as practiced is an attenuated form of nature worship.'⁵⁹² Here the questions posed to Boas are reformed as statements of clear conviction: 'You know of course that the sacrament is a relic of cannibalism'.⁵⁹³

Hurston's study of hoodoo and her first-hand knowledge of African American religious culture had demonstrated to her that all religions were rooted in a common veneration of nature and of those vital elements, like 'fire, water, and blood', which sustain and destroy human life. Lawrence was also interested in reviving and

⁵⁹⁰ Hurston, Letter to Franz Boas, April 21, 1929 in Kaplan, p. 137.

⁵⁹¹ Boas, Letter to Hurston, April 24, 1929, quoted in Hemenway, p. 126.

⁵⁹² Hurston, Letter to Langston Hughes, April 30, 1929 in Kaplan, p. 139.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 139.

emphasizing the ancient, pagan elements of Christianity; Meyers notes that 'Lawrence's relation to Christianity was essentially negative, but he used its imagery in an attempt to lead society back to a pre-Christian, pagan awareness of vital possibilities.'⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, in *Apocalypse* he stresses the 'pagan recoil' of the Book of Revelation.⁵⁹⁵ But the best example of Lawrence's exploration of the possibilities of a revived pagan, pre-Christian religious model is in *The Plumed Serpent*.

Christianity in the 1926 novel has lost vitality in part because it insists upon the separation of body and spirit. In an episode reminiscent of the dancing scene of *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, the 'rippling and [...] pulse-like thudding of the drum' makes Kate, Lawrence's protagonist, 'instantly [feel] that timeless, primeval passion of the prehistoric races, with their intense and complicated religious significance, spreading in the air' (*PS*, 117). When the departure of Christianity and the return of Quetzalcoatl is announced, Kate is drawn into the throng of dancers in which '[m]en and women alike danced with faces lowered and expressionless, abstract, gone in the deep absorption of men into the greater manhood, women into the greater womanhood' (*PS*, 131). In Indian dance, Lawrence suggests, the individual is absorbed into a greater expression of his or her sex, there is no division of body and spirit; God is part of the natural world and all things are godly.

Ramón envisages every nation experiencing the return of its own indigenous pre-Christian form of religion; he wishes to see 'Thor and Wotan' restored in 'the Teutonic world', 'a new Hermes' in the Mediterranean and 'the oldest of dragons' (*PS*, 248) returned to China. Democracy must be dispensed with; a 'Natural Aristocracy of the World' (*PS*, 248) shall rule. Ramón hopes that the Mexican people will regain a

⁵⁹⁴ Meyers, *A Biography*, p. 353.

⁵⁹⁵ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 82.

sense of identity and individuality denigrated by westernisation and modernisation. As the revivalist religion gains ground, he takes the role of Quetzalcoatl, army general Cipriano becomes 'Huitzilopochtli' and Kate takes on the identity of 'Malintzi'. Thus, the polytheism of this resurrected religion permits men to become gods and gods to become men. This facet of polytheism is discussed by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*; here 'in some distant overworld', the fact that 'one god was not considered a denial of another god' permitted 'the luxury of individuals'.⁵⁹⁶ Nietzsche further explains that '[t]he invention of gods, heroes, and overmen of all kinds [...] was the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the individual: the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods – one eventually also granted to oneself in relation to laws, customs and neighbours.'⁵⁹⁷ Polytheism opens the door for superhuman self-creation, but in *The Plumed Serpent* this leads directly to authoritarian rule.

In *Their Eyes*, Hurston seems also to reference a harsh, pre-Christian, polytheistic religion. Mrs Turner's prizing of light skin and Caucasian features is figured as a brutal and hypocritical religion encouraging '[i]nsensate cruelty to those you can whip, and grovelling submission to those you can't' (*TEWWG*, 193). This leads Hurston's narrator to declare, in a passage which reads almost as an outburst of pent-up anti-religious gall, that:

All gods who receive homage are cruel. All gods dispense suffering without reason. Otherwise they would not be worshipped. [...] Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood. (*TEWWG*, 194)

⁵⁹⁶ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 191.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 191-192.

This passage is often glossed over as simply a statement upon Mrs Turner's colourism rather than a wider reflection of Hurston's views on religion. But repeated references to multiple cruel 'gods' who 'require blood' implicate a ruthless, pagan and polytheistic religion. The rhetoric here is reminiscent of a passage in *Jonah's Gourd Vine* in which Hurston affirms that divine power derives from violence and domination: 'God shows feet – not faces. Feet that crush – feet that crumble [...] If gods have no power for cruelty, why then worship them?' (*JGV*, 166). Hurston implies that all religions are rooted in this harsh, bloody, ritualistic model; all demand sacrifice at their altars. Religious power, whether vested in a Christian God or a panoply of pagan gods and goddesses, relies upon fear and suffering.

Hurston and Lawrence see pre-Christian, polytheistic forms of religion as potentially regenerative and revitalizing, but they also recognise the darker potentialities here. The perceived African roots of Pentecostalism, like the cult of Quetzalcoatl, offer an attractive vision of vital connection to nature, of 'oneness with the infinite'. Yet both are at base revealed to be cruel and brutal: breeding grounds for dictators. They blur the lines between men and gods, thus permitting the process Nietzsche describes whereby one eventually grants oneself god-like freedoms. This drive to create one's own laws and customs rather than living by those enforced by society is of course a central part of the Nietzschean process of self-creation. Becoming what or who you are thus seems also to imply creation of oneself as a god-like figure. Indeed, T. R. Wright observes that 'Nietzsche and Lawrence can both be said paradoxically to imitate Christ most when they rebel against Christianity.'⁵⁹⁸ Something of this Christ-complex seems also to resonate in Hurston. Plant notes how

⁵⁹⁸ T. R. Wright, *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 9.

in the “Religion” chapter of *Dust Tracks* ‘the narrator, through a metaphysics that culminates in pantheism, ultimately becomes a reigning God herself.’⁵⁹⁹ For Hurston, Lawrence and Nietzsche, then, it is perhaps their own sense of self-importance that led them to rebel against Christianity and to instead gesture towards a more primal and ancient mode of religion. All three share a fierce individualism which could not endorse a single ‘omnipotent, omniscient, and intervening God’ in control of their life and fate.

