

Georgia State University
ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

English Dissertations

Department of English

Fall 12-18-2013

“Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice”: An Examination
of the History and Culture Leading to the
Publication of Fire!! Devoted to Younger Artists
and Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American
Writers

Joni Louise Johnson Williams

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss

Recommended Citation

Williams, Joni Louise Johnson, ““Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice”: An Examination of the History and Culture Leading to the Publication of Fire!! Devoted to Younger Artists and Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers.” Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2013.

https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/117

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

“FIFTY YEARS OF OUR WHOLE VOICE”:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURE LEADING TO THE
PUBLICATION OF *FIRE!! DEVOTED TO YOUNGER ARTISTS*
AND *AIIEEEEE!*: AN ANTHOLOGY OF ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS

by

JONI LOUISE JOHNSON WILLIAMS

Under the Direction of Pearl A. McHaney

ABSTRACT

According to African American literary theorist Henry Louis Gates, “the slave wrote not primarily to demonstrate humane letters, but to demonstrate his or her own membership in the human community” (128). Two efforts at this demonstration of community membership exist in the publication of the literary journal, *Fire!!*, written and published by African American artists and writers in 1926 and in the anthology *AIIEEEEE!*, compiled and edited by Asian American writers and published in 1974. These compilations, published not quite fifty years apart, are direct responses and reactions to the efforts of the larger society to influence and/or to silence the voices of African American and Asian American people in the United States. The Harlem

Renaissance artists seem to have spoken to the *AIIEEEEE!* editors, who appear to have continued the conversation in their work while demonstrating the importance of historic memory, cultural influence, and national identity. As *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* talk to each other, they symbolize the double voice that accompanies the dual consciousness of people of color in America and signify a collective effort to redefine the expectations that white America has of people of color. For each of them, the years and events leading to their publications shape the content, the immediate reception, and the longstanding impact of the publications themselves. Together, the works represent the power of multiethnic presence in American literature, and now, years later, texts continue to speak across generations and cultures and in voices strident enough to empower artists and writers and to influence the direction of American literature.

Studying literature and art, not in isolation but in relation to other works, even those from other cultures, enhances the significance of collective contribution and appreciation of the literature that expresses national identity and the American place in the global community. To that end, understanding the significance of the cultural and historical contexts that lead to artistic and literary production provides a comprehensive appreciation of *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* and their creators by revealing connections, tensions, and diversions for analysis, as well as a more complete understanding of the works themselves.

INDEX WORDS: African American, Asian American, American Literature, Harlem Renaissance, *Fire!!*, *AIIEEEEE!*, Black Arts, Black Power, Yellow Power, Literature, Multicultural, Multiculturalism, Multiethnic

“FIFTY YEARS OF OUR WHOLE VOICE”:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURE LEADING TO THE
PUBLICATION OF *FIRE!! DEVOTED TO YOUNGER ARTISTS*
AND *AIIEEEEE! : AN ANTHOLOGY OF ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS*

by

JONI LOUISE JOHNSON WILLIAMS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2013

Copyright by
Joni Louise Johnson Williams
2013

“FIFTY YEARS OF OUR WHOLE VOICE”:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORY AND CULTURE LEADING TO THE
PUBLICATION OF *FIRE!! DEVOTED TO YOUNGER ARTISTS*
AND *IIIIIIIIII! AN ANTHOLOGY OF ASIAN AMERICAN WRITERS*

by

JONI LOUISE JOHNSON WILLIAMS

Committee Chair: Pearl A. McHaney

Committee: Audrey Goodman

Renée Schatteman

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation and the effort that produced it to those who have dedicated their hearts to me.

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done
by only me is your doing, my darling)
i fear
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

e. e. cummings

I dedicate this work to strong shoulders and stronger hearts, both of which have sustained me when my shoulders and my heart were weak.

I dedicate this work to my Aunt Anne who loved what she loved and whom she loved simply and completely.

And I dedicate this work to my father—Daddy—whose love of learning has passed, strong as DNA, to his children and to the generations to come.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every doctoral student knows the truth of the reality and the necessity of the village that supports the effort of doctoral work. Every word appears here as the result of much support, encouragement, and intercession from that village. I am grateful for the unwavering support and firm encouragement from my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Pearl McHaney, who believed in me to the point that she made me believe in myself. I appreciate my committee members, Dr. Audrey Goodman and Dr. Renée Schatteman, who encouraged me early in my coursework and have willingly and enthusiastically supported me throughout the completion of this dissertation.

Over the years, my colleagues at Atlanta Technical College have supported my work there and here and kindly allow me to sit at the table while we plan to change the world. Brenda Watts Jones first offered me a seat at that table and served as a mentor early in this work. Her spirit continues to speak.

I am consciously and intensely grateful for those who patiently accompanied me on this journey. Gladys Hodges Camp “pressed hands” and checked my homework. Laretta Hannon is a sister of the word, with stories of her own. I appreciate her listening to mine. Ebony Olivia Lumumba’s faith in me is the force I need to keep moving. Alison Rynette Kean Wright who was there the first time and ever after . . . I owe you a “D.”

My family is my foundation and my touchstone--my past, my now, and my becoming. In his inimitable fashion, my husband Kevin T. Williams is steadfast in his conviction that if it can be done, I can do it. My father, James E. Johnson, Sr., read every word of this work as it was being researched and written. Every day, his sense of wit and wisdom encourages me to do more and to be more and to enjoy every minute. My mother, Mable Lumpkin Johnson, who loves fiercely and unconditionally, believes that by sheer force of love great things can be accomplished. My brother Jimmy Johnson has provided just the right word in many a midnight hour, and my sister, Meryl Johnson Jackson, magically, in spite of many miles, manages to be with me through everything. Our grandparents and great grandparents are present in us; their legacy lives in every breath, every truth, and every child. Their lives are my stories . . . my life their legacy.

There are so many whose voices carried across generations and whispered to me as I researched this project. Many of those stories live in these pages. I hope I do their creators proud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction “Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice”	1
Chapter One One Nation, Many Voices: From Colonialism to Consciousness	18
Chapter Two “Behind the Mask”: Foundations of the Modern African American Voice	47
Chapter Three <i>Fire!!</i> and the New Negro: The Harlem Renaissance as Foundational	76
Chapter Four Of Golden Mountain and Paper Sons: The Asian American Experience	171
Chapter Five <i>AIIEEEEE!</i> : Asian American Voices in the Literary Tradition	219
Chapter Six “On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet”: Diverse American Literatures in the Twenty-first Century	265
Works Cited	281

Introduction

“Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice”

*“. . . Only in fiction can the hopes and fears
and joys and sorrows of people be adequately recorded.”*
John Okada

With the above quotation, author John Okada explains the impetus for writing his first and only published novel *No-No Boy* (1957), about Japanese American experiences during World War II. In the novel’s afterword, “In search of John Okada,” Frank Chin includes part of a letter from Okada to his publisher, Charles Tuttle, wherein Okada states his belief in the power of fiction to serve as the repository for the stories of a people. Further, he explains that the experience of Japanese Americans has been omitted or misrepresented in the conventional recountings of the history of the United States (“Afterword” 256). Although Okada is speaking from his own sense of responsibility and personal experience, his sentiments are true for many people, particularly those who have been subjected to unequal treatment by the majority culture and those whose realities are not part of the historical memory of the country and the formation of national identity. For these people, fiction is the medium to “faithfully describe” (256) history and peoples’ relationship to it.

Contrary to the long-held belief that minority cultures do not possess their own histories of literary production, African Americans and Asian Americans are examples of minority cultures in America that have extensive traditions of expressing their experiences and preserving their cultural histories through oral and written literature. There are similar histories among other minority cultures; however, the focus of this study is the intersection of African American and

Asian American cultures and histories and the production of specific literary works from those two communities.

According to Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Shannon Steen, scholars of AfroAsian cultural politics, the connections between African Americans and Asian Americans have only recently become the focus of serious study (1). However, from their beginnings in this country, African Americans and Asian Americans have been connected by labor and lack of citizenship. African Americans were brought to the United States as slaves, and Asian Americans arrived as indentured laborers, with their numbers increasing when the slave trade was abolished. Based upon their nonwhite skin color and the circumstances of their arrival in the United States, people of color in the United States have been subject to a subordinate or inferior position within the societal, political, and economic fabric of the nation—they have been given “subaltern” status. For centuries and generations, they were considered voiceless and rootless, without substantive history to contribute to the idea of American identity or to its literature. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in the 1985 essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” those assigned subaltern status exist in a space of difference. As this definition is extended to those who are excised from the narrative exchange of the larger culture, the subaltern is not recognized as a significant contributor to a dialogue that happens between speaker and listener in the exchange of ideas and in the behaviors that shape national history and experience. They have no voice. Spivak concludes that speaking involves discursive, expressive exchange and that the exchange does not have to be based in symbolized identicalness to be equally significant or equally valued. In western patriarchal society, we seem to ask if the subaltern is able to speak in terms that are politically correct, in terms that do not upset the delicate balance between white and nonwhite, in

terms that America can acknowledge. In the title question, “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak also asks, “Can and will those who are ‘othered’ be heard?”

The answers to these questions for both African Americans and Asian Americans lie in their rich literary traditions in the United States; however, both exist in a space of cultural and color difference from the larger society, and this society has historically failed to accept their literary work as a critical part of the American literary canon and has instead historically imposed the writing of white Americans as the staple and standard of the literature of the United States. The marginalized status that African American and Asian American cultures have occupied historically in the United States belies the wealth of literature that is the product of longstanding literary traditions that describe and relate a unique American experience of people who are, according to larger society, American in only a liminal sense. To the contrary, these groups have rich literary histories, and the movements within these traditions figure significantly in the composition of the history, traditions, and literature of the United States and of the world.

According to African American literary theorist Henry Louis Gates, “the slave wrote not primarily to demonstrate humane letters, but to demonstrate his or her own membership in the human community” (*Signifying* 128). Such demonstration of belonging may be applied to others who have been disenfranchised by color and race, and, for purposes of this study, the exploration of community membership extends to Asian Americans as well as the African Americans who are Gates’ initial subjects. Two efforts at this demonstration of community membership exist in the publication of the literary journal, *Fire!! Devoted to Younger Artists*, written and published by African American artists and writers in 1926 and in the anthology *AIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian American Literature*, compiled and edited by Asian American writers and published in 1974. These compilations, published not quite fifty years apart, are direct responses and reactions

to the efforts of the larger society to ignore and/or to silence the voices of African American and Asian American people in the United States. Conceived and created in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, respectively, the works bookend the geographic expanse of the United States and the many voices within. Moreover, these two works share the ability to be both sign and symbol in that they represent and are related textually as “talking texts.” According to Gates, “talking texts” are those black texts that “talk” to other black texts by way of intertextuality, metaphor, or formative style. I suggest that the notion of “talking texts” extends to literatures produced by other peoples of color and is particularly evident in an examination of *Fire!!* and its relationship to *AIIEEEEE!* The latter follows in the tradition of proclaiming the community that it represents as “speakerly subjects” and gives voice to the Asian American community as the former gives voice to the African American community. They appear to be engaged in a dialogic exchange. The Harlem Renaissance artists seem to have spoken to the *AIIEEEEE!* writers, who appear to have continued the conversation in their work while demonstrating the importance of historic memory, cultural influence, and national identity. In what can be interpreted as a significant sign of their interconnectedness, *AIIEEEEE!* was published by the press of historically black Howard University in Washington, D. C. As *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* talk to each other, they symbolize the double voice that accompanies the dual consciousness of people of color in America and signify a collective effort to redefine the expectations that white America has of people of color.

Over a hundred years have passed since W. E. B. DuBois wrote in his 1903 publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*, “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the color line” (3). The color line exists still although the problem has expanded to exceed the customary, foundational binary of conflicts and contrasts between black and white and, within the last two decades, has come to

include an exploration of whiteness itself. This twenty-first century color line includes many shades that Americans attempt to associate with cultural heritage and struggle to navigate and to reconcile within the hegemonic ideal of Americanness. The focus of the following study is the literary impact of two cultural groups as they confront and respond to the twentieth-century problem of the color line in literary movements in the 1920s and 1970s respectively. This dissertation examines *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* as they are hallmarks of periods of prolific literary production within the times and the cultures that produced them. Published during times of major societal change, both publications are products of communities of young writers and artists and foreshadow a twenty-first century that welcomes a global and more varied American literature.

The African American history of literary and artistic tradition traces its beginnings to the eighteenth century and is evidenced by Phillis Wheatley's poetry and the first of the slave narratives written by Olaudah Equiano. The authenticity of these works and of those that followed was and is still questioned, fundamentally because Africans were largely brought to America and other parts of the West by white masters who believed that their chattel was incapable of the complex thought necessary to create narrative discourse. Nonetheless, African Americans continued writing, and as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, they had created a tradition that included writers Paul Laurence Dunbar, Ida Wells Barnett, Charles Chestnutt, James Weldon Johnson, and W. E. B. DuBois. By the end of the World War I, the world was changing, and many African Americans were determined that their corner of it would change as well. They would be included rather than disenfranchised, and in order for this change to happen, their voices—individual and collective—would need to be heard and their stories would need to be told by them on their own terms. Fueled by military service, travel stateside and abroad, and more educational opportunities than had previously existed, those previously

silenced began to speak more loudly than ever before. Men and women, artists, educators, and laborers, who were descendants of generations of slaves joined their voices with those who were immigrants from Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean and began to speak.

In the wake of World War I, a flurry of artistic activity began in the African American community. This activity was centered in New York City and coincided with the Anglo American modernist movement that became known as the “Jazz Age.” The time between 1917 and 1935 marked a period when literature created by black people was more examined than it had been since the eighteenth century, although the artistic production of the period also included visual arts, theatre, and music (Gates 129). This “Negro Renaissance” or “Harlem Renaissance,” as it came to be called, enjoyed the peak of productivity and creativity in the 1920s. The younger artists who claimed their space during this exciting time were able to capture the spirit of being black and being American and realized that there was something special about them and the situation in which they found themselves. Although visibly of African descent, they were more than the sum of their ancestry and their color. They were also more than the images and stereotypes that the white majority had created, having thrown off the stereotypical shackles of Southern slavery to embrace the totality of the African Diaspora, including those people of Caribbean ancestry who contributed their own rhythms to the literature of the times. In their search to assert individuality and humanity within their race and culture and as those who would show themselves as the amalgamation of their African and slave ancestors and of their Americanness, they created anew. They wrote, created, played, acted, and sang a new song for a new time and a new generation. Eponymously, *The New Negro* (1925), the anthology of writings about the cultural activity of the time is said to have “launched the Harlem Renaissance” (Rampersad, “The Book” 87). The volume’s editor, Howard University

professor Alain Locke, said of the renascent times, “The popular melodrama has about played itself out, and it is time to scrap the fictions, garret the bogeys, and settle down to a realistic facing of facts” (5).

In this atmosphere fueled by ideas, politics, and revitalization, seven of the “younger artists” conceived of a literary journal that would join but also surpass the creativity and realism of those publications already existing in their community. In 1925, Gwendolyn Bennett, John P. Davis, Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Wallace Thurman produced *Fire!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists*, and, in so doing, concretized their struggle to free themselves from the editorial control of the community leaders, patrons, and publishers. *Fire!!*, originally planned as a quarterly, was critical to the growth and impact of the Harlem Renaissance as it responded to some of the philosophies, literature, and art produced by many of the contributors’ more conservative forebears. Firmly entrenched in the modern age, *Fire!!* was designed to challenge this conservative culture as well as the stereotypes propagated by white America. In “Lighting Fire” an introductory essay to the journal’s 1985 reprint, Richard Bruce Nugent recalls Langston Hughes’s declaration that “the Negro in America was like the phoenix and that some day he would rise from the fire to which America had consigned him” (1). To illustrate his belief in these qualities of rebirth, Hughes had written a spiritual entitled “FIRE!” According to Nugent, it is the spiritual that provided the name for the journal and contributed to the Foreword in the original publication:

Fy-ah,

Fy-ah, Lawd,

Fy-ah gonna burn ma soul!

There was conflict between these “younger” artists and the “old” guard, many of whom were of the same generation of the *Fire!!* contributors. The old guard believed that art served a political purpose, while the “younger” artists believed in the value of art for art’s sake, and this fundamental philosophical difference is evident in the controversial reception of *Fire!!*’s sole issue. Theophilus Lewis, theater and literary critic for *The Messenger*, an African American magazine founded in 1917, is said to have thrown his issue of *Fire!!* “on the fire” (Lewis, *W. E. B. DuBois* 180).

The lack of commercial and popular success notwithstanding, *Fire!!* and its editors and contributors became known for their outspoken and fervent belief in the value of art and literature in the demonstration and celebration of black culture and community. Although politically and perhaps sociologically joined to the black intelligentsia in their stance against racism and bigotry, the creators of *Fire!!* presented an additional layer of revolution in their contempt for the staid attitudes of their elders. In his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” published in *Nation* (June 1926) in response to George Schuyler’s essay “The Negro Art Hokum,” Langston Hughes announced the credo of the *Fire!!* artists and others of similar beliefs:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express to individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn’t matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves (694).