The “Religion” chapter in *Dust Tracks* is perhaps the closest Hurston came to expressing her vitalist philosophy. Elsewhere, she was often compelled to suppress ‘contentious matter’ that would have revealed her true views on such sensitive matters as religion. That she has been loved too simply and that she was ‘often not the woman her admirers want her to have been’, is the result both of the public image she fostered herself and of the sentimental and romanticised persona cultivated by subsequent generations.⁶⁰⁰ These efforts have not only obscured her more subversive side; they have also precluded an understanding of Hurston as a modernist, a vitalist, a challenging intellectual and a thinker of great complexity. In reading Hurston and Lawrence as equal interlocutors, it becomes clear that there is much in Hurston’s oeuvre which remains to be properly treated. But the Lawrentian (and Nietzschean) spyglass does reveal and magnify several significant strands of thought within Hurston’s work that have not previously received adequate attention.

Hurston defiantly counters Fernihough’s suggestion that vitalism held little appeal for African American intellectuals. Her vitalism is evident in Janie’s erotic communion with nature, in Hurston’s strident and enduring individualism and in her declaration that

⁵⁹⁹ Plant, *Every Tub*, p. 28.

⁶⁰⁰ McCann, p. 8.

'[t]he springing of the yellow line of morning out of the misty deep of dawn, is glory enough for me' (*DTR*, 226). The young Hurston was encouraged by her mother to 'jump at de sun' at every opportunity: 'We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground' (*DTR*, 13). This motherly advice continued to drive Hurston throughout her life. *Apocalypse*, Lawrence's last major work, ends with a similar exhortation: 'Start with the sun, and the rest will slowly, slowly happen.'⁶⁰¹

It is perhaps unsurprising that Lawrence should wrestle with Nietzschean philosophy and vitalist ideology or worry over the exceptional individual's relation to the masses. For Hurston, such a dialogue is far more unexpected. Read together, Lawrence and Hurston demonstrate the extent to which, in the modern period, writers from seemingly different worlds were often engaged in the same debates and preoccupied with the same issues. Under the singular and simultaneous conditions of modernity, both sought ways of achieving selfhood and overcoming constraint. Yet much as Toomer seems to have ultimately pulled back from connection or deemed it impossible under the conditions in which he lived, there is also a sense in Hurston and Lawrence, as in Janie and Ursula, of individuals seeking something ultimately unattainable in present circumstances: the sun, the *Übermensch*, the undivided individual.

⁶⁰¹ Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 149.

Conclusion

When a *New York* magazine reviewer referred in 1981 to Toni Morrison as ‘the D. H. Lawrence of the black psyche’, they cited her ability to transform ‘individuals into forces’ and ‘idiosyncrasy into inevitability’.⁶⁰² The comparison here does not seem entirely flattering, coming directly after complaints that in *Tar Baby*, the 1981 novel under review, Morrison ‘adopts the tone of the scold more often than the tone of the prophet’ and her characters ‘turn out, disappointingly, only to serve single ulterior purposes’.⁶⁰³ Exactly what this reference to Lawrence denotes is unclear. It may be that Lawrence had become, by the 1980s, a byword for the ability to capture in language the spirit of a people and a history. More pressing, for the concerns of this thesis, is what it means today to evoke Lawrence in this context: the back cover of the Vintage edition of *Tar Baby* (first published in 1997 and reissued in 2016) continues to bear the *New York* magazine reviewer’s comment, proclaiming Morrison as a writer having ‘made herself the D. H. Lawrence of the black psyche’.⁶⁰⁴

This thesis has not sought to cast Toomer as ‘the mixed-race D. H. Lawrence’ (he would have objected on multiple counts to such a description) or to figure Hurston as ‘the D. H. Lawrence of the American South’. Such formulations are reductive and problematic for obvious reasons. Yet it is useful here to query the significance of such an act of equivalence: what did and does it mean to evoke Lawrence in connection with black writers? Another example is suggestive, one both closer and more hostile to the Harlem Renaissance than Morrison: Richard Wright. Lawrence, as several of

⁶⁰² Rosellen Brown, Review of Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*, *New York*, 13 April 1981, p. 42.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42.

Wright's biographers note, was among his favourite writers. *Sons and Lovers* (1913), in particular, became an important book for him. Indeed, Wright was so taken with Lawrence's novel about 'coal miners in England' that he 'read nearly all of his books'.⁶⁰⁵ Wright provides a clue to Lawrence's particular appeal in a letter of 1944 regarding a review he had written of Hodding Carter's *The Winds of Fear* (1944):

When the mailman arrived with Carter's novel, I was busy rereading an old favorite novel of mine, D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The transition was terrific! What a comedown! (I'm not panning Carter's book; I like it and admire it for what it is.) But what a difference between two first novels! Lawrence cuts deeper into human feeling, and there does not exist in him the slightest hesitancy in revealing everything. Indeed, one could say that his passion was simply to do that to the best of his strength. Again I say that this is not directed against Carter; what I'm saying is leveled against our culture as a whole. We, both white and black, have so much to learn in our country. And I feel that an honest grappling with the Negro problem is one of the ways in which a therapeutic and loosening process could enter our culture, our feelings, and allow us to react freely.⁶⁰⁶

What Lawrence represents for Wright is the freedom to react honestly and unreservedly to one's culture: to reveal 'everything' without hesitation. Where black and white Americans alike, for Wright, are stifled and stymied, unable to express their true feelings (especially regarding 'the Negro problem'), Lawrence speaks out forthrightly and unapologetically.

Wright's musings upon Lawrence suggest that the Englishman's impact upon African American writers was not confined to those associated with the Harlem Renaissance, that he continued to be a significant figure for black writers of

⁶⁰⁵ Wright, Interview with Georges Charbonnier, October 1960, *Conversations with Richard Wright* ed. by Keneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993) p. 214; For a list of Lawrence works owned by Wright, see Michel Fabre, *Richard Wright: Books and Writers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990) pp. 92-93.

⁶⁰⁶ Wright, Letter to Philip Wylie, 10 October 1944, in Fabre, *Richard Wright: Books and Authors*, pp. 191-192.

subsequent generations. This is confirmed again by another of the most important African American writers of the twentieth century: James Baldwin. In a 1986 interview, Baldwin explains that as a writer he ‘needed a box to put thoughts in—a model’, but, he avers: ‘I couldn’t use D. H. Lawrence [...] (I was far too much like him).’⁶⁰⁷ It would almost be too obvious, Baldwin suggests, for him to choose Lawrence as his ‘model’.

Wright’s evaluation of Lawrence as a writer who ‘cuts deeper into human feeling’ and in whom there exists not ‘the slightest hesitancy in revealing everything’ and Baldwin’s sense of his own similarity to the Englishman speaks in many ways to the instances of influence and confluence explored in this thesis. What emerges in each chapter is a sense of Lawrence as a writer engaged in a radical critique of culture, a critique in which McKay, Hughes, Toomer and Hurston – whether under the influence of Lawrence’s work or not – were also actively involved. The themes and subjects that occupied Lawrence – primitivism, individualism, vitalism, the search for new ways of living and new relations between people – were also the concerns that motivated the literary and essayistic efforts of McKay, Hughes, Toomer and Hurston. All are, in one way or another, concerned with escaping the current state of things, with reformulating one’s life or one’s position in the world. All are out of sympathy with modernity and with the trajectory of modern society, fighting against a tide of increasing mechanisation and disconnection. All, in a sense, are groping for a way out: reformulating the function of the black writer (or indeed refuting this identity entirely), looking to break away from constraint, seeking new ways of living and new forms of identity. All, I have sought to demonstrate, were engaged in the sort of critique of modernity that Sherry sees as characterised by ‘the special awareness of today, a

⁶⁰⁷ David Adams Leeming, “An Interview with James Baldwin on Henry James”, *The Henry James Review*, Volume 8, Number 1, Fall 1986, pp. 47-56 (p. 55).

heightened and self-conscious sense of the present, [...] an imaginative understanding of the times and of time and of the ways in which culture tells time and gives meaning to its experience of time.⁶⁰⁸

These Harlem Renaissance writers have always been concerned with time, with 'the special awareness of today'; in 2019 this takes on new meaning. 'New' works by writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance are now being published almost yearly; McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* in 2017, Hurston's *Barracoon* in 2018, *Romance in Marseille* in 2020. The factors that made these works unpublishable in their own time make them appealing to publishers and readers today. These 'new' Harlem Renaissance works embody the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous; they appear to us at once as old works with a particular history, as time capsules unearthed and poised to reveal some past mystery, yet they also appear as strikingly fresh, novel works: the New Negro made new once again eight or nine decades on. As K. Merinda Simmons and James A. Crank note, in fact the re-emergence of modernist figures like Hurston should come as no surprise during a period in which the same delineations 'that identify an "us" and a "them", an "insider" and an "outsider"' are in force.⁶⁰⁹ In such an environment, '[t]he phenomenon of a Harlem Renaissance author, writing about a former African slave, being published in the twenty-first century, in fact, makes all too much sense.'⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Sherry, "The Long Turn of the Century", p. 88.

⁶⁰⁹ Simmons and Crank, *Race and New Modernisms*, p. 186

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 186.

Bibliography

Ahad, Badia Sahar, *Freud Upside Down: African American Literature and Psychoanalytic Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010)

Ahmad, Aijaz, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'", *Social Text*, No. 17 (Autumn, 1987) 3-25

Ailwood, Sarah, and Melinda Harvey (eds.), *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Influence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)

Asai, Masashi, *Fullness of Being: A Study of D. H. Lawrence* (Tokyo: Liber Press, 1992)

Baker Jr., Houston A., *Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996)

- *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

Baldwin, Kate A., *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002)

- "The Russian Connection: Interracialism as Queer Alliance in *The Ways of White Folks*", *Montage of a Dream: The Art and Life of Langston Hughes*, ed. by John Edgar Tidwell and Cheryl R. Ragar (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) 209-236

Barkan, Elazar and Ronald Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995)

Bell, Michael, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

- "D. H. Lawrence", *The Cambridge Companion to English Novelists*, ed. by Adrian Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 309-325
- "Lawrence and Modernism", *Cambridge Companion to D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 179-196
- *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J. M. Coetzee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- *Primitivism* (London: Methuen, 1972)

Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston: Mariner, 2005)

Bernard, Emily, "A Familiar Strangeness: The Spectre of Whiteness in the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement", *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement*, ed. by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006) 255-272

- *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance: A Portrait in Black and White* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)

Berry, Faith, *Langston Hughes: Before and Beyond Harlem* (New York: Random House, 1995)

Bhabha, Homi K., "'Race', Time and the Revision of Modernity", *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2, Neocolonialism (1991), 193-219