This response to established perceptions of their art in the heyday of Harlem sets the stage for the Renaissance. This sense of protest against conformist expectation blazed a trail for younger artists to create during that literary movement, but it also left a trail for those who came years after to follow as they tried to find themselves and their literary identity amidst racism and stereotypes.

The elder leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, such as W. E. B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, and Alain Locke, demonstrated that literature could change the nation's perception of black people and could, therefore, play a major role in the societal and historical significance of any race of people (Price 9). Fifty years later, four young writers—Jeffrey Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong—furthered this idea with their collaborative editing of *AIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, conceived in 1969 and published in 1974. In the introduction to the anthology, they echo John Okada's belief in the role of literature as the “adequate recorde[r]” of the “hopes and fears and joys and sorrows of people” (Chin, “Afterword” 256), when they assert that “the vitality of literature stems from its ability to codify and legitimize common experience . . . and to celebrate life as it is lived” (xxxvi).

Although the African American artists of the 1920s had known role models to learn from as well as to rebel against, Shawn Wong remembers feeling as if he were the sole Asian American writer, until he met Frank Chin in 1969 (Partridge 92). According to Wong, the editors of *AIIEEEEE!* felt it necessary to “educate the audience about something called Asian American literature, the tradition” (Partridge 94), so their anthology is not exclusively their own writings. Chan, Chin, Inada, and Wong recognized the power of the historical tradition and used their collaboration as an instrument through which they gave the tradition voice, lending their own work as part of the larger tradition. It was important to them that the social and literary

history that had been so long subverted and sublimated first be extolled as real and significant so that literature from the Asian American community would be read in a new social context.

Asians' arrival in the United States in large numbers can be traced to the 1830s when Chinese workers traveled to Hawaii to work the sugar plantations and Chinese sailors and peddlers arrived in New York. Asian American literature followed in the 1880s with an autobiography written by immigrant Lee Yan Phou who recounted his boyhood in China. Edith Eaton, the daughter of a British father and Chinese mother who lived in the northeastern United States and Canada was also writing at this time. A journalist and fiction writer, she adopted the Chinese nom de plume Sui Sin Far. She is said to be "one of the first to speak for an Asian American sensibility that was neither Asian nor white American" (Solberg 45).

Asian Americans faced many of the same barriers that African Americans did when it came to writing their own experiences. Like their African American counterparts, Asians were faced with a Western, Anglo vision of their homelands "as [countries] without a history" and of their cultures as based in "a philosophy without substance" (Chan xi). Writing from historic memory and that interstitial place between Asia and America was frustrated by obscurity or revision determined by white Anglo interpretation and control. Folktales were discounted as quaint stories told by the uneducated, and religious and spiritual beliefs were attributed to pagan superstitions. For the earliest of these writers, the heroes, ducks, swans, and monkeys of which folktales are made and the language by which they are conveyed are very real and necessary. They live on in the historic memories of their descendants as elements of their natural existence and cultural identity. If they cannot relate their experiences using these folk staples in their own voices, how then can the story be told?

The editors of *AIIEEEEE!* answer this question in the collaboration that resulted in the 1974 publication. During this same time, students at California universities raised their voices in protest against America's involvement in inequality and discrimination at home and in the war in Vietnam. These protests for nonviolence and universal civil rights mark the first time the phrase "Asian American" was used to describe the Asian diasporic presence and influence in the United States. Outcries for national recognition and for Asian Studies programs followed and critically influenced the availability of and exposure to Asian American literature.

In the preface of *AIIEEEEE!*, the editors of this groundbreaking anthology respond directly to the manifesto of the younger artists of the Harlem Renaissance as communicated by Langston Hughes in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain":

The Asian American writers here are elegant or repulsive, angry and bitter, militantly anti-white or not, not out of any sense of perversity or revenge but of honesty . . . It is clear we have a lot of elegant, angry, and bitter life to show. We know how to show it. We are showing off. If the reader is shocked, it is due to his own ignorance of Asian-America. We are not new here. *AIIEEEEE!* (xvi).

According to Shawn Wong in his interview with Jeffrey Partridge, the title of the anthology is a parody of the dying cry of many an Asian actor in the formulaic martial arts films of the 1970s on "Hollywood's silver screen" (Partridge 91). The movie characters represented the "yellow man as something that when wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing, or wondering whined, shouted, or screamed '*AIIEEEEE!*'" (Chin, et. al. vii). The editors of the anthology *AIIEEEEE!* give language to this previously inarticulate character and give power to what was once a theatrical and unintelligible scream meant to convey powerlessness.

Like their African American forerunners, Asian American writers also raised their voices at a time when the country was in turmoil. The 1960s and 1970s were decades of tumultuous change in America. Protests against war and injustice were commonplace, and much of the art, music, and literature of the time reflected revolution and rebellion. When *AIIEEEEE!* was published in 1974, America was reeling from the Vietnam War. Asians had been in America for more than seven generations, visibly and productively present through World War II and the Korean War, both of which also prominently involved Asian countries. In a country where Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and, more recently, South Asian peoples are all grouped under one umbrella of identity, all Asian Americans were seen as the potential enemy. In response to stereotypes, prejudices, and bigotry, the editors of *AIIEEEEE!* echo their African American forebears to highlight a literary tradition that spoke to their experiences as American citizens of Asian descent and by its very existence refuted the stereotypes ingrained in the cultural fabric of this country.

Traveling the modernist trajectory begun in Harlem in the 1920s, the Asian American editors of *AIIEEEEE!* expand the avant-garde thinking of the previous fifty years. Their anthology includes their own voices, particularly as they proclaim their credo in the prefatory pages. The anthology is not so much concerned with their own creations, however, as it is with their discoveries of writings from past generations of Asians in America and Asian Americans and the pride with which they display them. The introductory information includes examination of the writings of Sui Sin Far in the early twentieth century, while the entries range from an excerpt from Carlos Bulosan's memoir, *America Is in the Heart*, published in 1946, to one act from the 1974 Frank Chin play, *The Chickencoop Chinaman*. *AIIEEEEE!* explores what it means to be Asian American and Asian in America and reveals that these can be two different

concepts. As the writers explore the idea of dual consciousness for Americans of color, they reify their interconnectedness with the African American community.

Deborah Willis asserts the historical tendency for literature to reflect passively social or political context (277). Then, in the effort to explore more complex theories of cultural production, critics and theorists extend this passivity to the reflection of “a single, all consuming discourse,” which further distorts the reflection of societal and power relations (277). The historical disenfranchisement of African Americans and Asian Americans in the United States is based in an imperialist worldview and reified by the hegemonic idea that “American” means “white.” As the American culture focuses on whiteness, it uses language to marginalize entire groups of people based on race and color and to assign racial descriptors. The people who are impacted by this othering have used that same language to broaden the margins, to delimit their lives by writing from within the very borders that were erected to disenfranchise them. By revealing the compelling stories that have remained, for the most part, hidden in plain sight, this study ultimately seeks to encourage a revisiting of these movements with a new, comparative vision. More specifically, *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!*, as explored in this study, use language to confront and deconstruct the myths that created barriers that separate people of color from their realities and from mainstream America. For the African Americans and Asian Americans creating *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!*, language is a key tool to confront and to expose the myths of racism and subaltern citizenship outside of and within their cultural communities. Two groups of people decades apart, but seemingly with one attitude resulting from feelings of generational alienation within their cultures and social and political disenfranchisement from without, produced *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* The publications demonstrate similarities and differences, and, in doing so, emphasize much of what is enduring about the literature of our nation.

According to Shawn Wong, “If you’re writing about race and identity or family and identity, you need to know the social history of the people that you are writing about so that you are informed by it” (Partridge 97). To that end, this study will move beyond traditional points of analysis and examine the situations that created the works. *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* are not spontaneous creations; therefore, consideration of the social, political, and historical landscapes that influenced the production of the works is critical to the examination and appreciation of them. In order to argue persuasively about the value and impact of the literatures from these cultures and to examine the times in which they were produced, this dissertation uses postcolonial theory to explore the legacy of colonialism in America and its impact on African American and Asian American communities. Race theory and poststructural theory also facilitate the examination of the works as they challenge the traditional binaries of black and white and American and foreigner.

The title of the dissertation “Fifty Years of our Whole Voice,” comes from the preface to *AIIEEEEE!* and refers to the time period covered by the works therein as the editors state their intention to give voice to generations of the “yellow man” in America (vii, viii). Those fifty years also constitute the span of time across which the texts talk to each other. The phrase “our whole voice,” as a part of the dissertation’s title indicates the significance of collaboration in cultural progress and to the nation’s literature while simultaneously speaking to the kinship between groups of oppressed peoples in America. At the same time, the word “whole” challenges the completeness of American literature, signaling that voices from previously silent groups are being included but that there are those whose voices have yet to be recognized fully. Together *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* represent the power of multiethnic presence in American

literature. For each of them, the years and events leading to their publications shape the content, the immediate reception, and the longstanding impact of the publications themselves.

Chapter one, “One Nation, Many Voices,” explores the United States and its imperialist attitudes toward people of color, African Americans and Asian Americans in particular. These attitudes shaped the definition of “American” and conditioned the African American and Asian American experiences. The country that was idealized for liberty and democracy became the site where basic freedoms were denied. Chapter one considers America’s formational history as it resonates through generations to influence all aspects of the lives of its inhabitants.

Chapter two, “Behind the Mask: Raising the African American Voice,” explores slavery, and Reconstruction in the African American experience and their consequences on African American culture. Chapter two considers minstrelsy as a critical historical medium that conveyed meaning of race and difference through stereotypes and spectacle. Minstrelsy is critical to the imagery of masking as people of color assumed agency over the stereotypes and eventually raised their voices from behind the masks. Chapter two is the foundation for the exploration of African American and Asian American histories throughout the dissertation as each group asserted agency over the mask through literature. Chapter three, “*Fire!!* and the New Negro: The Harlem Renaissance as Foundational,” continues the examination of the African American experience in the early decades of the twentieth century and the cultivation of literacy and literature in the years following World War I. Chapter three examines the social and historical circumstances in which *Fire!!* was created, and discusses the contributors and editors of the work as well as public reaction to it. Chapter four, “Of Golden Mountain and Paper Sons: Raising the Asian American Voice,” considers the history of Asians in America, including the legacies of the coolie labor system, minstrelsy, and the Japanese internment experience. The

chapter also considers the shared disenfranchisement experiences of African Americans and Asian Americans.

Chapter five, “*AIIEEEEE!*: Asian American Voices in the Literary Tradition,” continues exploration of the Asian American experience after World War II and explores the impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the emergence of Yellow Power, and the impact of the Black Arts Movement on socio-political and literary activity within the Asian American community. Chapter five also discusses the editors and their influences, the works within the anthology, and public reaction to *AIIEEEEE!* The final chapter, “‘On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet’: Diverse American Literatures in the Twenty-first Century,” explores the interconnectedness of the works and examines the impact of the *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* on the evolution of global literature while recognizing the implications the works have for American literature in the United States in the twenty-first century. Each chapter is introduced by quotations from various sources, representing voices from different cultures, spanning 200 years of American literature and history.

Both African Americans and Asian Americans speak from the liminal space that has been euphemized as “the hyphen” beyond the limits imposed by those who placed it. “Hyphenation” implies a separation of parts, a division of selves, and a type of incompleteness. Therefore, the hyphen will not be used within the text of this study in the names of the cultural groups except where necessary in a direct quotation. Rejecting the idea of hyphenation, a sign of missing some essential element and of being not quite African or Asian and still not entirely American, the writers of *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* announce that they are the sum of two cultures and that they are wholly American. This study will examine the two cultures at a juncture where they meet and talk to each other across the pages of two anthologies published fifty years apart. In the

pages of *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!*, African Americans and Asian Americans share “[their] whole voice” (Chin, et. al. viii).

Chapter One

One Nation, Many Voices: From Colonialism to Consciousness

The whole is more than the sum of its parts.
Gestalt Theory

History is therefore never history, but history-for.
Claude Levi-Strauss

*The story of the Negro in America is the story of America—
or, more precisely, it is the story of Americans.
It is not a pretty story; the story of a people is never pretty.*
James Baldwin

*I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo,
and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly,
I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight,
to create a sense of the hunger for life that gnaws in us all.*
Richard Wright

The struggles of the early American colonists—against the elements, against British rule, against possibly hostile native people, against famine and destitution in an unforgiving landscape—and their endurance and survival have shaped our national understanding of “colony” and its significance in our historic memory. The image of America usually celebrated both in America and the rest of the world is of a “Christian, democratic country, an enemy of tyranny, a refuge for fugitives from oppression in other lands; a nation of free men and women living in liberty in a land of equal opportunity” (Chinweizu 431). However, the colonists subjected native peoples to oppression and degradation and imported non-native peoples into America for the purposes of exploiting them for labor. They disrupted families and

communities, brought them to an unfamiliar landscape, banned native languages, denied cultural and personal histories, and outlawed all but their own religions. The colony is America's beginning, signifying bravery and freedom, prejudice and oppression all at once.

When the English settled the New World, they brought with them a legacy of European imperialism. Although the victory of the Revolutionary War, early diplomatic agreements with other countries, and the subsequent founding of a democracy established the United States of America as an icon of freedom, colonialist attitudes have prevented the application of democratic ideals in the lives of all Americans. The founding fathers envisioned a "white democracy," created to protect the rights and freedoms of those for whom it was created. When the founders set out to form the Constitutional "perfect union," not only was there no regard for the people they had displaced, but there was also no planning for the application of the creed in a racially diverse America (Takaki xiii). It stands to reason, then, that the literature of the country would follow the same path of exclusivity. However, if, as John Okada says, the story of a people is to be found in its literature, that literature should reflect stories from its entire people. Historically, American literature has been seen as the literature of those who settled this "New World"—European men who shaped the culture of this nation in their own image. The first works of literature from America were stories of life and adventure in the "New World" that had as their major audience readers in England. The body of literature grew as the nation's population grew and territories spread westward. What did not grow even as the population became more diverse was the opportunity for a more diverse literature to become a part of an expanding literary canon. Although the history of America includes Native Americans of North and South America, Europeans, Africans, and Asians, the literary tradition has not included all of them equally and has overlooked some of them altogether. Such critical omissions compromise the authenticity of

our nation's historic memory. The result is "history-for" rather than "history," a distinction that according to Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1996), is critical as "history-for" refers to the work of the historian and a selection—and/or omission—and recounting of historical facts. Therefore, the "history-for" is biased and incomplete (257-8). Even as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first century, the number of white writers in the American literary canon far outnumbers the writers of color. Because this country's culture has been grounded in whiteness and its accompanying racism, neither whites nor other people of color can truly embrace the range of humanity within the United States or its historic memory as their own (Hale 10). Rather than celebrate the hybridity that makes this country, making use of each culture's strengths and making them our collective own, we continue to play across racial boundaries—studying each group separately without acknowledging the connections between them and the larger culture—reaffirming the pathology of division. This century brings with it a globalized worldview and the promise of a globalized literature, including that of generations of diasporically diverse Americans. Before that postcolonial future can be fully realized in life and in literature, however, it is necessary to evaluate the broken promises of America's imperialistic past holistically, considering the whole as well as the sum of its parts (Hufnus "Gestalt Theory").

For hundreds of years, European powers have "sallied forth from their western European homelands to explore, assault, loot, occupy, rule, and exploit the rest of the world" (Chinweizu 3). Conquering the world through imperialism and colonialism was the object of European power and competition, and by the end of the sixteenth century, Spain and Portugal had joined forces to create an empire that stretched the globe from Peru to China. The land that was to become America joined the aforementioned "rest of the world" with Columbus's fateful ocean voyage west in 1492, taken in an effort to identify a trade route with India and China that was

shorter than the existing land trek. Most American school children know the story of Columbus's "discovery." The same school children learn early that finders keep and losers are left to weep; presumptive ownership is the natural and unfortunate twin to discovery. In the disregard for the native people, —mistakenly, yet enduringly identified as "Indians"—their land, their history, their names, and their customs, Columbus's discovery on Spain's behalf begins the thread of colonialist legacy that was to become significant in the fabric of America's development and a defining aspect of its history.

Spanish explorers continued to lay claim to the New World, followed by the French, and then by the English in the early seventeenth century. History notes the 1607 landing at Jamestown, Virginia, as most influential in the formation of America because the resulting settlement was the first to endure for any period of time. Over the next ten years, the Jamestown colonists found the key to survival in the farming of tobacco for the Virginia Company of London. Labor that the colonists could not themselves provide was necessary to meet the demand, and, initially, indentured servants from England seemed to be the solution. The problem was that the servants became free after a few years, and were given "freedom dues" to start new lives. Colonists sought long-term solutions by putting Native Americans to work, but they tended to return to their nearby communities or fall victim to diseases that were introduced by the foreign colonists and unfamiliar to their physical constitutions. The labor problem was solved in 1619, when a Dutch trading vessel hijacked a Spanish cargo ship and traded the stolen goods—Africans in chains—in Jamestown for food and supplies. These were the first African slaves traded in the colonies, and, while some of them would enter into indentured servitude with contract terms to guarantee them eventual freedom, others became slaves ("Africans").

Although the first choices for forced, permanent labor were nonwhite peoples, it must be noted that racial identity before the nineteenth century was not absolute, and the New World colonists did not initially consider themselves in terms of color (Hale 4). In many countries, including many in Africa, slavery was a political reality of war, but it was, in many instances, a temporary condition, similar to indentured servitude. The English historically enslaved non-Christians, and a slave, regardless of race or color, could become free by converting to Christianity. Religious beliefs were initially more important than skin color in the consideration of European interactions with peoples from other cultures. The signification of race and the subsequent subjugation of “lesser breeds without the law” (Chinweizu 391) have evolved over centuries to justify both the means—the exploitation of natural resources across the globe—and the end—resulting economic wealth and political and social power. According to Grace Elizabeth Hale in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, “Europeans enslaved Africans and regarded them as inferior because they were pagans, without nationality or culture and because unlike those other ‘savages’ [Native Americans], they could not readily escape to their own people” (4).

Whatever the motivation, the first slave trade in 1619 cast the die for America’s color-bound legacy. Massachusetts and Virginia were the first colonies to legally recognize slavery, and in 1662, Virginia passed laws that declared children of slave mothers slaves themselves, making the condition of slavery something like “skin color” to be passed down from generation to generation (“Africans”). Linking slavery to skin color also solved another problem: Unlike indentured servants from Europe whose status could change, slaves could now be instantly racially identified as different from the central population and were marked by their skin color as members of a “permanent, dependent labor force.” In 1705, the Virginia General Assembly

declared that all servants who were not Christian in their native country would “be accounted and be slaves” and that all “Negro, mulatto, and Indian slaves” were held as real estate, or property, subject to their masters’ wills and stripped of all rights (“Africans”). The law in effect determined which populations were to be subject to slavery, making slave status “a political difference enacted through the law rather than a naturalized, embodied identity existing outside it.” Slaves occupied the brutally exploited lowest rung on the ladder of social hierarchy; therefore, the *system* of slavery in its provision of labor necessary to continue the country’s growth and prosperity “founded and fixed the meaning of blackness more than any transparent and transhistorical meaning of black skin” (Hale 4).

In addition to their legal rights to hold slaves, slave masters employed localized techniques to ensure the success of physical and psychological slavery, weaving a system of colonization and its attitudes deep into the threads of the country’s historic psychology. Championing their interpretations of Christian values, slaveholders indoctrinated the slaves with a survivalist version of Christianity as a form of internalized control. Already severed from the support of their African cultures, slaves were given a version of Christianity that emphasized the Biblical injunction that subordinates should willingly obey their superiors. They were conditioned to believe that their masters were superior to them by divine providence, and, with this, the desire to revolt was tempered with a fear of violations against the commands of heaven (Chinweizu 439). To ensure further internal control, slave masters compelled slaves to control other slaves. A few slaves were given specific privileges that transformed them into a slave “elite,” giving unconscious license in the colonial enterprise to select members of the community of the oppressed. Slave foremen, domestics, and artisans were singled out because of their necessary personal contact with white overseers and with the white master’s family. Although

still slaves, their privileges fostered and conveyed a sense of social superiority that firmly tied the slaves' social interests in with those of his masters', thus making them loyal to the *system* of slavery. In his public speech, "Message to the Grass Roots" delivered on November 10, 1963, in Detroit, Michigan, Malcolm X summarized, "The slave master took Tom and dressed him well, fed him well, and even gave him a little education—a *little* education; gave him a long coat and a top hat and made all the other slaves look up to him. Then he used Tom to control [them]" (qtd. in Chinweizu 440). The slave, "Tom," was non-threatening and usually considered more "responsible" and a "leader of his people." His masters bought his loyalty with material things and an illusion of privilege above his fellow slaves. Again, internal controls were instilled with the willing, albeit subconscious, assistance of those against whom they were implemented. These internal controls contributed to the imperialist legacy most importantly through psychological control of the colonized people. Those who have been psychologically colonized will willingly seek to conform to the colonialist imperative.

In the early years of the colonies, various countries in Europe fought for control of different areas in North America, with the British along the east coast, the French in the lower Mississippi valley, and the Dutch in the Hudson valley. Exploration and the discovery of new frontiers appealed to European pilgrims as they sought a new life in the New World. They embarked on a "flight from the Old World to the New . . . a flight from oppression and limitation to freedom and possibility" (Morrison, *Playing* 34). Westward expansion offered more "once-in-a-lifetime, clean slate" opportunities to those who would immigrate from Europe and those Americans seeking another New World experience. According to Toni Morrison, "there was a vision of a limitless future [in the New World] . . . it was a promise genuinely promising. With

luck and endurance one could discover freedom; find a way to make God's law manifest; or end up rich as a prince" (Morrison, *Playing* 34).

New and varied techniques of dispossession and control that were developed during westward expansion significantly influenced the American personality (Chinweizu 432). Forced evacuation of the native inhabitants made land available for American settlers. Native Americans were forced into unknown territories with inadequate shelter, food, and other resources necessary for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. With luck and endurance, they survived the "trail[s] of tears" to travel across unforgiving terrain in unrelentingly harsh and severe circumstances. Seizure of Native American lands was justified because Americans believed that "they were inherently superior to the red man, that Christianity was superior to Amerindian religion, that tillage made better use of the land than hunting" (Chinweizu 433). They, therefore, had God-given and superior rights to the land, and the Native Americans who had inhabited the land for generations "could expect no lasting accommodation" (Chinweizu 433), so they were literally moved out of sight. The landowners who seized the land brought African slaves to work it. These Africans, who may have been princes in their homelands, were made no promises, and their luck and endurance did not result in freedom, but in a life of unending labor and oppression. As slaves, they farmed, worked in textile mills, factories, and refineries. They worked in mines, dug canals, constructed railroads, houses, and buildings; they pulled barges, provided artisan, craftsman, and other specialized and common labors, and provided domestic and childcare services in homes and hotels. Without them and the labor they provided, without forced surrender of the land, the economy would have been ruined and America's progress would have instantly ceased (Chinweizu 439).

A new American was born in the new territory of the frontier. Possibly the transformation came about because of the group identity that was forged in the acquisition of land, the establishment of towns and villages, and the expansionist ideal of furthering a particular way of life, or as the result of laying claim to open the plains that were considered to have been unsettled and ungoverned. Or perhaps, this new personality is the direct outgrowth of the “bands of immigrant peoples from various European cultures” who were moving away from old world national differences toward a singularly new and unifying collective identity (Chinweizu 416). Notwithstanding historic rivalries as European neighbors, the new Americans united and settled into a newly formed identity that was greatly influenced by established systematic disenfranchisement of Native Americans and African slaves. Long before Americans identified themselves by regional location, they linked skin color to the origins of peoples, using it to distinguish various nationalities and ethnicities of Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans (Hale 4). In fact, they became so entrenched in their new group personality that European immigrants recreated their own histories to the point that they became the *first* Americans, those who set the standards by which all others coming to these distant shores must be measured in order to be approved as “American” (Takaki xv).

New American John de Crevecoeur wrote in his *Letters from an American Farmer*,

What then, is the American, this new man? He is neither a European nor the descendent of a European; hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners,

receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced . . . and the new rank he holds . . . Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men . . . The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared (qtd. in Raphael-Hernandez and Steen 4-5).

The omission of Africans and Native Americans in de Crevecoeur's writing is a clear indication that they do not figure into the creation of the "American." In the new color-based hierarchy of America, this "new man" is white. For these Americans, the New World holds promise. They changed ethnic names to more "American" ones and adopted the dress, customs, and culture of their new country. By doing so, they masked or sometimes severed ties with their countries of origin. Ostensibly indistinguishable from "old-stock whites in America, they were able to blend into the society of their adopted country" (Takaki 12).

The transatlantic slave trade ceased on American shores early in the nineteenth century, and while domestic slave trading flourished, there was no ebb in the demand for additional labor. Following the imperial tradition east from Africa, Americans turned to Asia to fill their labor needs. According to Ronald Takaki in *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from a Different Shore*, Asians were "'pushed' by hardships in their homelands and 'pulled' here by America's demand for labor" (7). Although Chinese and Filipinos had been in Hawaii and the Louisiana territory, respectively, since the eighteenth century, their arrival in the 1840s to work on the transcontinental railroad and, later, in the hills of the California gold rush, represent their first recognized presence in large numbers in the United States. Approximately 370,000 Chinese arrived on the west coast between the late 1840s and early 1880s (Chan 3). These numbers seem small compared to the numbers of Africans and African Americans at the time, but the

concentration of the mostly Chinese Asian population was centered in the west, and their numbers created issues of lodging and labor for Americans settling there. Although they dreamed about their prosperous futures in America while in their homelands, their flight from oppression landed them not on the “Gold Mountain” of their imaginations, but in an oppressive situation made more so by the restrictions on their movement, native language, and native religions. Like their African counterparts, Asian laborers in this country were frequently forbidden to talk to each other, especially in their multiple native languages. To the Anglo American ear, the multiple dialects and languages all told the same story—a story of rebellion and plans for revolt. Further prohibitions on learning to read and write English made language itself a weapon of oppression.

In America’s evolution, European attitudes toward peoples of other cultures had been managed along the hierarchy of color based in a white/nonwhite binary. Now, there was a new race of people in America to be managed in terms of “enslaveability” (Raphael-Hernandez and Steen 4, 29). Generally it is often thought that these various groups are collectively called “Asian Americans” because they or their ancestors have all come from Asia. The more important reason for treating them as a collective entity is an outgrowth of American hegemony that has had long-term effects for African descendents as well. Because of appearance in difference from European Americans, American society has treated all Asian Americans alike, regardless of what “differences might have existed in their cultures, religions, languages, or in the status of their homelands in the family of nations” (Chan xiii). Isolated by race, language, and culture, they became an “internal colony” not expected to stay in the United States long enough to become “good citizens” (Takaki 99). Thus, citizenship was not granted to Chinese or other Asian immigrants. Therefore, while the African was marked by race, the Chinese laborer

was “triple marked—racially, nationally, legally—radically as other” (Raphael-Hernandez and Steen 29). Whiteness was elevated in the creation of another race of workers, their status indicated by their appearance.

When the slavers went to African and Asian shores to ensure their own “manifest destiny,” they took away men who knew how to “build houses, govern empires, erect cities, cultivate fields, mine for metals, weave cotton, [and] forge steel.” The destroyed communities of people whose “religion had its own beauty, based on mystical connections with the founder of the city. Their customs were pleasing, built on unity, kindness, respect for age” (Césaire 21). Then in the wake of destruction and human cruelty, the men who destroyed these communities used their destruction as rationale for the destruction itself. Ultimately, they used this rationale to convert the former inhabitants into ‘pagan savages,’ who, if left to their own devices, would surely destroy themselves (Fanon 130-1). This mindset allowed Europeans and, now, Americans to justify the mass exploitation of skills and knowledge of people of color while subjecting them to a system of ownership and control. When Africans and Asians arrived in America, their nationhood was stripped and they were grouped by color and skill or labor needs. Communities that were not geographically close or kin by culture became grouped under umbrella terms, usually related to color—black or yellow, or Negro and Chinese, and, today, African American and Asian American—collapsing the complexities of politics, language, religion, and culture to facilitate the simplistic labeling that colonialism requires. As trustees of civilization, white people “decided to reorganize the world and teach its peoples their duties according to their stations” (Chinweizu 400). Quoted in Chinweizu’s *The West and the Rest of Us*, French philosopher Ernest Renan states in “La Reforme Intellectuelle et Morale (1871),”

The regeneration of the inferior or degenerate races by the superior races is part of the providential order of things for humanity . . . Nature has made a race of workers, the Chinese race who have a wonderful manual dexterity and almost no sense of honor; govern them with justice levying from them, in return for the blessing of such government, an ample allowance of the conquering race, and they will be satisfied; a race of tillers of the soil, the Negro; treat him with kindness and humanity, and all will be as it should; a race of masters and soldiers, the European race. Reduce the noble race to working in the ergastulum like Negroes and Chinese, and they rebel . . . But the life at which our workers rebel would make a Chinese fellah happy, as they are not military creatures in the least. Let each do what he is made for and all will be well (401).

Between 1600 and 1900, the estimation of human worth of people of color generally decreased in popular opinion, as Renan's comments illustrate. Americans accorded respect to European immigrants, and, with some exceptions including the Italians and those from Eastern Europe, considered them near equals. However, for those "lesser breeds," there was contempt. As societal roles became more and more defined by labor and those who profited from it, black and yellow dignity, or the lack thereof, was proportionately founded on black and yellow power in the white world, or the lack thereof. Therefore, white dignity and self-esteem, along with its impact on other races, can only be founded on white power, which, as it allowed to accumulation of wealth, extended to economic power as well. Europeans had created in themselves a "master race" whose power was sufficient to maintain their status. As long as it did so, they would disseminate "the profitably disguised story that they ruled and others served by virtue of blood and race, not transient disparities in power" (Chinweizu 404-405).

It is not difficult to make the connection between the increase in power that afforded a racial superiority complex and the promotion of that complex to support their arrangements for exploiting the rest of the world. “White power gave birth to white racism, and white racism serves white power. It is that simple” (Chinweizu 403). Connections can be further made in consideration of the situation of white, European immigrants to America. White racism extends to those other white people who are not “American” enough to fit the hegemonic ideal of whiteness, further suggesting that whiteness is a cultural construct not based in color. The farther the immigrants move from their native cultures in the loss of their native language and its speech indicators, their rejection of native customs and dress, and the changing of their names to more “American” ones, the more real and powerful their whiteness becomes. This power puts distance between them and other nonwhite Americans, including those from their own homelands.

Hale traces the conceptualization of “whiteness” in the United States to the South, finding its defining moment in the Civil War and its Reconstruction aftermath. Prior to the Civil War, whiteness was a defining quality used to distinguish between slave and free, have and have not, and primarily to identify a new, collective regional identity in the face of Union aggression. The War amplified the need for a singular, identifiable difference in a land where, in many areas of the South, newly freed slaves outnumbered whites. The changes that came after the war, including economic changes such as industrialization, migration, and urbanization created the need for a new way to demonstrate solidarity. The 1865 Emancipation Proclamation freed the slave and guaranteed personhood to those who had previously been held as chattel, and the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and 1868 promised all southern men, black and white, the same legal rights. The “spinning abstraction” of the newly economically integrated, industrialized

nation-state created confusion where there had once bloomed confidence (Hale 6). How now to identify themselves and ensure the continued control that had been the manifest destiny of the white man? Various groups, including former Confederates, lawmakers, working men, western settlers, and rights activists found race—the differing between white and nonwhite—instrumental and useful in creating new collective identities to replace older, more individual, and local groundings of self-identity. In an ever-changing landscape, white America increasingly found confidence in collectivity and homogeneity as the norm. As the European immigrants on the frontier came to realize, Americanness became based in assimilation—an absence of culture, an absence of accent, an absence of marked difference—that begins when a person “rejects all other ties, any other history, and himself adopts the vesture of his adopted land” (Baldwin 24). Such assimilation was not a reality for people of color. Complete assimilation was prohibited by their inability to shed the marked difference of skin color. The power of a racialized national identity began to take hold as visual reifications of white supremacy began to assert themselves in laws and legislation directed toward segregating African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. A mass cultural identity began to assert itself across class, gender, region, and religion rendering whiteness ingrained, yet invisible, while officially and hegemonically othering those not white (Hale 8).

As the national identity grew, so did the historic memory on which the national identity was formed. Because whiteness finds its value in the absence of color, the virtue of absence extends to a “pure absence.” This “pure absence” indicates that whiteness is then free of any other limitations, including age, class, gender, and sexuality. The result is that whiteness speaks to a longstanding originary identity that supersedes time and circumstance (Trimm 247). The significant conflict, then, is trying to conform to the “fantasy of whiteness.” This “fantasy”

extends from the rhetoric of white supremacy (hooks 169). According to Ruth Frankenberg, “Whiteness turns out on closer inspection to be more about the *power* to include and exclude groups and individuals than about the actual practices of those who are to be let in or kept out” (“Introduction” 13). The superiority of whiteness had been the primary factor in deciding who would have access to social, economic, and political power, and the guiding principle behind the humane distribution of each. As the white population exercised power and privilege, the “other” Americans have lived as disenfranchised, colonized subjects, fully aware of their oppression and subjectivity.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States saw a systematic push toward the cultural homogenization of whites carried out through social reform movements and the schools. This push took place alongside the expansion of industrial capitalism, giving rise to the sense that whiteness signifies the production and consumption of commodities under capitalism (Frankenberg, *Women* 203). As the country grew, so did consumer culture, and marketing through cheap visual productions of advertising and postcards promoted the newly racialized meanings to a wide audience (Hale 7). These meanings were conveyed through public venues such as expositions, museums, advertising, and department stores. The idea of *spectacle*—the act of looking and the “authority of the eye” developed and concretized the importance of appearance as superficial trappings and markings became the primary method of judgment and classification. A picture literally became worth a thousand words in its ability to evoke elements of difference quickly and powerfully. Spectacle became superior to narrative. “Types” took hold as the images transmitted very clear signs of what was acceptable and, perhaps more importantly, what was not. Stereotypes are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to “tell it like it is,” but to invite and encourage

pretense (hooks 170). That pretense morphs into reality on two levels: One is the continuous depiction of negative stereotypes; the second is the failure to recognize the existence of other Americans beyond the stereotype. Thus, the stereotype ceases to be stereotype and becomes accepted reality.