Blake, Casey Nelson, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990)

Bloom, Harold (ed.), *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973)

- *The Harlem Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004)
- *Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008)

Bond, Candis, "Embodied Love: D.H. Lawrence, Modernity, and Pregnancy", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016) 21-44

Bone, Robert, *Down Home: A History of Afro-American Short Fiction from Its Beginnings to the End of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1975)

Bontemps, Arna, Introduction to *Cane* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969)

Booth, Howard J., "'At last to newness': D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and the dream of a better life", *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2015), 19-44

- "Claude McKay in Britain: race, sexuality and poetry" in Len Platt (ed.), *Modernism and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 137-155
- "D. H. Lawrence and Male Homosexual Desire", *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 209 (Feb., 2002), 86-107
- "Give Me Differences: Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and Race", *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 27 (1997), 171-196
- (ed.), *New D. H. Lawrence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

- "Non-Metropolitan Modernism: E.M. Forster. D.H. Lawrence, and William Faulkner", *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 700-716

Boyce Davies, Carole, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Boyd, Valerie, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003)

Bradshaw, David, and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (eds.), *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)

Brathwaite, Kamau, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London: Villiers, 1984)

Brickell, Herschel, Review of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *New York Post*, 14 September 1937

Bridgewater, Patrick, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony* (London: Leicester University Press, 1972)

Brown, Rosellen, Review of Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*, *New York*, 13 April 1981

Brown, Sterling A., Arthur P. Davis and Ulysses Lee (eds.), *The Negro Caravan* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1941)

Burwell, Rose Marie, "Checklist of Lawrence's Reading", *A D. H. Lawrence Handbook*, ed. by Keith M. Sagar (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982) 59-125

Byatt, A. S., "The one bright book of life", *New Statesman*, 16 December 2002.

Bynner, Witter, *Journey with Genius: Recollections and Reflections Concerning the D. H. Lawrences* (London: P. Nevill, 1953)

Byrd, Rudolph P., *Jean Toomer's Years with Gurdjieff* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990)

Calverton, V. F. (ed.), *An Anthology of American Negro Literature* (New York: The Modern Library, 1929)

Cameron, Christopher, "Zora Neale Hurston, Freethought, and African American Religion", *Journal of Africana Religions*, Volume 4, Number 2, 2016, 236-244

Carey, John, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber, 1992)

Carpenter, Edward, *Civilisation: its Cause and Cure* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1906)

- *The Intermediate Sex* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1908)

Caughie, Pamela, "Passing as Modernism", *Modernism/Modernity*, Volume 12, Number 3, (September 2005) 385-406

Chambers, Jessie, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

Chioni Moore, David, "Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border: Langston Hughes' Relevance, 1933–2002", *Callaloo* 25.4 (2002) 1115-1135

Cleveland-Wright, Margaret E., "Cane and *In Our Time*: A Literary Conversation about Race" in Gary Edward Holcomb and Charles Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012) 151-176

Cobham, Rhonda, "Jekyll and Claude: The Erotics of Patronage in Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom*", *Queer Diasporas*, Durham, [NC]: Duke University Press, 2000, 122-153

Cooper, Wayne F., *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996)

- (ed.) *The Passion of Claude McKay* (New York: Schocken, 1973)

Cortàzar, Julio, "Some Aspects of the Short Story", *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994) 245-255.

Cruse, Harold, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: New York Review Books, 2005)

Curren, Erik D., "Should Their Eyes Have Been Watching God?: Hurston's Use of Religious Experience and Gothic Horror", *African American Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1995) 17-25

Cushman, Keith, "The Young Lawrence and the Short Story", *Modern British Literature* (1978) 101-112

- and Dennis Jackson (eds.), *D. H. Lawrence's Literary Inheritors* (London: Macmillan, 1991)

Dash, J. Michael, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997)

Delavenay, Emile, *D. H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter* (London: Heinemann, 1971)

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)

Dixon, Melvin, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987)

Douglas, Ann, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995)

Doyle, Laura and Laura Winkiel (eds.), *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005)

Draper, Ronald P., *D. H. Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1976)

Du Bois, W. E. B., *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 2012)

- "Two Novels: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* & Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*." *Crisis* 35, 1928.

Dunn, Allen and George Hutchinson, "The Future of the Harlem Renaissance", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 80, No. 4, The Future of the Harlem Renaissance (Winter 1997) 445-454

Dunn, Stephane, "I thought there was no "real" sex left": D. H. Lawrence and the Sexed Vision of Black Femininity", *Like a Black and White Kaleidoscope Tossed at Random: Essays on D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love*, ed. by Jean-Paul Pichardie and Philippe Romanski (Rouen: Presses universitaires de Rouen, 2001) 59-72

Eder, M. D., "Doth a Man Travail with Child?", the *Freewoman*, 30 November 1911

Edwards, Brent Hayes, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2003)

Einhaus, Ann-Marie (ed.), "The short story in the early twentieth century", *The Cambridge Companion to the English Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 101-114

Ellis, David, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

- *Love and Sex in D. H. Lawrence* (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2015)

Ellison, Ralph, "The World and the Jug", *Shadow and Act* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1967) 107-143

Etherington, Ben, *Literary Primitivism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017)

Fabre, Michel, *Richard Wright: Books and Writers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990)

Fernihough, Anne, *D. H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

- *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p

Ford, Karen Jackson, *Split-Gut Song: Jean Toomer and the Poetics of Modernity* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005)

Forster, E. M., *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000)

Foster, Jr., John Burt, *Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)

Franco, Paul, "Becoming Who You Are: Nietzsche on Self-Creation", *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Volume 49, Issue 1, Spring 2018, 52-77

Frank, Waldo, *Our America*, (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919)

Friedman, Susan Stanford, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

Fullinwider, S. P., "Jean Toomer: Lost Generation, or Negro Renaissance?", *Phylon*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1966) 396-403

Game, David, *D. H. Lawrence's Australia: Anxiety at the Edge of Empire* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)

Garvey, Marcus, "Home to Harlem, Claude McKay's Damaging Book Should Earn Wholesale Condemnation of Negroes", *Negro World*, 29 September 1928.