Focusing only on one group is a critical strategy in othering because it overtly indicates the importance of that group as the norm with others being too insignificant to illustrate. While dictating the boundaries of acceptability, white Americans continued to cross those boundaries to sample the exotic tastes, sights, and sounds of the othered cultures. At the same time, nonwhite people were constrained to segregated, specific spaces that emphasized their otherness and reified their lack of racial power. This power allowed whites essentially to mock people of color on stage, in print, and in film, to defame othered Americans, and to subsume aspects of their cultures and their cultural production while leaving the undesirable traits in the dark. They have imbued themselves with the power of whiteness, ensuring that it remains uncorrupted while remaining openly and exploitatively fascinated with difference. This fascination, combined with the propensity to imitate it and profit from it without regard to the humans associated with it, has allowed whites to relegate some as “other” and to facilitate this “othering” with the dehumanizing that seems necessary to make the “otherness” happen. In hooks’ essay, she refers to Michael Taussig’s work, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, wherein Taussig identifies this fascination with difference as a “passion . . . to know more deeply you who are not ourselves” (hooks 165). Taussig attempts “to reproduce a mode of perception—a way of seeing through a way of talking—a mode of perception that catches on the debris of history” (hooks 166). hooks connects this “debris of history” to those times when interaction with whites was limited, but discussion about their mysterious ways was more open.

For nonwhites, whites are the “other.” The information and evidence that are shared in nonwhite communities about whites come not from academic or anthropological study, but from observations made while serving or in conflict with whites. Specifically, according to bell hooks, black people have, since the time of slavery shared knowledge about white people gained by way of interactions. Such interactions provide the opportunity to scrutinize their ways, and, at times, to adopt them, albeit temporarily, as their own. For centuries, black domestic workers have themselves crossed boundaries and have acted as informants, bringing knowledge back to communities otherwise separated from white communities (hooks 165). In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, Ruth Frankenberg’s 1993 study of white women and their understanding of their connections to race, she says that the terms “white” and “American,” as the women in her study used the terms, signified domination in international and national terms. The link between whiteness, Americanness, and power are accurate because “white” and “American” both function discursively to establish the boundaries that exclude people from normativity (Hartigan 203).

In a colonized society, the power structure creates and enforces the hegemony that rules the lives of inhabitants of a society and shapes the understanding of their surroundings. In tracing the origins of existing colonialist attitudes, Chinweizu cites Swedish cultural commentator, Jan Myrdal in his observations of Europeans’ stay in South Asia in the early years after European interaction with the area. According to Myrdal, “Europeans . . . were [initially] visitors, missionaries, soldiers . . . one people among many.” Then “the trade grew into empires . . . [and they] began to set themselves apart. They acquired . . . race-consciousness.” They set themselves apart most conspicuously with clothing and costume—“all serv[ing] to underline the European’s sensitivity to a tropical climate and his biological distance from the natives.” They

“became gods, far above all other races, yellow, black, or red!” (400-401). Colonizing attitudes and ideas of superiority took hold and superseded any claims of shared “civilization” from the Europeans. In a sense, “the flags of European civilization dropped, and there it was unashamedly, the ugliest creation of man . . . race prejudice” (Gordimer 262).

Western hegemonic race prejudice determines that whiteness represents truth, justice, and purity. Its antithesis is color, so the consummate other for the white man is all races that are not white. Blackness signals evil, ugliness, and sin, and yellowness indicates exoticism and feminized weakness. The power structure determines connotations for these words that make base associations while aligning people with static qualities as one would with things. People then become objectified so that no positive attributes are associated with the people themselves. The key again is not race but *power* that becomes *racialized*. On a purely physical level—the most visible and immediate, and, therefore, the most easily consumed—the other’s body image is absolutely the “not-self.” It is unidentifiable; therefore, in Lacanian terms, it is “unassimilable” (Fanon 161). It is, then, in these very concrete terms that the person is attacked, that his or her very existence is a threat. The unfortunate truth is that each American is viewed first and foremost by skin color, so the African American is first of all black, and the Asian American is first of all yellow. The underlying assertion is that the person’s color is the most important, perhaps the only significant marker in his character or personality. It logically follows that “if his body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black, too” (Fanon 180). On the other hand, the American is brave, strong, and white. How do Americans of color reconcile these two selves—one of color and one that is American—into one being that is more than the sum of its parts?

In a society based on colored levels of power, being other than white carries with it a multipart, multi-conscious existence. In speaking of the complexity of being black, extended here to include the racial construct “yellow,” psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon says, “. . . not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man . . .” (110). According to Deepika Bahri (2004), as cultural values constrain events, determine our views, and shape our realities, they become cultural mores that are internalized, or “epidermalized” into consciousness, creating a fundamental disjuncture between the colonized man’s consciousness and his body. Under these conditions, the person of color is necessarily alienated from himself (Bahri). Fanon defines a colonized people as those “in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality”(18). This death and burial has been carried out by physical force as well as by psychic oppression. Knowing that the society in which he lives holds contempt for color—for blackness or yellowness—one seeks to exist outside of that contempt. In an attempt to escape the association of the negative connotation of “blackness,” the man of color assimilates into white culture, or thinks of himself as an equal member of a society that has some knowledge and appreciation of his innate value. This line of thinking is an extension of the psychology of the “elite” slave community. No matter the privileges allowed to the slave, he is still a slave, object of the will and whim of his master. Despite generations of disenfranchisement, the rhetoric of the melting pot has convinced some people of color that “by applying their talents till their personal achievements shine and dazzle the white man, they will be let in on equal terms into a world elite, respected without qualifications” (Chinweizu 408). History has proven, however, that a person of color is first and always a person of color, and while assimilation may be possible in some cultural aspects, race does not allow complete assimilation into a white society. Shining and dazzling achievements are

still compromised by the color line; for example, African Americans are stereotypically known for athletic prowess and musical innovation. Asian Americans are typecast as having academic genius. Achievements in these areas will result in references to the expectation of the stereotype first, and then of the individual. In a country developed in racialism, “No amount of personal wealth, athletic skill, or intellectual achievement will help any black man escape the contempt the West reserves for all, of any race whatever, who belong to groups less powerful than their own” (Chinweizu 408). For this same reason, it is important not to confuse class issues with race. In Sartrean terms, class is universal and abstract; more specifically, anyone of any race can be of any class, and their class status can change. Race, on the other hand, is concrete and particular. It is fixed along color lines and held fast by law and legislation (Gines 61).

Because the oppression occurs within the confines of race, the colonized individual must first become conscious of the race that is the catalyst for his oppression. After generations of racialized existence, it is difficult—perhaps impossible—to jump into or even seek a raceless society, despite claims of a “melting pot.” To move beyond the oppression for the oppressed and the oppressor, an authentic race consciousness is necessary for an authentic collective historic memory, where all of the differences in the pot are not melted into indistinguishable mass, but recognizable as distinctive and necessary contributions to the diverse whole.

Africans and Asians have contributed significantly to America. They have their individual trials, triumphs, and histories that contribute to an authentic national history, and in recognizing those, the African American or Asian American cannot deny that he is a person of color. He cannot claim to be part of some “abstract colorless humanity” (Gines 58), and since he cannot totally assimilate, he must claim and assert himself as a black man or as a yellow man. In doing so, he claims what have been negative attributes and re-visions them as positive ones. He

acknowledges the legacy of those ancestors who preceded him here, and “puts the white man back into his place.” He proves that the white man was wrong and that he “was not a primitive . . . a half man. [He] belongs to a race that had already been working in gold and silver 2000 years ago” (Fanon 133). Such a declaration will “jostle [the white man]” and allow the man of color to declare, “Get used to me, I am not getting used to anyone” (133). Color then provides a type of membership card. Although diasporically different, Africans and Asians find unity situationally both within and without their communities. Inside each community, there is a shared color and a particular history.

African Americans and Asian Americans, then, find themselves paradoxically united by individual authentic race consciousness and individual and collective memories. In forging the identity of this new American, early twentieth-century African American author Jean Toomer revises the new American described 150 years earlier by de Crevecoeur.

In my body were many bloods, some dark blood, all blended in the five or six or more generations. I was, then, either a new type of man or the very oldest. In any case, I was inescapably myself (93).

With his essay, “The Maturing Years,” thought to have been written between 1931 and 1932, Toomer claims collective ownership of America for people of color. Although generations of Americans of color have been denied their histories and hegemonically have no ancestral kinship claims, there is value in each of them as they have survived and exist. Rather than continue to define themselves in the outdated objectified terms of those outside of their communities, they seek instead to prioritize their present and futures while taking the past into account. By doing so, they become agents in their existence, subjects of consciousness rather than objects of it (Gines 63). Though based on mythic underpinnings, the concept of race has become a source of

heritage and resistance and empowerment. To now pretend that it does not exist endangers the whole cloth of American history.

Reality is based on ideology and socialized myth, including accepted perceptions and resulting classifications of people. America has succeeded as a segregated nation in “metaphor and law” based on myth of absolute racial difference, a “translation of the body into collective meaning, into culture” (Hale 40). The term “myth” has evolved to include myths of the nation and of the individual, as well as those traditional stories from Greece and Rome (Colvin 1). In her introduction to the January 2004 issue of *German Life and Letters*, Sarah Colvin cites Carl Jung and Claude Levi-Strauss in their consideration of myth as an “intellectual tool.”

Myth is unsuccessful in giving man [sic] more material power over the environment. However, it gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he does understand the universe. It is of course, only an illusion (2).

Colvin echoes Roland Barthes in her treatment of myth as meaning derived from cultural events or circumstances. According to Barthes, “myth,” as it is generally understood, seeks to explain the history or reason behind an event and becomes an accepted part of an ideology as it functions to explain a socially constructed reality as natural occurrence. In this consideration, Barthes’ definition of myth is the continuation of socially enforced, encoded mass-culture upon society. The encoding takes place in large part through language. In fact, according to Barthes, myth is language (110), and as such, is critical to the construct of identity. “To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (Fanon 38). In his examination of the importance of language in defining the dimension of the other, Fanon puts it thusly, “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting

at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power.” In other words, according to Fanon, “every colonized people finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (18).

Postcolonial theory posits that colonized people exercise their power by writing “back to the center,” by responding to colonization by writing their own stories and experiences using the language of the colonizer. The native language of Americans of African and Asian descent is the language of the colonizer—it is American English. However, their subject matter, narrative styles, and tools are those that carry traditions of the diaspora of their derivation, e.g., the folktales, folk speech, superstitions and cultural references that further mark the stories as their own. According to Toni Morrison in the 2008 HBO documentary, “Blacklist: Vol. 1,” when there is no access to politics or government, people come to rely on religion and magic for explanations of their reality (3 September 2008). To that end, even these techniques challenge westernized understanding of reality and the “primitive” method of storytelling that blends native myth, spiritual reference, and magical happenings. According to Alfred Lopez, the designation of these techniques as “Third World” further evidences the western need to mark the native and exotic as “other,” that is, to be so bizarre and unusual as to exist outside the realm of “normal” literature that is valued in the West (143). This narrative technique allows American writers of color to record the fragmentation of the memory and identity of colonized people that “occurs under the weight of historical trauma” (Dawson 85).

The fact that writers of color write at all is a hint of rebellion against the construct of race and otherness. Using language, which had been used as a tool of oppression, to strike back

against colonial legacy defies the very idea that those who have been othered—the subaltern—cannot speak for themselves and are thus objects of assumptions and suppositions of the dominant culture. When the “gags that had muted . . . black mouths” were removed, they chant not the praises of their oppressors (Fanon 29). Rather they raise them in recognition of cultural and collective history, they raise them and speak a national history. African American and Asian American writers create a channel through which each culture may have their individual voices heard and by which each contributes to the sum of American culture. Here they challenge the fallacy that one cannot speak if not through the common and established racialized and patriarchal channels. Within higher realms of thought, discourse has been created that intellectuals believe give voice to those experiences that fall outside the understood normal realm. Under these circumstances, not only can those who have been othered not speak, but also if they do, they are misunderstood or their message is interpolated to make it more palatable to the dominant society. Until they exercised their own self-assessment and raised their voices to claim their space and place in this America that continues to reinvent itself as a new world, their voices were silent and they occupied a seat in society that others had invented for them.

Writer Caryl Phillips, in his examination of the correlation between the relationship of race and national identity, notes, “Individuals are ultimately more complicated than historical forces or historical events” (qtd. in Schatteman 94). To that end, African Americans and Asian Americans are entitled to be viewed as men and women with minds, wills, and voices. They are not objects to be studied in terms of what history happened around them. Rather than “raise the names of ancient African and Asian empires,” rather than “busy themselves” forever digging fresh specimens to prove and celebrate their illustrious pasts, rather than coax some measure of approval by spreading specimens and ancient arts, rather than rescue and revive cultures sick

with colonialism and imperialism (Chinweizu 398), African American and Asian American artists sought to build new power. Sure of the value in this new culture and honoring the inextricable twoness of heritage and nation, their voices convey their stories, their impressions, their experiences, as they were a part of history. Their stories are told in oral histories, conversations, speeches, soliloquies, short stories, novels, poems, and songs, as well as in their personal writings—letters, diaries, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, placards, posters, flyers, court petitions, and autobiographies. Social history has recently acknowledged that much of recorded history is the story of kings and elites. Failure to include the histories of the “little people” renders them invisible (Takaki 7-9). According to James Baldwin, “The story of a people is never pretty” (24), but by telling stories that had not previously been told, Americans of African and Asian descent and other Americans of color reclaim their history and exercise their agency over it.

Fanon’s faith in the revolutionary artistic power of the “peasants” and the “regular folk” exists in the work created by the *Fire!!* artists and created and explored later by the *AIIEEEEE!* artists and editors. These authors create characters and situations that reflect the impact of racial objectification on everyday people from routine oppressive social norms to the horrors of inexplicable violence. They have as their focus the politics and consequences of struggles against racial oppression as it overwhelmingly influenced the day-to-day activities in private homes and private lives. Raymond Mazurek, in his exploration of the politics of literary form quotes South African writer Njabulo Ndebele, “Our literature . . . ought to seek to move away from an easy preoccupation with demonstrating the obvious existence of oppression. It exists. The task is to explore how and why people can survive under such harsh conditions” (72). Further, in his “Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa,” Ndebele

states, “The ordinary day-to-day lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the very *content* of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions” (156).

The role of the American writer is critical in chronicling the history and truth of the country in its actuality and in the aftermath of some of the more terrifying, horrible, ghastly periods, in what Stephen Clingman refers to as the “revolutionary moment” (xiii). A great deal of American writing is set in the moment of conflict in the spirit of rebellion or revolution maintaining as its focus the more sensationalized political and social subjects. There are other writers, however, who approach the view of the struggles in America from the inside, which is the only vantage point available to them. In consideration of the struggles of South African writers, Nadine Gordimer says, “the artist has only to do what every artist must in order to become one: face his own reality, and he will have interiorized the standard of relevance set up outside. Thus, theoretically, he has solved the aesthetic and social problem, put himself in meaningful relationship to his society” (137). Then, the more sensationalized images are not necessary for American writers of color to relate effectively the experiences that they use as the subjects of foundation of their art. Rather, *being* subjects in a racialized America is sufficient to give each of the writers a first-hand look at the realities of oppression. Writers of color in America benefit from the view from the lowest depths that details a common plight of generations of oppressive contact with Western ideals and colonial legacy. They face the challenges of putting themselves in the midst of a racialized society, to be what James Baldwin calls, “bastards of the West,” with a special attitude toward Western literary standards and icons that do not reflect them (6-7). They are always conscious of race, as they represent their own

and as they are represented “by a race of readers who understands itself to be race free” (Morrison, *Playing* xii).

The colonial enterprise operates in three domains: (1) at the core, (2) semi-peripherally, and (3) peripherally in the New World. The production of the other takes place in all three domains, and, for this reason, colonial discourse cannot rest. It is working constantly to contain the different, the threat of the other upon which it depends (Willis 279). Agitation between the other and the center is constant, resulting in aggression directed from one to the other.

According to Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, there is “in every society, in every collectivity, a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the form of aggression can be released.” This aggression had traditionally been released for white Americans in the form of “books written by white men for little white men,” which include defamatory and inflammatory characterizations of people of color (145) and, in the case of United States literature, has as its focus the “architecture of a *new white man*” (Morrison, *Playing* 15).

Possessing talents and tools that have been tempered by the cultural conditions in which they developed (Trilling xii), people of African and Asian descent in America have responded to this aggression with their own writing. Their response has existed on some level since they came to these shores by physical or economic force in dark and silent spaces. From these spaces, they waited for an echo of their humanity, the echo of which Richard Wright speaks in *American Hunger* (1977) that would embolden them to encourage others to give account of history in their own voices (453). Their stories are different and the same; their histories are different and the same; their diasporic identities are different; their national identity is the same. The themes of the African American and Asian American writers are universal and transcend time, but these writers are “irreducibly of their time” (Fanon 13) with concerns, sensibilities, historical

references, and social situations that are of their here and now. Their work and their stories champion some of the differences that melt and meld in the cultural pot that is America, and they challenge the idea of “nation” as a “linear homogeneous body” (Ozdek x).

Chapter Two

“Behind the Mask”: Foundations of the Modern African American Voice

To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.
(Newton’s Third Law of Motion)

*We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.*
Paul Laurence Dunbar

Star-spangled. Race-strangled.
Toni Morrison

And always our two natures were in strife.
Ezra Pound

When Portugal began the modern traffic of African slaves in 1441, the Portuguese Empire possessed land on the eastern coast of South America as well as islands in the northern and southern Atlantic Ocean. The Portuguese exploration and trade routes influenced the world from areas of what are now Greenland and northern Canada through the western and southern coasts of Africa to the Japanese islands. Along with gold and ivory, human beings became legal, desired tender in trade along routes between Africa, the Orient, and Europe (Quarles 16). They became slaves in many different geographical locations, and their descendants are sprinkled across the globe, with a large concentration in the United States.

After being brought to the New World in shackles, Africans and their descendents have lived a double life, and, according to W. E. B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, African Americans, have “a second sight . . . in this American world—a world which yields . . . no true self-consciousness, but only lets [them] see . . . through the revelation of the other world” (7).

Striving against the perceptions of others and their entrenched and dehumanizing role as chattel in the American social structure, African Americans have struggled to see themselves as fully potentialized humans under the weight of the white gaze, which has formulated the attitudes and behaviors that exacerbate this idea of “twoness”—of black Americans as simultaneously integral and apart.

Although they came from the widest geographic area of any immigrants to America, the majority from Africa’s west coast, and, through the generations, from other areas in Africa, the human diversity of black people was overlooked, so the first obstacle in this gaze was the idea that all Africans were alike. To the contrary, the ancestors of current-day African Americans came from various nations were very different in appearance, cultural backgrounds, and spiritual beliefs. They spoke hundreds, perhaps thousands, of languages and dialects. The different groups varied as much in their ways of life as in the way they looked and the languages they spoke (Quarles 16). What DuBois called the “strange meaning of being black” (Souls 3) had its beginnings here in the reduction of people to a utilitarian type. Considered to be without home, religion, identity, creative voice, or rational thought, blacks were reduced to objects of toil and labor.

The condition of being of color in America is defined by the history of blacks in America—their status as slaves, their struggles to legally obtain basic rights, and their overcoming obstacles in order to survive in the land of their birth, yet not a land of their own. Slavery and the machinations that the larger society engaged to preserve that way of life create the backdrop against which Americans of color find the circumstances of their reality in this country and fuel the “complicated psychic power [that is necessary] to exercise to resist devastation” (Morrison, *Margins* 46). African Americans have been marginally situated in

American culture, without a single, definite name, but embodying within themselves the possibility of all names. The only way to shape a longstanding, expressive identity in such a situation, Houston Baker asserts, is “to play on possibilities—to divide one’s self into ‘public,’ under the gaze of whiteness, and ‘private’ personalities” (Baker, *Blues* 59).

By 1830, slavery had been alive and thriving in the United States for more than 200 years, and although white America had been free from British rule for only one-quarter of that time, the nation’s hard-won independence did not inspire an extension of the same to the slaves that contributed to the country’s foundation and formation or to the Native Americans from whom the land was taken. Yet, the early years of the third decade of the nineteenth century were pivotal for all of America’s people—those who framed the guarantees of the Constitution and those strategically legislated out of its reach.

In 1830, rebellious slaves allegedly set fire to the city of New Orleans, foreshadowing the violent attempt at freedom led by Nat Turner in Virginia the following year. The “Indian Removal Act” was passed in 1830, legislating the uproot and removal of Native Americans from their Southern homelands and placing them on the Trail of Tears headed west. The slave population in the United States increased to more than 2 million (Johnson and Smith 306), and Chinese men were brought in to provide labor in the shortfall created by the cessation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade more than 20 years before. European immigrants were coming to America in increasing numbers, bringing with them vast socio-political and economic changes that impacted living conditions for white Americans and, eventually, for blacks as well. The geographic dividing line between North and South began to surface when, also in 1830, the State of New York emancipated an estimated 10,000 African Americans.

During this time, the America's geography continued to expand, and an American literary tradition began to emerge with works about the realities of increasingly overcrowded Northern cities, the pastoral life on the Southern plantations, and the adventures of exploration and expansion from the Western frontier. Mass media publications of newspapers, pamphlets, postcards, and periodicals expanded from the Northeast to the south and west. Westward expansion also brought with it the growth of popular theater and the popularity of the minstrel show, "a distinctly American art form" that traces its origination to 1830 (Wellman 312). The minstrel shows were designed around songs, dances, and skits based on Southern plantation life, and white men with faces blackened by burnt cork or greasepaint performed for audiences who were also white. On these stages of racial performance, the popular minstrel character "Jim Crow" was born.

A recurring and popular nineteenth stage and media figure in the United States and Europe (Cowan and Maguire 58), Jim Crow has become embedded in American popular culture where he has impacted race relations in the United States for more than a century. Bearing the name that would eventually come to be associated with laws that would dehumanize and limit the black community for generations, the character initially conceived and developed for entertainment is believed to have been created by white song and dance man Thomas Dartmouth "Dandy" Rice. Speculation about the identity of the real "James Crow," however, ranges from his having been an unknown soldier, a slave from Ohio, or a slaveholder named "Crow." It is equally possible that the name may have come from the simile "black as a crow" (Bennett 255). In any case, part of the creation story that has survived in many accounts is that Rice heard an old slave in Louisville, Kentucky, dance to a song that had these or similar lyrics:

"Wheel about, turn about, do jus' so

And ebry time I wheel about, I jump Jim Crow” (Levine 192).

As the personification of black America, the Jim Crow minstrel character helped to ingrain and justify the inferior status of African Americans by portraying them as ignorant, lazy, infantile, and irresponsible. As early as 1838, Jim Crow had transformed from solely a figure of entertainment and had established himself in American culture as “a noun, a verb, an adjective, [and] a ‘comic’ way of life,” and he had taken on a personality of viciousness . . . what had been performance and art had become “a wall, a system, a way of separating people from people” (Bennett 256). Jim Crow, in his ability to extensively and simultaneously bring shame and laughter to America, had another very significant effect. From stages across the United States and in Europe, comments about him or his likeness appeared on postcards, in newspapers, as figured toys, and in consumer advertisements for everything from “pancake mix to shoe polish” (Hale 51). Thus, even those who did not attend the theatrical performances were engaged in the reification of the stereotyped image.

By 1855, the long lasting effects of Jim Crow were yet to be seen, but the immediate effects were drastic enough. The New York Tribune received Jim Crow enthusiastically and compared the character’s performance with European artistry: “Absurd as may seem Negro minstrelsy to the refined musician, it is nevertheless beyond doubt that it expresses the peculiar characteristics of the Negro as truly as the great masters of Italy represent their more spiritual and profound nationality” (Bean et. al. 4).

Often dressed in tattered clothing that hung from his body and in shoes that were unusually large so that they tended to flop, Jim Crow appeared to be a dirty, slouching, shuffling lazybones. His facial expressions were often vacant, childlike, and confused. The early minstrels constructed a racial mark that identified the black other as “natural” entertainer,

childlike, docile, and supersexual (Wellman 325). All of these characteristics coalesced to create a character that, in its very design, was derogatory for those whom it sought to represent and self-serving, not only for the one who created it, but also for those who believed it to be real. In fact, *The Knickerbocker*, alternately known as *New-York Monthly Magazine*, called Jim Crow “the best representative of our American negro [with] such a natural gait! [And] such a laugh! It was the negro, par excellence. Long live James Crow, Esquire!” (Johnson and Smith 303). Such commentaries prove that in their lack of agency over their own lives, African Americans, moreover, neither had control over the way they and their lives were perceived nor how those perceptions were transmitted as truths. That African Americans, slaves in particular, lived in such close proximity to the whites who created the truth of their living conditions and were, nevertheless, persistently subjected to such dramatic misconceptions served only to make matters worse.

Blackface minstrelsy was a form of entertainment that had as a valuable by-product a means of dehumanizing and objectifying African Americans through caricature. Moving the focus of white America’s disdain of the African American to the stage of performance is a critical step in the othering of people of color that continues to pervade Western thought. Slavery as labor may have been confined to plantations, businesses, and domestic spaces, and people who did not own or regularly come into contact with slaves or other African Americans might not have the opportunity to know anything real about them. On many occasions, the audiences of foreign immigrants from Europe and Americans from rural America outside of the South knew little about plantation life or the black people who figured so prominently in it. There were also occasions where the performers themselves were personally unfamiliar with the slaves they portrayed (Wellman 312). The minstrel show became the opportunity for these

people who lived far removed from black life to see and observe “black people” for themselves and to form their own opinions of them. The parodies, caricatures, and exaggerations that they saw formed the stereotype and became a “real” depiction of black people for the viewing audience. Moreover, their collective consumption of these images created an atmosphere that nurtured white unity and encouraged its existence only against images of nonwhite others (Roediger 18).

As free blacks made economic inroads and a black middle-class became more populous, there grew also a need for containment and control that would allow othering even as living circumstances grew more similar. Therefore, while the primary portrayals were of slaves, free blacks also figured prominently in minstrelsy. To this end, the Jim Crow character—sometimes called “Cuff,” “Sambo,” or “Snowball”—represented the ugliest and least desirable aspects of what whites saw in blacks and further polarized these social and political opposites. Jim Crow was designed to emphasize that blacks were not human; rather, at their essence, they were only parodies of their white, human counterparts (Johnson and Smith 302). The fact that, on most occasions, the Jim Crow character was a white actor who altered his appearance by distorting the whiteness of his face with blackness enhanced the idea that black people were a deformation—a positive turned negative—normalcy turned inside out. Houston Baker asserts that the misappropriation of everyday details of black life, including speech, storytelling, and song, is an extension of the subversion of any authentic aspect of black life. In fact, minstrelsy can only make sense in the context of black life from which it is appropriated. Therefore, it can be said, “the device is designed to remind white consciousness that black men and women are mis-speakers bereft of humanity—carefree devils strumming and humming all day” (Baker , *Modernism* 21).

Like the assignation of race and color as social stratification, minstrelsy is a particularly American and Western phenomenon. The West seems preoccupied with denigrating blackness through performance when compared with other slave-holding nations. According to Toni Morrison, there is a “determination on the part of white people to insist on our ugliness. It never seemed a requisite for any other slave-holding society, each of which seemed quite prepared to recognize the handsomeness of their human property without the least intention of relinquishing rights over their lives” (*Margins* 47). Thus, the popular theater provided the stage for that ugliness to be revealed, and although blackness was the controlling motif, the illustrations of black life were so distorted; they were not actually about black life as it was really lived or about black Americans and how they experienced it. Instead, the minstrel shows had white life as their central focus as they depicted how vastly different black life was from the “normal” lives that the audience members lived. According to David Wellman in his essay, “Affirmative Action and Angry White Men,” the minstrel shows soothed white anxieties and reaffirmed the order of the universe. They reassured white men that they were not black, that they were not slave (312). These reassurances underlie the distinctive feature of minstrelsy, which is the use of African American lives and those of other people of color to negotiate larger public troubles. Therefore, while the misconceptions and caricatures are indeed problematic, the real business of minstrelsy, and its most dangerous feature, is the construction and performance of racial selves (Wellman 323). Minstrelsy succeeds on one level because it entertains, but in the structuring of otherness, the performances bind white Americans through similar political-economic forces and through mass-lived experiences in whiteness (Wellman 326). In *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*, Susan Gubar suggests that the concept of whiteness depends on the appropriation of black beings and that the situation of white culture is dependent upon

misrepresented and [destroyed] black bodies. “Euro-Americans remained tethered to a dark reflection that splits and distorts their being. Although impersonation has functioned as a fate imposed upon or a strategy adopted by the disempowered, it has also operated as a means or method of disempowering others, or Othering others (41).”

In *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self*, Henry Louis Gates asserts that multiple, historic meanings of “mask” contribute to the signification of the word as we know it today. In addition to the idea of making up or putting on a false face, “mask” makes reference to the “masked person,” or “live doll.” Earlier versions of the word mean “net” or “mesh,” and an early nineteenth century meaning of word is “to infuse” and includes a reference to the Yoruba meaning a literal re-covering of the human face with a second surface (Gates, *Figures* 168-169). In effect, the blackface of the minstrel covered and obscured the truth of the African American in an effort to reinvent that truth for whites.

Without regard to who was wearing it, the blackface mask of the minstrel performers came to represent any or all African Americans and empowered the wearer to convey performance that was consumed as authentic African American experience by white audiences. According to African—specifically Yoruba—tradition, a mask takes on meaning only when it becomes a “mask-in-motion” (Gates, *Figures* 168) suggesting that the thing itself signifies nothing. Blackface only began to signify after the actor began the lampoon. It then became associated with parody and oppression. The black mask becomes a visage of confusion and contradiction for the observer who at first sees simply a black face. Once the mask is put into motion, the white observer sees a black face reifying the absurdity and otherness of being black, but the black observer sees the false impression of his being that is taken as truth. The two together create the “primary evocation of a complete hermetic universe” and the black observer

feels again the impossibility of escaping the stereotype. Through this masking—donning of blackface and subversion of true likeness—“a code of meaning is established through the media of rhythm, movement” (Gates, *Figures* 168-169).

Throughout its history, minstrelsy occasionally featured black men in black face, and near the end of the nineteenth century, they became more common as African American entertainers found this the only access to professional entertainment. African American influence grew beyond the subjects of caricature and came to include performers and composers, one of whom was James Bland whose compositions “Oh, Dem Golden Slippers” and “Carry Me Back to Ole Virginy” became staples on the minstrel stage (Quarles 203). These influences by black Americans in dramatic form that had the denigration of blacks as a major trope created multiple layers of meaning within the structure of the shows themselves. The confusion comes from the relationship between the mask and the voice behind the mask when masking extends to language.

The lyrics and banter that “reverberate[d] through a white American discursive universe as the sound of the Negro” (Baker, *Modernism* 22) coming from behind the mask were part of the appeal of the minstrel in popular culture. The voice that was heard when the blackface mask was in motion was as inauthentic as the mask itself because voice supposes a face. Although blackened faces sang ditties and told tales in “Negro dialect,” each performance was a foot on the throat and a hand on the mouth of African Americans. With each performance, these dark faces in effect silenced the black community. The inability to hear themselves and to tell their own story contributed to their oppression.

According to Jacques Derrida, “no consciousness is possible without the voice” (79).

To speak to someone is doubtless to hear oneself speak, to be heard by oneself; but at the same time, if one is heard by another, to speak is to make him repeat immediately in himself the hearing-oneself-speak in the very form in which I effectuated it . . . this possibility of reproduction, whose structure is absolutely unique, gives itself out as the phenomenon of . . . limitless power over the signifier . . . The proximity [between signifier and signified] is broken when, instead of hearing myself speak, I see myself . . . gesture (Derrida 80).

The connection in meaning for African Americans is further disrupted when the gestures are made by someone in costume behind a mask that is a parody of their true selves. Without what Frederick Douglass called “the service of the living human voice,” African Americans were without “humanity, justice, and liberty” (qtd. in Gates, *Figures* 106). Because blacks in America were assumed to have no history, muting the voices that would speak consciousness into the text of blackness itself was not difficult. Since it was believed that they had no self-consciousness, black people in America had no power to present “this black and terrible self” (Gates, *Figures* 104).

These implausible performances of black people—as objects of ridicule, even when they were the actors and agents of creation—reified the duality of the African American life. This double-consciousness included encoded language and dual selves—one that was accepted in the white world based on that world’s expectations and one that was hidden from all except those in their own communities. This conflict is what DuBois called a double-consciousness, which he describes as

. . . A peculiar sensation . . . a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in

amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Souls 7).

The double-conscious extends to the white community as well. The minstrel show put blacks squarely in the line of the white gaze and depicted how they appeared in relation to someone else. At the same time, however, white Americans saw themselves in relation to their black counterparts. Fanon asserts that the black man must be black in relation to the white man (10); however, Gubar asserts with equal clarity, “the white man must be in relation to the black” (40). The white man cannot be white without a sign indicating the absence of blackness. Therefore, while black people are subject to the signification of their blackness as constructed by the white majority, the superiority of whiteness is found when comparing it to blackness or measuring the degree to which it is absent.