Gates, Jr., Henry Louis, "Canon-Formation, Literary History, and the Afro-American Tradition: From the Seen to the Told", *Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s*, ed. by Houston A. Baker, Jr. and Patricia Redmond (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) 14-39

- *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)
- *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Gillespie, Michael Allen, "'Slouching Toward Bethlehem to Be Born': On the Nature and Meaning of Nietzsche's Superman", *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, 49-69

Gilroy, Paul, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993)

Goggin, Joyce, "D.H. Lawrence, the Nazis, and Michel Foucault", *The D.H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1/3 (1995 & 1996) 287-304

Goldman, Wendy, *Women, the state, and revolution: Soviet family policy and social life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Goodheart, Eugene, "Lawrence and American Fiction" in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *The Legacy of D. H. Lawrence: New Essays* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987) 135-155

Gordon, David J., "Sex and Language in D. H. Lawrence", *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1981) 362-375

Granofsky, Ronald, "Class" in Andrew Harrison (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 173-182

- *D.H. Lawrence and Survival: Darwinism in the Fiction of the Transitional Period* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003)
- "Jews of the Wrong Sort": D.H. Lawrence and Race", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1999-2000) 209-223

Grant, Madison, *The Passing of the Great Race or The Racial Basis of European History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1919)

Hamalian, Leo, "D. H. Lawrence and Black Writers", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Spring 1990) 579-596

- *D. H. Lawrence and Nine Women Writers* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996)

Harootunian, Harry, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

Harris, Janice Hubbard, *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984)

Harrison, Andrew (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

- *The Life of D. H. Lawrence: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Wiley, 2016)

Hassan, Ihab H., "The Problem of Influence in Literary History: Notes towards a Definition", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Sep., 1955) 66-76

Hathaway, Heather, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999)

Hawkins, Stephanie L., "Building the 'Blue' Race: Miscegenation, Mysticism, and the Language of Cognitive Evolution in Jean Toomer's 'The Blue Meridian'", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (Summer 2004) 149-180

Haynes, Stephen R., *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Head, Dominic, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

- "The Short Story" in Andrew Harrison (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 101-110

Helbling, Mark, "Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank: A Creative Friendship", *Phylon*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1980) 167-178

Hemenway, Robert E., *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977)

Holcomb, Gary Edward, *Claude McKay: Code Name Sasha* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2009)

- "Hemingway and McKay: Race and Nation" in Holcomb and Charles Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), 133-150.

Holcomb, Gary Edward and Charles Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012)

Huggins, Nathan Irvin, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973)

Hughes, Langston, *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia, The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 71-105

- "In an Emir's Harem", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 105-110
- *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993)
- "Farewell to Mahomet", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 133-140

- *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (New York: Holt, 1951)
- "Tamara Khanum: Soviet Asia's Greatest Dancer", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 122-127
- *The Big Sea*, ed. by Joseph McLaren (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002)
- *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. by Arnold Rampersad (New York: Vintage, 1995)
- *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 15: The Short Stories*, ed. by R. Baxter Miller (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002)
- "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 31-36
- "The Soviet Theater in Central Asia", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 117-121
- *The Ways of White Folks* (New York: Vintage, 1990)
- "To Negro Writers", *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes, Volume 9: Essays on art, race, politics, and World Affairs*, ed. by Christopher C. De Santis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002) 131-133

Hunter, Adrian, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Hurston, Zora Neale, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Slave* (London: Harper Collins, 2018)

- *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006)
- "How It Feels to Be Colored Me", *I Love Myself when I Am Laughing ... and Then Again when I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*, ed. by Alice Walker (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1979) PP
- *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008)
- *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008)
- *Seraph on the Suwanee* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948)
- "Sweat", *The Complete Stories* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago, 2007)
- *The Sanctified Church* (Berkeley: Turtle Island, 1983)

Hutchinson, George, "Jean Toomer and American Racial Discourse", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 35.2 (Summer 1993) 226-250

- *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)
- (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Hyde, Virginia, and L. D. Clark, "The Sense of an Ending in *The Plumed Serpent*", *The D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1/3 (1993 & 1994) 140-148

“Influence”, in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <<http://www.oed.com.manchester.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/95519?rskey=pfqcyd&result=1#eid>> [accessed 14 November 2018].

Jackson, Lawrence P., *A Narrative History of African American Writers and Critics, 1934-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)

Jacques, Geoffrey, *A Change in the Weather: Modernist Imagination, African American Imaginary* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005)

James, Winston, “A race outcast from an outcast class: Claude McKay’s experience and analysis of Britain” in Bill Schwarz (ed.), *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) 71-92

Jameson, Fredric, *Allegory and Ideology* (London: Verso, 2019)

- *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002)
- *Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991)
- “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”, *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986) 65-88

Jenkins, Lee M., “Lawrence’s Influence on Later Writers” in Andrew Harrison (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 327-336

- *The American Lawrence* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014)
- “*Studies in Classic American Literature and American Studies*”, *D. H. Lawrence Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (September 2012) 44-59

Joannou, Maroula, "The Angel of Freedom: Dora Marsden and the transformation of *The Freewoman* into *The Egoist*", *Women's History Review*, Volume 11, Number 4, 2002, 596-611

Johnson, James Weldon, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (New York: Dover, 1995)