Cultural performance “can give life to a sign that connotes a vital stage of human development toward ideals of culture” (Baker, *Modernism* 63). So it seems with minstrelsy that black Americans had a form to work against in their construction of blackness and their determination of the forward movement of a black community. The drama acted out on stage put the love-hate relationship between the races directly in the spotlight. The desire to replace the black body with one’s own—by dressing like it and “acting” like it—coexists with the desire to destroy the “surrogate that is debased and debasing” (Gubar 75). Representing black bodies on stage allowed white men to ultimately conquer those bodies. The nature of representation entails a process of conquering in order for the representation to take place—the thing being represented must be eliminated. Therefore, minstrelsy simultaneously asserts two contrasting

attitudes toward people of color: “(1) we can be like them and (2) they need not exist.” If desire originates in mimesis, it logically follows that the thing desired is destroyed in the imitation. To that end, “every identification involves a great degree of symbolic violence” (Gubar 75). If, as Susan Gubar suggests, blackface is as symbolic as the war paint of Native Americans, the struggle between white Americans and African Americans entered a new theater with the minstrel show.

While the battle may not have begun with the minstrel show, minstrelsy was definitely a weapon in the ongoing racial conflict. During the years before the Civil War, the issue of maintaining and extending the institution of slavery was the question at the core of much of America’s expansion, industry, and legislation. Although the trans-Atlantic slave trade was officially abolished in 1808, the mid- nineteenth century found slavery firmly entrenched as an institution in the American South, and legislation to protect owners and to contain slaves made racism a vital part of the American way of life. The Compromise of 1850 legislated stronger enforcement of fugitive slave laws in exchange for California’s entry into the Union as a free state (Johnson and Smith 326). This amendment to the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act allowed that any person could be enlisted to aid in the capture of a runaway slave. Refusing to do so could result in imprisonment or fine. The overall results of the 1850 revision of the Act were (1) the forced complicity of white and black citizens in the maintenance of the system of slavery (Johnson and Smith 389) and (2) chaos within the communities of free blacks, some of whom may have been escaped slaves and some who may have been born free but who may have matched the descriptions of runaway slaves.

The Supreme Court’s 1857 Dred Scott decision had a resounding impact on black Americans and their pursuit for freedom and citizenship. The decision clearly defined the

relationship between color and status in America when the Court concluded “that the African race who came to this country, whether free or slave, was not intended to be included in the Constitution for the enjoyment of any personal rights or benefits.” The author of the decision, Justice Roger B. Taney, went on to state that African Americans were “of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior that they had no rights to which the white man was bound to respect” (Johnson and Smith 418). No additional interpretation was necessary to ascertain that the America created by white men for white people would be preserved.

During the Civil War, the country divided itself in a war over states’ rights and the effort to keep slavery out of the Western territories. With a Union victory, the agrarian way of life would be altered by new labor arrangements and by assault on the supremacy of the planter class (Battle and Wells 95). Black men and women saw something much more personal at the heart of the conflict. The War was the vehicle that would transform them from commodified chattel to human beings, who, at the very least, might be compensated for their work and labor.

For African Americans, race as sign was real because it had defined their existence—slave meant black; freedom and privilege meant white. However, aspects of this binary expanded as blacks became free and more populous outside of plantations. Definitions had to expand, and white consciousness shifted. According to Grace Elizabeth Hale in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, whites created the culture of segregation to counter black success, to further the myth of absolute racial difference, and to stop the rising of the African American community and the voices within it. The inferiority felt by blacks before the Civil War was a direct result of slave status, not strictly of their racial identity, although it was the common predicament of most that their skin color determined their living

conditions, mobility, and treatment by the larger community. The abolition of slavery disconnected race from slave status and seemed to provide the promise of American citizenship, and it was hoped that blacks would be allowed to rise above their status as chattel and the subalternity that was particular to centuries of bondage (21).

“After the Civil War, the presence of freed people in public places, dressed in clothes that no longer marked them as slaves, signaled their claim to enter the national state and angered whites who thought that whatever changes in status slaves experienced should be invisible” (Kerber 733). It was easier to force invisibility in some of the Northern cities where the populations were small and contained in enclave-like communities. However, in the South, African Americans were scattered across the landscape and were highly visible, even if their agency was limited. Still at issue for many, however, was many former slaves’ relationship to the land. They had spent most of their lives in an agrarian society, learning to prompt crops from Southern soil. They could not imagine freedom without access to the land to provide them a means of earning a living and sustenance. Therefore, although they were freed from the bondage of slavery, many, unable to survive in other ways, were forced back to plantations and sharecropping to escape a fate of starvation (Bennett 212-3). The South embraced the minstrel show and all of its accompanying stereotypes, and slavery had contained the movement of the majority of black people, but the full erasure of the African American visibility from the southern landscape was much more difficult. As a result, racial difference was created as the critical metaphor of the new regional, racialized culture. By 1868, “WHITE . . . was a call to arms and the winning word” (Hale 76).

With racial relations in America forever in contradiction, in 1866, the same year that the fourteenth amendment was ratified to guarantee every American civil rights, the Ku Klux Klan

was born. Originally begun as a brotherhood of defeated confederate soldiers, its purpose evolved to minimize Union presence in the South and to control African Americans through terror and intimidation. In early twentieth-century America, the notion of empire evolved on United States soil in the fraternal organization of the “Invisible Empire” of the Ku Klux Klan, which, by 1920, claimed more than five million members (Gerend 6). Wearing white sheets and hoods, the Ku Klux Klan set the stage for performance in whiteface. This masking inverted that of the minstrel show, and like the blackface of the minstrel was rendered without significance until the wearer put it in motion to terrorize the black community. Then, it came to signify as strongly as did blackface the conflict between black and white where one found its meaning within the context of the other.

Most of the interactions between the Klan and African Americans involved persistent, yet clandestine treatment outside the purview and discussion of the general public. The covert nature of these acts underpins the invisibility of whiteness. The use of masks to hide the human features was designed to render the wearer invisible as they asserted power over African Americans, reinforcing and extending whiteness as the driving force in American society. “The group’s primary objective involved making visible the power of white Americans who felt increasingly threatened by the country’s changing values and minority cultures. . . the ghosts . . . announce which bodies can and cannot be considered legitimate representatives of the modern nation”(Gerend 7). To people of color, “whiteness” is most visible when it is “denied, evokes puzzlement or negative reactions” (Sue 764). Because the strength and privilege that accompanies whiteness, “Euro Americans [are allowed] to deny its existence and use it to treat persons of color unfairly” (Sue 764). As they had in the theaters that hosted the minstrel shows, a collective audience gathered again to be bound together in mass experience. This time,

however, the experience became overtly violent with the spectacle that of lynchings, property fires, and public beatings. As a collective, millions of white Americans were initiated into whiteness partly by hearing stories of racist terror from those closest to them (Roediger 16). Postcards carrying images of burned, beaten, mutilated colored bodies told the stories across distances. The photographed onlookers, white men, women, and children, reinforced the idea of white supremacy—power over black bodies. Even the opposition to the violence is in effect a critical part of the reciprocal gaze between white and black. The refusal to be dominated by European and American oppression leads to a new stage in the formulation of whiteness, one that requires hatred and violence to thrive, and according to DuBois, “Whiteness becomes the only standard of morality; anything done in its name is acceptable, even if it violates all other principles of western civilization” (DuBois, *Souls* 450).

The years between 1867 and 1877 marked the era of Reconstruction in the South. The majority of African Americans lived in the South and, in many Southern states, they were the majority population. Reconstruction efforts were necessary not just to determine what to do with approximately four million freed slaves but also with defeated white people whose family homes and way of life had been destroyed. The union, including the former Confederacy, had to be reconstructed with allowances for all of its citizens. For southern whites, emancipation meant transference of responsibility for southern blacks to northern whites . . . it never occurred to white southerners that African Americans had earned the right to self-mastery (Hale 78). An important measure was the fourteenth amendment, passed in 1866, which granted citizenship to every person “born or naturalized” in the United States.

For its intentions, Reconstruction could be imagined as the first black cultural space as it promised widespread change for African Americans. In addition to freely seeking education

with “a passion . . . that has never perhaps been equaled in world history,” African Americans had the right to vote and to serve in government offices from Congress to postmaster (L. Bennett 212-213). Unfortunately, their service was described as “the rule of the uncivilized Negroes over the whites of the South” even though African American elected officials who participated in government were subject to various forms of maltreatment and were ignored on various levels then and in historiographies that followed the era (Hale 80). Rather than the creation of black cultural space, it appeared that African Americans would continue to exist within cultural space defined by whites—one that was “amorphous and indescribable” (Frankenberg, *Women* 196). African Americans found themselves having to conform to Americanness as defined by the white majority without any apparent concessions to be made for their existence. “If individual white men could no longer be masters, then the white community collectively would, by custom and, when necessary, by law, name the space if not the content [and conditions] of servitude” (Hale 47). Whiteness becomes associated with a kind of willful innocence, a corrupt arrogance, and an imposition of responsibility onto its victims. It becomes the norm, and is rendered invisible in white cultural space. It remains, however, highly visible to the person of color who does not fit many of the normative qualities that make Whiteness invisible (Sue 764).

With racial conflict and divide antagonized by freedom, a fictional “plantation past” became a space of pleasure and escape. The “Old South” was born in the reminiscences of many whites who “turned wistfully away from present conflicts to a past named ‘old’ and therefore distant, a time that northern minstrel shows had established as entertaining” (Hale 52). The antebellum South provided a means to escape the upheaval of social roles and to refigure and recreate the constructs of racial difference. The recounting of these times gone by became the “first clearly white space” within the culture of segregation, and many more in the white

community ascribed to “racial essentialism”—the “conception of sets of personal characteristics as biologically determined racial identities” (Hale 80). This idea grew in popularity among whites, especially in cities as the new black middle class grew. The object of writing the history of Reconstruction, DuBois claims, is “to paint the South a martyr to inescapable fate, to make the North the magnanimous emancipator, and to ridicule the Negro as the impossible joke . . . this may be fine romance but it is not science . . . It has . . . led the world to worship the color bar as social salvation.” What he came to understand then, is that “white southern racial identity formed an increasingly crucial part of modern nationalism. American whiteness . . . would have no moral “historical” foundation without the rewriting of Reconstruction” (DuBois, *Reconstruction* 723). Rewriting Reconstruction is necessary in the space of white culture, and the transformation as historical memory maintains the motif and idea of the invisibility of whiteness. This “discounting and suppressing the knowledge of whiteness” held by people of color is a white illusion that [is] the necessary byproduct of white supremacy and absolutely necessary to the imperative of white domination (Roediger 6).

The rewriting of southern history in combination with the changes taking place in popular culture brought forth novels like Thomas Dixon’s *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1905). Like the minstrel shows before them, they misconstrued black and white relations in the south. One critic of *The Leopard’s Spots* wrote, “No other book yet printed has given such a graphic presentation of the Southern view of the Negro Problem . . . It is the best apology for lynching, it is the finest protest against the mistakes of reconstruction. . .” (qtd. in Hale 79).

Dixon’s *The Clansman* romanticized the Civil War and the Ku Klux Klan and the violence wrought by each. D. W. Griffith later adapted the novel to film and portrayed

Reconstruction as a race war. A backdrop for the creation of the “darky-beast dichotomy” (Hale 81), this portrayal, along with the examination of the “fall from plantation grace” (Hale 79) and the “loss of racial ease” (Hale 79) clearly laid the obvious solution of segregation squarely at the feet of its victims—those ignorant and savage African Americans who destroyed the racialized paradise of the Old South. As the nineteenth century closed, white northerners joined their southern counterparts by “memorializing the loyal ex-slave” (Hale 59), and by the 1940s, recountings of Reconstruction appeared in histories and in white southern writings as the “blackest page” of American history (Hale 79-81).

By the turn of the century, “an increasingly, problematically, and therefore self-consciously, Anglo-Saxon nation did not want . . . nonwhites demanding citizenship rights” (Hale 76). When white Americans realized that their black countrymen expected to vote, own businesses, and to share with them in their individual pursuits of the American dream, barriers and obstacles were erected to postpone, interrupt, and prevent their successes. Not all of these barriers were physical, although volumes can still be written regarding decades of lynchings, burnings, and beatings after the Civil War and well into the twentieth century.

“Black Codes” were laws passed to curtail freedom of movement and societal engagement of black people; the first of which were passed in Ohio in 1804. Other northern states followed, primarily in direct response to the abolition of slavery. However, the harshest codes were enacted after the Civil War in 1866 and 1867 to curtail the activities and progress of the more than four million freed slaves. Many Southern states, especially those such as Mississippi and South Carolina where the Blacks outnumbered whites by almost two to one, enacted the Codes as well. They included vagrancy and apprenticeship restrictions that widely affected the freedmen’s access to find work. In, South Carolina, Codes restricted recently freed

slaves to farming and menial services. In Mississippi, blacks were given a deadline by which to find work. In other states, “masters” could whip their “servants” under the law, and blacks could be punished for certain gestures, “seditious” speeches, or for walking off the job (L. Bennett 225). According to the Codes, blacks could not testify in court, and strict curfews forced African Americans off the streets at sundown. Movement was restricted by the requirement of passes and tolls or bonds for travel within or between states. Freedom of assembly and the right to bear arms were forbidden (Cowan and Maguire 91). Considered by many to be virtual enslavement, the Codes controlled the lives of African Americans before they ever experienced freedom.

Jim Crow evolved separately from the Black Codes, but by the latter part of the nineteenth century, Jim Crow had taken center stage again, not as a minstrel show character, but as the set of laws established to curtail the freedom of African Americans, particularly in the South. These laws were legal steps on the state level designed to keep races separate, and in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, states saw the opportunity to enact these strict segregation laws that facilitated and supported the rise and entrenchment of white supremacy and the racial caste system. The laws developed to keep African Americans disenfranchised eventually came to bear the name that mockingly stereotyped the people against whom the laws were developed. These “Jim Crow laws,” largely enacted between 1876 and 1965, by design denied access to education, transportation, public services, (such as restaurants, water fountains, and restrooms), parks, housing, voting, and employment. The system was designed to elevate white people and to disenfranchise black people, and included multiple levels of ensuring difference, leading to Toni Morrison’s assertion that black people in the democracy of America are “star-spangled” but by virtue of their racial identity, “race-strangled” (“On the Backs”). Separate facilities, derogatory media images, literacy tests designed to deny opportunities to vote and to work, and

public humiliations converged to create racial hierarchy. Punishments for violation of these laws ranged from the legal fines or jail time to the illegal but tolerated public reprisals of mob violence that all too often ended in death.

States' use of Jim Crow laws was ratified as federal law with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896. The Supreme Court decision determined that states met the measure of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution by establishing "separate but equal" accommodations for black citizens. The decision entrenched further the concept of race within the legal foundations of the 120 year-old republic:

The object of the Amendment was to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting or even requiring, their separation, in places where they are liable to brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of state legislatures in the exercise of their police power" (*Brown, "Plessy v. Ferguson*).

Because of how and when they were enacted, Jim Crow laws more than hindered the actions and movements of black people. They also had psychological implications for whites. According to Zora Neale Hurston in the essay, "Crazy for This Democracy,"

Jim Crow laws have been put on the books for a purpose, and that purpose is psychological. It has two edges to the thing. By physical evidence, back seats in trains, back-doors of houses, exclusion from certain places and activities, to

promote in the mind of the smallest white child the conviction of First by Birth, eternal and irrevocable . . . (168).

Despite local and legal opposition during the turbulent years of the nineteenth century, Black Americans were exploring newly won freedom in every area of their lives: who and how they married, where and how they lived, where they worshipped, even in the selection of their names, which heretofore had been chosen for them often with surnames not given at all. Without the right to name their children and denied the familial connection associated with surnames, instead carrying the names of their slave masters, slaves were denied a basic right of self-identity. For centuries, African Americans were denied their rights as individual beings in their own communities. It became necessary for them to step beyond the mask that obscured the realities of struggle and triumph, while putting forth a false face of “grins and lies” (Dunbar 71)—to re-vision the African American person in the fabric of America.

African Americans made efforts to “rename” themselves in the turmoil of Reconstruction and to reconstruct themselves in the minds of white America as real people, as more than the one-dimensional characters and more than the beasts of burden—roles they had played for more than 300 years. Calling upon the voices that had been silenced by chains and blackface, listening for the sounds of true history among the screams of oppression and the silence of death, newly freed African Americans followed the paths of their freed peers and sought ways to identify themselves as free people—ways to bridge the gap between signifier and signified—as people able to choose the labels for themselves and the direction of their lives. Remnants of their African heritage reminded them that names have deliberate meaning, with the selection of some names dictated by circumstance and some reflecting destiny (Mack 2935). Semiotic theory supports that all beginnings are found in the name. The discovery of who one is begins in the

interrogation of the name, and the foundations of ethnicity are based on the genealogical, narrative underpinnings behind one's name.

The double-consciousness of which DuBois speaks affects even the process of naming. While the knowledge of self and surroundings is acutely American, the existence of the African American in America is predicated upon being uprooted from the African homeland, divorced of culture, and separated from the defining foundations of their familial past. Although the more immediate experience is American, the Middle Passage claimed “fathers, mothers, priests, and gods” and created a “painful linguistic marginality” (Benston 152) and affects every aspect of the Africans' circumstances. The forced scattering of Africans throughout the world as a result of slavery also dispersed any individuality or consciousness of self or nation along with it and created a type of statelessness among them. “Statelessness” refers to a man or woman without a country and evokes a lack of nationhood, of community and brings forth images of undirected movement from pillar to post, as it were; however, it is the lack of freedom of movement that is a key characteristic of the statelessness of American slaves (Kerber 733). Although they were physically located inside the United States, and by this time, many were natives, the law had created borders—not of space, but of place. African Americans were without the stability of statehood; they were natives of America but were not welcome here.

At the turn of the twentieth century, two very important developments should be noted. First, the communities of former slaves, those in the South who had not been slaves, and those in the north were amalgamating and creating a black middle class. Secondly, the migration of black people; specifically, the movement of black intellectuals between colleges in the South and those further north was creating an “increasing national conception of African American collectivity” (Hale 20). Because of agricultural crises in the American South, exacerbated by

fear and deplorable living conditions, and the labor shortage in the North, approximately 2 million African Americans migrated from rural south to urban north between 1890 and 1920.

During this time, African Americans were making inroads toward self-sufficiency, but they still were not considered fully American. The “necessary space” for opportunity was compromised by commodification of black disguises, as well as other well-entrenched African American cultural productions (Hale 23). In all regions, they made huge strides in building schools and churches, buying farms, and even starting businesses, but at the same time, many former slaves became self-conscious for the first time about “their forms of speech, styles of worship, and other traditions” (Hale 18). The goal of the Northern white teachers who came South to educate “all men equally as member of the same great commonwealth” was to establish “one common civilization,” and, it became clear that “Americans did not act like slaves” (Hale 19) or talk like slaves.

In the quest for identity and belonging, the significance on individual and family names extended to naming the collective, the community of black people in the United States. In her essay, “I Yam What I Yam: Topos and Un(naming) in Afro-American Literature,” Kimberly Benston suggests that the mastery of language itself as the key to “organizing the mind’s encounter with an experienced world—is propelled by a rhythm of naming”(152). To claim their space in the world around them, African Americans had to situate themselves in it, and a critical way to do so was by mastering the language of the masters. With English as their native language, they had, for the most part, acquired the language from a position of servitude, so even if they were free, the mark of bondage remained on their tongues. Much like the European immigrants, learning to speak American was one way to prove one’s place—a way to fit in and to erase aspects of otherness.

In the reclamation of individual names, African Americans also sought to reclaim their statehood to claim a national identity despite their individual and community differences. By the turn of the century and as recently as 1945, sociologists and anthropologists were discovering what those in the African American community had known all along, even when seeking to develop a sense of kinship and nation with those designated to be of their race. “Negroes are not just Negroes to each other . . . a multitude of status lines crisscrosses colored social relationships, marking distinctions which are no less important humanly and scientifically than those to be found in white Boston or Baltimore” (Brown 18). Therefore, because African American expressive culture is an amalgamation of our cultural experience, including generations of slavery, while maintaining evocations of the African homeland, “No one can hand us a peoplehood, complete with prefabricated images” (Gerald 84).

In response to the desire to define their nationhood across these status lines and varied backgrounds and in a larger atmosphere where they were not accepted, many African Americans sought to connect to the diasporic homeland of Africa. As the “Old South” came to represent the best of times gone by for defeated Southerners, “Africa” became “an invention, a black translation of white racialist thinking, a view inseparable from the history of their racialized oppression in America, which had rendered diverse peoples into an African American whole” (Hale 29). W. E. B. DuBois describes this Africa as the seat of life for the African American and the place where the “black body” is affirmed as beautiful.

The spell of Africa is upon me. The ancient witchery of her medicine is burning my drowsy, dreamy blood. This is not a country, it is a world--a universe of itself and for itself, a thing Different, Immense, Menacing, Alluring. It is a great black bosom where the Spirit longs to die. It is life so burning, so fire encircled that one

bursts with terrible soul inflaming life. One longs to leap against the sun and then calls, like some great hand of fate, the slow, silent crushing power of al-mighty sleep--of Silence, of immovable Power beyond, within, around. Then comes the calm. The dreamless beat of midday stillness at dusk, at dawn, at noon, always. Things move--black shiny bodies, perfect bodies, bodies of sleek unearthly poise and beauty ("Africa" 646).

However, constructing a black America in Africa would not merge the African Americans double consciousness, only change the location of the conflict. Because of the generations that separated the African American from Africa, he was not African. However, in the land of his birth, he struggled against being No-Man—struggled to assert his conscious self as an American.

For African Americans, self-creation and reformation of a fragmented past are endlessly interwoven. Their identity is directly connected to naming as they seek to reinvent their ancestry despite the abruptions in their history (Benston 152). African Americans were seeking to erase the slave identity, to move away from the imposition of "nigger" to a self-imposed naming that would encompass all in the community, not limited to former slave or free, African or American. By the 1900s, "colored" gave way to "Negro," and, by the mid twentieth century, "Negro" was making its way to "black." Yet none of these fully define this group of people. There was an effort from activists, scholars, and writers to do away with markers that reduced people to a color. It was an effort to synthesize a new image from the simplified images that had been forged for them in the past.

The many and confusing images evoke Ezra Pound's "broken bundle of mirrors," from "Near Perigord" (1917). The images mirror a shifting aspect of reality; however, a distinction must be made in the strife between real and created images. According to Carolyn Gerald, all

images, “and, especially created images, represent a certain way of focusing on the world outside, and therefore they represent a certain point of view.” With that certain point of view, “we have automatically emphasized some aspects of reality, blocked out others, and glossed over the rest, and the image which we project or which we perceive is not objective reality but our own—or someone else’s—reshaping our reality” (Gerald 81). The image portrayed is a new mask-in-motion.

With the projection of new images, African Americans derived a greater sense of personal worth at the turn of the century from the reflections they saw gazing back at them. Black people were defining themselves within their own group. Although still struggling against Jim Crow and other forms of oppression, African Americans were able to see continuity of themselves in people like them and in things and concepts. They were still black people living in a white world, but they were becoming subjects in that world. They began to give voice to their consciousness, changing the signs and their meanings. This continuation of the black self validated their existence. Image became extremely significant as white cultural and racial images were continuously projected. According to Carolyn Gerald in “The Black Writer and His Role,” the result is that “the black man sees a zero image of himself” a great deal of the time (Gerald 83). In response to this “zero image,” DuBois asserts, the American Negro

long[s] to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being

cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity roughly closed in his face (DuBois, *Souls* 8).

The merging of those selves would take place in the pages of increased literary activity that would follow the migrations of African Americans out of the South and is the beginning of the African American aesthetic. With this activity, comes a certain “sense of self” (Gerald 83). The link between race change, self-consciousness, and performance is seen in the assumption of masked performance by African Americans without the application of blackface. Such command of the minstrel mask constitutes a mastery also of form necessary to speak to white audiences, but more importantly, the mask is a space for those whose existence it had denied to proclaim their agency and humanity. Claiming the space is a significant move toward modernism (Baker, *Modernism* 17). To that end, for African Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century, the possibility of becoming not “ex-colored” but re-colored as “definitely negro” evoked a return to origins and a type of freedom (Gubar 119).

Chapter Three

***Fire!!* and the New Negro: The Harlem Renaissance as Foundational**

I, too, am America.
Langston Hughes

*Opposition is the life of enterprise; criticism tells
you that you are doing something.*
Pauline Hopkins

*BLACK MAN! What is in Thy Bosom?
Pluck It Out—Is it Genius,
Is it Talent For Something? Let's Have It.*
Marcus Garvey

New York is the last true city.
Toni Morrison

The early years of the twentieth century found America at a complex crossroads. The landscape of the country was rapidly changing, with the focus moving away from agriculture toward the industrial. In the period immediately after World War I, America became the recognized political and economic power in the western world. Having come out of the war ostensibly unscathed by the onsite devastation that their European counterparts experienced, Americans were experiencing the prosperity of the war's aftermath and the burst of creative energy that accompanied it. Of this era, F. Scott Fitzgerald said,

We were the most powerful nation. Who could tell us any longer what was fashionable and what was fun? Isolated during the European war, we have begun combing the South and West for folkways and pastimes, and there were more ready to be had (Fitzgerald 14).

The end of World War I disrupted the conservatism that had determined the course of American life and cleared the way for individual and collective self-expression. According to Nathan Huggins in *Harlem Renaissance*, “everything was pollinated by the spirit of self-determination which pervaded the world at that time” (303).

The spirit of the European avant-garde movements invaded America in the years around World War I as creative musicians and artists followed the sounds of jazz and the other signs of creativity to the United States (Cameron 223). The burgeoning culture of communication combusted with the culture of abundance, and consciousness was altered: “The very perception of time and space was radically changed” (Susman xx). James Weldon Johnson considered the “recent literary and artistic emergence of the individual creative artist” as “so marked that it [did] not have the appearance of development; it seems rather like a sudden awakening, like an instantaneous change” (260). This sudden awakening would have global influence and find support in the burgeoning psychological world for which Sigmund Freud had recently identified the three levels of the human psyche: the id, the ego, and the superego. The reconciliation of the id—the basic most primitive self—and the superego—controlled by social forces and appearances—preoccupied minds and social activities throughout the 1920s. The conflict between the id and the superego that fostered the anxiety that created the “Lost Generation” of Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, and their contemporaries resulted from a distinct movement away from the staid Victorian values and formulas toward a less inhibited mode of thinking and creating. This anxiety was compounded by the “fear of replicating outmoded forms or giving way to the bourgeois formalisms” of the old guard (Baker *Modernism* 101). The impetus that created the modernist African American was of a slightly different type as their move was one not just away not from rigid Victorianism, but toward agency, toward the mastery

of forms away from stereotypes without abandoning the common folk. It stemmed from a will to truth, without falling into others' ideas of what that truth should be. The movement towards agency found its voice in literature, art, music, and dance, and found its critical core in downtown New York, particularly Greenwich Village. Simultaneously, approximately five scant miles uptown in Harlem, another movement was taking place. The parallel lives of the Jazz Age and the activity in Harlem would provide a collision of cultures that would set off a chain of events unprecedented then and not recreated since in terms of focused productivity, a movement that would, for African Americans, offer response to years of degradation and separation and of stereotype and caricature. James Weldon Johnson attributes the apparent sudden onset of creativity to America's realization that "there are Negro authors with something interesting to say and the skill to say it" (263). The "Negro writers were caught up in the spirit of the artistic yearnings of the time . . . which is to say that their experience was part of common experience" (Lewis 120). The aftermath of the War brought forth a flurry of modern production that proved to be both the topic of debate and critical to the foundation of an inclusive American literature. There was a "Little Renaissance" in New York City, and there had been other activity in the New England, Knickerbocker, Hoosier, and Yiddish literary traditions. The suddenness with which this awareness came about gave the movement the feeling and aspect of a phenomenon (J. W. Johnson 263). According to historian Melvin B. Tolson, the Harlem Renaissance "came with startling immediacy" and produced a "psychologically different Negro known to sociologists, educationalists, and critics as the New Negro" (43).

The Harlem Renaissance has been referenced as "the New Negro movement," "the Negro Renaissance," and "the Renaissance of the Twenties," or not acknowledged as a renaissance at all. For purposes of this discussion, I refer to the definitive arts and literary movement that

centered itself in Harlem during the 1920s as the “Harlem Renaissance” or the “renaissance.” There is also debate over the span of the movement. Some researchers date its beginning in 1910, when W. E. B. DuBois began editing *The Crisis*. Others look to 1913 as the beginning, when DuBois, in the pages of *The Crisis*, called for a renaissance in the community of black educators, writers, and artists. Scholar David Levering Lewis cites the beginning of the renaissance as 1917 when the United States entered World War I, and the Victorian-influenced world began to move away from former conventions and expectations. Langston Hughes cites the beginning as the debut and Broadway run of the stage production *Shuffle Along* in 1921, groundbreaking with its African American cast and crew, and the recognition that African American performers could be successful in something other than applied blackface masks. Still others use the 1924 Civic Club dinner, planned by Charles S. Johnson, as the watershed because of the public attention planned around it in the media and the awards going to Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. The lack of a confirmed starting point notwithstanding, most scholars agree that the end of the Harlem Renaissance began in 1929 with the Great Depression.

The cultural awakening in Harlem featured theatre, visual arts, music, and literature, but it was, for the most part, a literary movement, with more written literature produced within its short time span than ever before in the history of African Americans and with the endurance of that literature. The period between years of 1926 and 1927 saw the largest outpouring of fiction during the renaissance, when, according to Yvonne Price, “it rained fiction Harlem” (23). The movement featured African American artists, who for the first time lifted their own voices and experimented with various art forms. The interiority of Harlem as a site of concentrated activity created an environment for African American artists to put the mask-in-motion and effect an artistic and spiritual consolidation of the race (Gates, *Figures* 167-8). Only a handful of the

artists were natives of New York, of even living in Harlem, for the duration of the renaissance, and they were of all ages, diverse talents, various backgrounds, yet they created a movement that has been analyzed as both a success and a failure but one's whose influence is without doubt in American arts and letters.

Although some scholars are reluctant to center the renaissance in Harlem because most of its major figures were not natives of the city and few took up permanent residence there, greater New York proved to be fertile ground for creativity during the twenties, with the Jazz Age influencing the "lost generation" downtown and the Harlem Renaissance nurturing the "new Negroes" uptown. Commonly called the "Jazz Age," the era prolific with artistic production, consumption, and commodification marks the first time that an African American contribution to the national culture defined an era (Schneider 1). Cultural rebellion resulted in the emergence of a generation of writers, artists, scholars, aesthetes, and bohemians who became aware of the lifestyle that accompanied the industrial revolution—the "Machine Civilization"—that led to an ideal of uniformity (Osofsky 230). The foundation of the modernist movement is embedded in the sweeping global changes at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and the resulting, fundamental disillusionment with established beliefs and practices. Younger artists protested in their lifestyles and their work as they stressed new methods to produce new ideas and new results. The combination of catalytic activity including the "birth" of the New Negro, a renewed sense of pride, the fight for civil rights, and the little magazine movement made the ground ripe for a literary revolution. An understanding of the influence that this era and its cultural production had on America and its literature can be gained by examining the elements that created it and is critical to understanding the eventual publication of *Fire!!* and its enduring impact.

The struggle to claim the authentic African American voice is as old as the presence of Africans in America. Native languages were struck from their tongues, and early writers were accused of being imposters. On the minstrel stage, black performers eventually claimed mastery over the masks that had previously been “blacked” on white faces and began to put on shows for white and black audiences. These black minstrel groups brought America its dance styles, the music that inspired them, and the vaudeville comic monologue. Considered by Ann Douglas as “the only completely original contribution America has made to the theatre” and “the most important single source of American live entertainment” (76), the images and messages of the minstrel show became public consumption. With roots in the antebellum South, the minstrel show was a major source of information in other parts of the country and the world about the ways of black folk in the South and the folk heroes of the times (Ann Douglas 75).

For the standard minstrel show, which was a “medley of purportedly Negro jokes, tall tales, song-and-dance routines, and spoofs of elite art and contemporary manners” (Ann Douglas 75), to succeed, black minstrels had to meet the expectations of their white audiences. They could not give realistic versions of minstrelsy’s standard types, nor could they offer obvious corrections to the previously depicted white distortions of black character. Instead, the Negro minstrel performer donned blackface himself and imitated, with variations, the white performers playing blacks. When blacks began performing their own minstrel acts in the 1860s, the draw was “genuine plantation darkies” who could, because of their status as former slaves, “bring a sense of authenticity that the white performers lacked” (Ann Douglas 99). Even then, the black performers were not considered artists or professionals on any level. They were instead considered to be “genuine Negroes indulging in the reality” of overly exaggerated versions of themselves. (Ann Douglas 99-100). American author Constance Rourke put minstrelsy, with its

“sudden extremes of nonsense” and “tragic undertone,” at the center of her American Humor, a work that presents the blackface minstrel as a stock figure in popular culture and is distinctive in the creation of a national American consciousness. As black people sought refuge from the tragic undertone inherent in watching or even participating in the donning of blackface for the sole purpose of hilarity in times when their situations were far from amusing, they sought also to control the sudden extremes of nonsense in an effort to exert some control if not over their lives then at least in how they were proffered for public consumption.

Minstrelsy came to be the entree for black art onstage before white audiences. According to Ann Douglas, “Black performers playing jazz, singing the blues, dancing, and doing comedy acts for white audiences at Harlem night spots had the long rich, and complex tradition of minstrelsy behind them” (75). The relationship established in that space between audience and actor extended to the whole of black art as African Americans extended their previously unacknowledged literary and artistic traditions. Mastery of form and ensuring the authenticity of the voice behind the mask were hallmarks of the “new Negro,” and, as the twentieth century aged, the New Negroes began to raise their voices in protest, in celebration, and towards recognition.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 removed the sense of isolation that previously enveloped the United States and brought an entire population of previously foreign people into the domestic fold (Quarles 178). While the war may not have impacted the African American community directly, it had serious implications on race relations in the United States. Specifically, as the United States took control over territories and people previously governed by Spain, America seemed to increase its devotion to the “fetish of racialism,” which promoted the belief that men are naturally and essentially separated into greater and lesser breeds (Quarles

180). In this climate, one that created central, societal dividing lines, one for whom the central metaphor was racial segregation, the “New Negro” evolved. The birth of the New Negro had taken place some time ago as this name was one that some educated African Americans “born in freedom” chose for themselves (Hale 22) to indicate new ideas about race, a new approach to existing as a race, and a new attitude about existing racially in a world defined by racial myth and determined by racial stereotypes. In his *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900), Booker T. Washington referred to the black community as a “new people” and referenced an emerging ethnic consciousness. According to Walter Kalaidjian in *American Culture between the Wars*, “self-styled new Negroes sought to articulate traditional African American folk signs and cultural tropes not just to an emerging black bourgeoisie but to the broader struggle for black labor privileges, women’s empowerment, and gay rights” (84). Two key features of new Negro ideology are (1) conflict with an older Negro ideology and (2) themes of progress. These themes suggest a radical political orientation that predates the 1920s era most associated with the New Negro and the cultural agenda of the Harlem Renaissance (Nadell 11).