Jones, Robert B., *Jean Toomer and the Prison-House of Thought* (The University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst, 1993)

- *Jean Toomer: Selected Essays and Literary Criticism* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996)

Jordan, Jennifer, "Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1988) 105-117

Kallen, H. M., "Alain Locke and Cultural Pluralism", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 54, No. 5 (Feb. 28, 1957) 119-127

Kalliney, Peter, *Modernism in a Global Context* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

Kaplan, Carla, *Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013)

- (ed.), *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* (New York: Doubleday, 2002)

Kerman, Cynthia Earl, and Richard Eldridge, *The Lives of Jean Toomer: A Hunger for Wholeness* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987)

Kessler, Jascha, "D. H. Lawrence's Primitivism", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1964), 467-488

Kinkead-Weekes, Mark, "D. H. Lawrence: 'A Passionately Religious Man'", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 109, No. 3 (Summer, 2001) 379-397

- *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile, 1912-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- "The Genesis of Lawrence's Psychology Books: An Overview", *D. H. Lawrence Review* (27:2-3) [1997-1998] 153-170

Kodat, Catherine Gunther, "To 'Flash White Light from Ebony': The Problem of Modernism in Jean Toomer's *Cane*", *Twentieth Century Literature*, Spring, 2000, Vol. 46, 1-19

Kreymborg, Alfred, *Our Singing Strength* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1929)

Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)

Krockel, Carl, *D.H. Lawrence and Germany: The Politics of Influence* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007)

Ladino, Jennifer K., *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* (University of Virginia Press, 2012)

Lappin, Linda, "Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence: A Parallel Quest", *Katherine Mansfield Studies*, Vol. 2 (2010) 72-86

Lawrence, D. H., *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, ed. by Mara Kalnins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

- "Aristocracy", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 365-376

- '[Autobiographical Fragment]', *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 49-68
- "Blessed are the Powerful", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 319-328
- "Chaos in Poetry", *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 107-116
- "Climbing Down Pisgah", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 223-230
- *Kangaroo*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *Lady Chatterley's Lover and A Propos of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'*, ed. by Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- "Love", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 5-12
- *Mornings in Mexico and Other Stories*, ed. by Virginia Crosswhite Hyde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- *Movements in European History*, ed. by Philip Crumpton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- "On Being a Man", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 211-222

- "On Being Religious", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 185-194
- *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious* ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- *Quetzalcoatl*, ed. by N. H. Reeve (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
- Review of *Nigger Heaven*, *Flight*, *Manhattan Transfer* and *In Our Time*, *Calendar of Modern Letters* (April 1927) in *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 305-313
- Review of *Saïd the Fisherman* in *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 243-248
- Review of *The Social Basis of Consciousness* by Trigant Burrow, *Introductions and Reviews*, ed. by N. H. Reeve and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 329-336
- *Sons and Lovers*, ed. by Helen Baron and Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- *Studies in Classic American Literature*, ed. by Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

- *The Fox, The Captain's Doll, The Ladybird*, ed. by Dieter Mehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 1, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 2, ed. by George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 3, ed. by James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 4, ed. by Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 5, ed. by James T. Boulton and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 6, ed. by James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton with Gerald M. Lacy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. 7, ed. by Keith Sagar and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- *The Lovely Lady* (London: Secker, 1932)
- *The Plumed Serpent*, ed. by L. D. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)
- *The Poems*, Vol. I, ed. by Christopher Pollnitz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

- *The Rainbow*, ed. by Mark Kinkead-Weekes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- "The Reality of Peace", *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays*, ed. by Michael Herbert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 25-52
- "The Risen Lord", *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 265-273
- "The State of Funk", *Late Essays and Articles*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 218-224
- "Why the Novel Matters", *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- *Women in Love*, ed. by David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Lawrence, Frieda, *The Memoirs and Correspondence*, ed. by E. W. Tedlock (London: Heinemann, 1961)

Lazarus, Neil, "Modernism and African Literature", *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 228-245

Leavis, F. R., *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967)

Leeming, David Adams, "An Interview with James Baldwin on Henry James", *The Henry James Review*, Volume 8, Number 1, Fall 1986, 47-56

Levenson, Michael (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Lewis, David Levering, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (London: Penguin, 1997)

Li, Victor, *The Neo-Primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006)

Littell, Robert, "Negro Poets", *The New Republic* (July 12, 1922)

Locke, Alain (ed.), *The New Negro* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997)

Lorde, Audre, "The Uses of the Erotic", *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007)

Lowney, John, "Haiti and Black Transnationalism: Remapping the Migrant Geography of *Home to Harlem*", *African American Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Autumn, 2000) 413-429

von der Luft, Eric, "Sources of Nietzsche's 'God is Dead!' and its Meaning for Heidegger", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April – June 1984) 263-276

Luhan, Mabel Dodge, *Lorenzo in Taos* (New York: Kraus, 1969)

Lukács, Georg, *The Theory of the Novel* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971)

Lutenski, Emily, "A Small Man in Big Spaces': The New Negro, the Mestizo, and Jean Toomer's Southwest" in Davarian L. Baldwin and Minkah Makalani (eds.), *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance beyond Harlem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013) 157-180

Maiwald, Michael, "Race, Capitalism, and the Third-Sex Ideal: Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* and the Legacy of Edward Carpenter", *Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 48, Number 4, Winter 2002, 825-857

Mao, Douglas, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies", *PMLA*, Vol. 123, No. 3 (May, 2008) 737-748

March-Russell, Paul, *The Short Story: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)

Marsden, Dora, "Bondwomen", the *Freewoman*, 23 November 1911

- "Notes of the Week", the *Freewoman*, 23 November 1911
- *The New Freewoman*, 1 September 1913

Marx, Edward, "Forgotten Jungle Songs: Primitivist Strategies of the Harlem Renaissance", *The Langston Hughes Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1/2 (Spring/Fall 1996), 79-93

Maxwell, William J., *F.B. Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)

- "Global Poetics and State-Sponsored Transnationalism: A Reply to Jahan Ramazani", *American Literary History*, Volume 18, Number 2, Summer 2006, 360-364

May, Keith M., *Nietzsche & Modern Literature: Themes in Yeats, Rilke, Mann and Lawrence* (London: Macmillan, 1988)

Mayberry, Susan Neal, *Can't I Love what I Criticize?: The Masculine and Morrison* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2007)

- "Out of the Mouths of Babes: Children and Narrative Voices in Hughes' *The Ways of White Folks*", *Griot*, Vol. 14, (Fall 1995) 48-58

McCabe, Tracy, "The Multifaceted Politics of Primitivism in Harlem Renaissance Writing", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 80, No. 4, The Future of the Harlem Renaissance (Winter 1997), 475-497

McCann, Sean, "The Cruelty of Zora Neale Hurston," *The Common Review*, 2.3 (Fall 2003) 6-15

McKay, Claude, *A Long Way from Home* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007)

- *Amiable with Big* (New York: Penguin, 2017)
- "A Negro Writer to His Critics", *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 390-393
- *Banana Bottom* (Chatham, NJ: The Chatham Bookseller, 1970)
- *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2008)
- *Complete Poems*, ed. by William J. Maxwell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004)
- *Home to Harlem* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987)
- Letter to W. A. Bradley, March 18, 1930, William A. Bradley Literary Agency Records, Box 43 Folder 8, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

- *My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Short Stories* (Kingston: Heinemann, 1979)
- Review of *Shuffle Along*, *Liberator*, Vol. 4 (December 1921) 24-26
- *Romance in Marseille*, Box 6, Folder 24, Claude McKay Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library
- *Songs of Jamaica* (Kingston: Aston W. Gardner & Co., 1912)
- *The Passion of Claude McKay*, ed. by Wayne Cooper (New York: Schocken, 1973)

McKay, Nellie Y., *Jean Toomer, Artist* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984)

Merrild, Knud, *A Poet and Two Painters: A Memoir of D. H. Lawrence* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1938)

Meyers, Jeffrey (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence: A Biography* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002)

- *D. H. Lawrence and Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985)
- *Homosexuality and Literature, 1890-1930* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977)
- "Katherine Mansfield, Gurdjieff, and Lawrence's 'Mother and Daughter'", *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 1976) 444-453
- *The Legacy of D. H. Lawrence: New Essays* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987)

Michelucci, Stefania, "The line and the circle: D. H. Lawrence, the First World War and Myth" in *New D. H. Lawrence*, ed. by Howard J. Booth, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) 117-129

Millett, Kate, *Sexual Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000)

Milton, Colin, *Lawrence and Nietzsche: A Study in Influence* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987)

Mishkin, Tracy (ed.), *Literary Influence and African-American Writers: Collected Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2015)

Montgomery, Robert E., *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Morrison, Toni, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992)

Munson, Gorham, "The Significance of Jean Toomer", *Opportunity* 3 (September 1925), 262-263

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. and trans. by Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

- *Ecce Homo: How to Become What You Are*, trans. by Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

- *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage, 1974)
- *The Will to Power*, trans, by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968)
- *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

North, Michael, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

Nowlin, Michael, "The Strange Literary Career of Jean Toomer" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 2011) 207- 235

Ostom, Hans, *Langston Hughes: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993)

Ott, Mark P., "A Shared Language of American Modernism: Hemingway and the Harlem Renaissance" in Gary Edward Holcomb and Charles Scruggs (eds.), *Hemingway and the Black Renaissance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012) 27-37

Perloff, Marjorie, "Tolerance and Taboo: Modernist Primitivisms and Postmodernist Pieties" in Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995) 339-354

Pfeiffer, Kathleen (ed.), *Brother Mine: The Correspondence of Jean Toomer and Waldo Frank* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010)

- *Race Passing and American Individualism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002)

Plant, Deborah G., *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995)

- "The Benedict-Hurston Connection", *CLA Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (June 2003) 435-456
- *Zora Neale Hurston: A Biography of the Spirit* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger, 2007)

Plomer, William, Review of *The Ways of White Folks, Jonah's Gourd Vine, Pitch Lake and Black Girl, White Lady*, *The Spectator*, January 4, 1935

Pochmara, Anna, *The Making of the New Negro: Black Authorship, Masculinity, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011)

Pontuale, Francesco, "The Contagious Fever of the Jungle: Primitivism in Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*", *RSA Journal*, Issue 8/9, 1997-1998, 65-83

Pound, Ezra, *New Selected Poems and Translations*, ed. by Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2010)

Pratt, Mary Louise, "The Short Story: The Long and Short of it", *The New Short Story Theories*, ed. by Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994) 91-113

Preston, Peter, "'I am in a novel': Lawrence in Recent British Fiction" in *D. H. Lawrence: New Worlds*, ed. by Keith Cushman and Earl G. Ingersoll (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003) 25-49

Quirk, Tom, and Robert E. Fleming, "Jean Toomer's Contributions to the *New Mexico Sentinel*", *CLA Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (June, 1976) 524-532

Rainey, Lawrence, *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)

Ramazani, Jahan, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

Ramesh, Kotti Sree and Kandula Nirupa Rani, *Claude McKay: The Literary Identity from Jamaica to Harlem and Beyond* (London: McFarland and Company, 2006)

Rampersad, Arnold, *The Life of Langston Hughes, Volume I: 1902-1941, I, Too, Sing America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Ratner-Rosenghagen, Jennifer, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)

Reade Rosenberg, Leah, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Reid, Susan, *D.H. Lawrence, Music and Modernism* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)

- "From Rope-Dancer to Wrestler: The Figure of the Artist as Performer in *Women in Love*", *D. H. Lawrence Review* (40:1, 2015) 107-127

Richards, David, "At Other Times: Modernism and the 'Primitive'", *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 64-82

Roberts, Neil, *D. H. Lawrence, Travel and Cultural Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

Roman, Meredith L., *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012)

Rosenfeld, Paul, *Men Seen* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1967)

Ross, Marlon B., *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004)

Rowbotham, Sheila, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008)

Rubin, William (ed.), *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984)

Ruderman, Judith, *Race and Identity in D. H. Lawrence: Indians, Gypsies, and Jews* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Rudnick, Lois Palken, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1984)

Rusch, Frederik L. (ed.), *A Jean Toomer Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

Russ, Robert A., "'There's no place like home': The Carnival of Black Life in Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*", *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, ed. by Victor A. Kramer and Robert A. Russ (New York: Whitston, 1997) 355-374

Sagar, Keith, *D. H. Lawrence: Poet* (Penrith: Humanities-Ebooks, 2007)

Schlesinger, Rudolf, *The Family in the U.S.S.R.: Documents and Readings* (London: Routledge, 1998)

Schneider, Daniel J., *The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence: An Intellectual Biography* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986)

Schwarz, Christa B., *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003)

Schweizer, Bernard, "Faith, Doubt, and Zora Neale Hurston's Resistance to God", *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 103-126

Scott, Jacqueline and A. Todd Franklin (eds.), *Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and African American Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006)

Sherry, Vincent (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Siegel, Carol, *Lawrence Among the Women: Wavering Boundaries in Women's Literary Traditions* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991)

Simmons, K. Merinda and James A. Crank, *Race and New Modernisms* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Slaughter, Joseph, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007)

Smethurst, James, *The African American Roots of Modernism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

- *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Snyder, Carey, *British Fiction and Cross-Cultural Encounters: Ethnographic Modernism from Wells to Woolf* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

de Spinoza, Benedict, *The Ethics*, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996)

Stein, Rachel, *Shifting the Ground: American Women Writers' Revisions of Nature, Gender and Race* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997)

Steinhauer, H., "Eros and Psyche: a Nietzschean Motif in Anglo-American literature", *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (April, 1949) 217-228

Stewart, Jeffrey C., *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

Sweeney, Fionnghuala and Kate Marsh (eds.), *Afromodernisms: Paris, Harlem and the Avant-Garde* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013)

Thatcher, David S., *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970)

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden* (New York: Dover, 1995)

Thornton, Weldon, *D. H. Lawrence: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne, 1993)

Tillery, Tyrone, *Claude McKay: A Black Poet's Struggle for Identity* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992)

Toomer, Jean, "A Drama of the Southwest (Notes)", Box 44, Folder 913, Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

- *Cane*, ed. by Rudolf P. Byrd and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Norton, 2011)
- "Reflections of an Earth-Being", *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) 15-27

- "Eight-Day World", Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- *Natalie Mann, The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) 243-325
- "Notations on *The Captain's Doll*", *Broom*, Volume 5, Number 1, August 1923, 47-49.
- "On Being an American", *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) 121-122
- "Portage Potential", Box 35, Folder 750, Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University
- "The Years of Wandering", *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) 99-115
- "The Blue Meridian", *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer*, ed. by Darwin T. Turner (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980) 214-234
- *The Collected Poems of Jean Toomer*, ed. by Robert B. Jones and Margery Toomer Latimer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988)
- "Unidentified Draft", Box 48, Folder 1014, Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Torgovnick, Marianna, *Gone Primitive* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)

Turner, Darwin T., Introduction to Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (New York: Arno, 1969)

- "The Failure of a Playwright", *CLA Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (June, 1967) 308-318
- (ed.), *The Wayward and the Seeking: A Collection of Writings by Jean Toomer* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1980)

Turner, John, "David Eder: between Freud and Jung", *D. H. Lawrence Review* (27:2-3) (1997-1998) 289-309

- and John Worthen, "Ideas of Community: Lawrence and 'Rananim'" *D. H. Lawrence Studies*, Vol. 8 (1999) 135-171

Vaddé, Aarthi, *Chimeras of Form: Modernist Internationalism Beyond Europe, 1914–2016* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016)

Van Vechten, Carl, *Nigger Heaven* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000)

Vasconcelos, José, *The Cosmic Race*, trans. by Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)

Walker, Alice, Foreword to Robert E. Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977)

Wall, Cheryl A., *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)

Wallace, Michele, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Verso, 1979)

Whitman, Walt, *Leaves of Grass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Widmer, Kingsley, "Lawrence and the Nietzschean Matrix" in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *D. H. Lawrence and Tradition* (London: The Athlone Press, 1985) 115-131

- *The Art of Perversity: D. H. Lawrence's Shorter Fictions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962)

Winant, Howard, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004)

Wollaeger, Mark, and Matt Eatough (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Woodson, Jon, *To Make a New Race: Gurdjieff, Toomer and the Harlem Renaissance* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1999)

Worthen, John, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

WReC (Warwick Research Collective), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015)

Wright, Richard, Interview with Georges Charbonnier, October 1960, *Conversations with Richard Wright*, ed. by Keneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993)

Wright, T. R., *D. H. Lawrence and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Archives

Claude McKay Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Claude McKay Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

Cynthia Earl Kerman Papers Relating to *The Lives of Jean Toomer*, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

D. H. Lawrence Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Jean Toomer Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Langston Hughes Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

Langston Hughes Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Zora Neale Hurston Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Zora Neale Hurston Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library