Although the evolution and emergence of the New Negro had been in the making for several generations, it seems that the phrase entered the mainstream of the American vernacular in the 1920s, when the New Negro and Harlem were “discovered” by the white world (Osofsky 230). The formation of the New Negro persona was thought to be the result of social and cultural changes driven by the Great Migration and World War I, which led to the creation of a new material and economic base for black artists, politicians, and intellectuals (Moses 62). This configuration of “new” racial attitudes and ideals paved the way for a renaissance—unprecedented explosions in population and creativity in a black community that extended the modernist spirit of the times—in Harlem.

There was a magic in Manhattan that continues to contribute to its allure as a major center of art, architecture, literature, fashion, and culture. It creates a loyalty among its residents and beckons to tourists from around the world. According to Martha Banta in “The Three New Yorks: Topographical Narratives and Cultural Texts,” signs of New York’s charm and appeal were obvious as early as 1609. When sailors from the Dutch West Indies companies first saw the island of “Manahata,” they felt that they were “at the threshold of an idea” (31). Centuries later, upon his arrival in New York from the Midwest, F. Scott Fitzgerald proclaimed the city to have “all the iridescence of the beginning of the world” (25). From these feelings grew the sense that “Manhattan” would be home to new imaginings and cultural changes. It seemed that the early European settlers immediately identified with the place later to be called Manhattan and the wonder of it. The original beauty of the water and land and the history of wonder that began with those settlers would go on to manifest itself in the generations to come. In the early years of the twentieth century, America moved to position itself as the most politically and economically powerful country in the world, and New York became a powerful city. The size of the population increase reflected in the 1920 census made New York America’s largest city with an equally large cultural impact.

New York was fast becoming a “world city,” and as Fitzgerald prophetically said in a letter to Edmund Wilson in 1921, “culture follows money.” He foresaw even then, as the U. S. was on the path to world power, “New York, not London, will soon be the “ ‘capital of culture’ ” (qtd. in Ann Douglas 4). This sense strengthened and came to a climax in the early decades of the twentieth century. According to Warren Susman, the era of the 1920s was a time for an increased calling to know the world through writing, art, journalism, social science, philosophy, and other artistic and intellectual pursuits (107). Many of these intellectuals, artists, and writers

identified themselves by their connection to New York, no matter how tenuous. Accordingly, the Jazz Age and the Harlem Renaissance were centered in the city, with the acclaimed African American literary renaissance of the 1920s linked to Harlem, which, by the end of World War I was well on its way to becoming the center of African American culture. The Harlem Renaissance existed parallel to the Jazz Age, often enticing major figures who were successful in downtown circles to experience it firsthand. This crossing of cultures was often seen as an inappropriate appropriation of white culture and manners. Of the increase of interest uptown, Fitzgerald said in a letter to Carl van Vechten, “Our civilization imposed on such virgin soil takes a new and more vivid and more poignant horror as if it had been dug out of its context and set down against an accidental and unregulated background” (qtd. in Goldsmith 447). At the same time that this view expresses Fitzgerald’s prejudice, it also seems to reveal his belief that “anything” can happen in the city of the New York as it serves as a microcosm for the infinite possibilities of the modern world. James Weldon Johnson echoes that sentiment in his seminal work, *Black Manhattan*: “The fact that within New York, the greatest city of the New World, there is found the greatest single community anywhere of a people descended from age-old Africa appears at a thoughtless glance to be the climax of the incongruous” (3). The fertile cultural breeding ground in New York allowed for a vibrant amalgamation of cultures, which is a key element in the distinction of American culture and is critical to the singularity of the American identity. This identity markedly began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century, in what Fitzgerald called “an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire” (14).

As modern artists began to write and explore the changing times, they often used their works to engage in an activity that became a significant marker of the twentieth century—self-

examination as it combined the inner workings of the id and the public persona of the superego. In their work, artists began to explore and express their own identities and to express their true selves. Usually, their explorations were conditionally set in a specific time and place, a comment on the modernist focus on temporality. Characteristic of those caught up in the New York mindset in the period between the World Wars is a profound sense of the here and now, the connectivity of time and space, a condition defined by Walter Benjamin as “aura”(Benjamin “The Work of Art”). The aura of New York in the early decades of the twentieth century is an important element in the work of many of the authors of the era, and the city proved to be the center of the universe for the advent of modernism. The growth in population, economics, and artistic production exemplified the modernist focus on discarding the conservative values of the passing Victorian era and the emphasis on the “new” and on new ways to produce, to express, and to progress. Economic expansion and massive shifts of population interacted with societal institutions to reshape the contexts in which black and white artists and audiences interacted with each other and to influence the forms of American modernism (Hutchinson 4). Many writers, musicians, actors, and artists flocked to New York determined to redesign the world of art and culture. The wonder of New York and the possibilities of Harlem became a part of who they perceived themselves to be. Houston Baker suggests that “modernism” was achieved only when the Harlem Renaissance gave way to “a spirit of nationalistic engagement that begins with intellectuals, artists, and spokespersons at the turn of the century and receives extensive definition and expression during the 1920s” (91).

New York attracted black intellectuals, in particular, “like a great magnet . . . pulling [them] from everywhere” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 240). Once in the city, many were drawn uptown. Hughes contends, one “had to live in Harlem, for rooms were hardly to be found

elsewhere unless one could pass . . . and perhaps live in the Village, where only a few of the “New Negroes lived” (240). The real action took place up in Harlem, which served as a type of “fugitive-home.” Leadership was drawn to Harlem because of its freedoms and possibilities, and thousands came to the city every month seeking the cultural stability and promise it offered—the stability of home, a site of cultural and black nationalism, and a source for spatial identification, and thus, a sense of community and a sense of nation. During the time when African Americans “despaired of finding a peaceful corner to inhabit, their uncontested takeover of Harlem gave the city an almost mythological importance in the black imagination, unequaled by any other American city” (Price 13). In this space and time, within the modernist enthusiasm of the Jazz Age, a movement began to take hold uptown that would ultimately help to lay the groundwork for the momentous changes that lay ahead for African Americans.

Reconstruction had promised widespread change for people of color in the United States, but barriers and obstacles were erected to postpone, interrupt, and prevent their successes. New codes and legislation were designed to restrain liberties and rights, and those that could not be legislated were integrated into popular culture. At the same time, freedom of movement was on the rise. One southern farmer put it thusly, “The good old Negroes are a first-rate class of labor. The younger ones [are] discontented and want to be roaming” (Osofsky 229). The migrations of this younger generation at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries would create the footprint for the future growth and direction of the United States.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of African Americans left rural areas and gravitated toward growing cities, most markedly those north of the former Mason-Dixon Line. By the end of the 1920s, about 20 percent of the 12 million African Americans lived in the North (Scheiner 23). This movement vastly disrupted the history

of blacks in America. Before the Great Migration, which carried African Americans north and west, 90 percent of all African Americans in the United States lived in southern states, 78 percent outside of urban areas. Between 1910 and 1930, that number had decreased by 11.5 percent, with approximately 1.2 million leaving the South and increasing the population of the North by 300 percent. At the end of the nineteenth century, one in seventy people in Manhattan was black; by 1930, it was one in nine (Ann Douglas 73). Numbers were also growing in the urban south, and by 1930, approximately 44 percent of all African Americans lived in urban areas (Schneider 25, 26).

Urbanity was still relatively new to America, and, in the aftermath of slavery, many black people stayed in familiar communities and continued to work on their previous owners' lands. The winds of change stirred by Reconstruction had proven to work against African Americans in the early years of the twentieth century, however, and they began to look northward for a new type of freedom. Jobs were scarce in the re-generating South, and the treatment for black Americans was worsening. Therefore, many sought job opportunities in the metropolitan cities of Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and, of course, the city of all cities, New York. Black-owned newspapers called for black Southerners to "go North, where there is more humanity, some justice and fairness" (Ottley and Weatherby 189). While the North beckoned, the South was hesitant to release its hold on black people and their potential for labor. Many land owners created debts to be paid before sharecroppers could leave and exerted force to keep black people from going North. At the same time that they offered new freedoms, northern cities challenged immigrants and people of color. At its best, the North offered higher wages, a shorter workday, and less political and legal segregation. At its worse, it offered unfamiliar and severe climate changes, inadequate housing, and continued discrimination (Scheiner 11, 12). The lure of the

North, especially New York, was “glamour and excitement,” which attracted the “mistreated, impoverished, frustrated, and bored” African Americans in the South. The impact of the newcomers was so great, local and national news reported their arrival, as did the April 17, 1927, edition of the *New York Times*:

Newcomers to Harlem’s “Little Africa” may be easily identified by their garments, speech, and idiosyncrasies. They come here from all parts of the world; from foreign seaports and interior towns and cities, bringing with them the quaint customs of their fatherlands . . . The new arrival from the South is perhaps the most in evidence . . . Often in the space of a single day, he has transformed himself into an entirely different individual. He has, in short, by a mere exchange of garments disassociated himself from his past and has become a new and different man, casting aside with his dull garments century-old habits and traditions (qtd. in Schoener 70).

The South had been home to millions for many generations, and yet, for many, it continued to represent poverty, oppression, and overt racism. Many African Americans cited the desire to leave the oppression of segregation as their motivation to move northward. They physically left Jim Crow in the red dust of the South as other social and political changes accompanied this migration. Northern opportunities opened up as a major agricultural decline compromised life in the South so that those who made even the most meager of livings were forced into a new kind of poverty. Some were reported to have left the South singing,

Boll-weevil in de cotton

Cut wurn in the cotton,

Debil the de white man,

Wah's goin' on (qtd. in Scheiner 11).

Additionally, World War I would force a cessation of European immigrants to America, causing a greater impact on the northern labor force.

The Negro in New York (1967), edited by Roy Ottley and William Weatherby, cites a noticeable “trek of Negroes to Harlem” that began in 1900 (179), but black people had already been there for almost 300 years. Africans first arrived in New Amsterdam in 1626 when the Dutch West India Trading Company transported eleven African men to the settlement. Two years later, three black women joined them, and over the next twenty-seven years, not quite 100 Africans joined these first fourteen to create a black labor force. Slaves from this labor force were sent by the governor of New Amsterdam in 1658 to build roads from New Amsterdam to Haarlem Village on an old Indian trail that became Broadway (Ottley and Weatherby 179). By 1664, the number of African slaves brought to New Amsterdam reached 700 and, by 1703, had increased to 1500 black people who were living in the Manhattan and Brooklyn areas (Scheiner 1). A 1712 uprising prompted the implementation of extreme measures in an effort to control and contain black people, both slave and free. These efforts were said to have been as severe as any in the Southern states (Scheiner 2). A “gradual abolition” law was passed in 1799, and slavery for more than 10,000 ended in New York in 1830. At this time, the African American population was estimated at 16,000 (Scheiner 4). Although some could exercise their rights as citizens to vote, they were still treated as second-class citizens, or worse, and lived separate lives striated by political, legal, economic, and social discrimination (Scheiner 6). As early as 1860, “Negro” colonies existed in Greenwich Village, the west Twenties, and east Eighties. By the 1890s, black New Yorkers had residences restricted to several sections; then in the early 1900s a small number moved into two apartment buildings on 134th Street east of Lenox Avenue—

uptown in Harlem (L. Bennett 274). By 1901, the *New York Times* referred to 130th Street, between Amsterdam Avenue and Broadway, as “Darktown.” With the real estate boom in 1902, the number of African Americans in Harlem increased (Scheiner 19), and, in 1910, Harlem’s distinction as an African American community began to take shape (Ottley and Weatherby 179).

As the black community grew, many of the whites living in the Harlem area fled to other areas, creating an economic depression and real estate prices that were affordable to the black families coming into the area (Scheiner 22, 31). By 1918, it is estimated that black-owned property in Harlem exceeded \$20 million (Scheiner 37). By 1920, 70 percent of all black people living in Manhattan resided in Harlem, with the greatest concentration between 130th and 144th streets, “extending from Park Avenue on the east to Eighth Avenue on the west” (Scheiner 20) and with “more Negroes to the square mile than any other spot on earth” in what was more than “a colony or a community or a settlement . . . not a ‘quarter’ or a slum or a fringe . . .” instead, it was, as James Weldon Johnson declared, a “black city [emphasis mine], located in the heart of white Manhattan . . . a phenomenon, a miracle straight out of the skies” (4).

“Although men make cities, it is equally true that cities make men. He who makes the city makes the nation, and it is indeed the cities of the future that will determine the character of the world” (Susman 250). Voluntary Negro migration is a twentieth-century phenomenon important to the development of a “Negro New York” because it brought a globalized feel to Harlem (Ottley and Weatherby 190) and expanded the world view presented in the art produced there. Migration of black people to New York was not limited to African Americans of the continental United States. People came from Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the West Indies, Haiti, and West Africa so that by 1899 more than 50,000 foreign-born people of color lived in the United States. Between 1900 and 1920 the population of New York included at least

28,000 of these, mostly from the West Indies, who flocked to New York for many of the same reasons that those from the southern United States did: impoverished living conditions, limited educational facilities, disenfranchisement from “majority” rule by the British, and a quest for new opportunities (Scheiner 9). By 1930, approximately 54,000 of black residents in Harlem were West Indian (Schneider 26).

Many of these immigrants began their journeys in the late nineteenth century, and the growing presence of West Indians in particular, presented a challenge to the burgeoning black American identity. Although visibly undistinguishable by the larger white community, West Indian blacks and African Americans came together in the United States from very diverse backgrounds and saw themselves quite differently. Some of the immigrants were bilingual, speaking English along with Dutch or French, depending upon the colonizing country of their native islands. Many immigrant black people had been the majority in many of their homelands, although their lives were determined by the whites who governed their lives from remote countries. As a result, they had enjoyed more and diverse opportunities than had their Southern counterparts and were not accustomed to considering the same limitations in their daily existences. Moreover, they saw themselves as immigrants, much as the European immigrants saw themselves, which was very different from the African Americans among whom they lived. They carried with them their histories from their Old Worlds, and they had to blend this with the history they inherited as blacks in the United States because of their color. They established national clubs for socializing and for the maintenance of national identity, which was an ambiguous idea for African Americans who sought to claim national identity in a nation that refused to fully acknowledge and claim them and where they were the minority. The immigrants sought to own businesses and worshipped in a fashion more “restrained” than their American

born counterparts. Both groups had to learn to navigate a foreign space while confronting the challenges of being misunderstood and often despised in their native or adopted home.

With attributes so different, they behaved more like European immigrants than American blacks. The April 17, 1927, *New York Times* article, “When Rural Negro Reaches Crucible,” observed, “Next to the Southern Negro the West Indian is the most conspicuous. He is different in manner, talk, and other characteristics as a New Englander is from a Middle Westerner” (qtd. in Schoener 71). The result was a tendency toward resentment of West Indian immigrants. They were disliked for several reasons, but markedly for their “considerable aggressiveness in small business affairs and ward politics” (Lewis 41). The conflict between the two cultures—black American and West Indian—seemed to climax with Jamaican native Marcus Garvey and his aggressive back to Africa campaign (Schneider 28-9). Garvey’s views inspired a sense of racial consciousness among black people, but, at the same time, his criticisms of black leadership, organizations, and his outspokenness about hierarchy based on skin color (brown racism) created conflict with the established African American leadership. Additionally, his calls for American blacks to abandon the United States, a country that had no regard for them and offered them little else, were met with mixed emotions. Many thought his ideas too radical. James Weldon Johnson stated, “Mr. Garvey apparently does not know that the American Negro considers himself, and is, as much an American as any one” (qtd. in Lewis 42). In the early years of the twentieth century, American-born black people were just beginning to recognize the historical significance of their presence in the United States. Unlike European immigrants, they were thought to have had no immediate past and history and culture to celebrate. Their native Americanness had never been appreciated by the larger culture or, by extension, themselves (Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* 308). Therefore, when Garvey cast dispersive light on the

relationship that American-born black people had with the only homeland they had ever known, he put himself in direct conflict with the claim to nationhood and identity that African Americans were fighting and literally dying to claim and put the immigrant community in further conflict with American-born African Americans.

The conflicts between the cultural groups notwithstanding, the immigrants blended with southern migrants to New York and combined diverse lifestyles, including dress, worship, and food, influenced by European, Caribbean, and African cultures (Ottley and Weatherby 190) into a common community that was rich with layers of cultural meanings gleaned from multiple and complex interactions. The majority of the white community perceived this other community as one-dimensional, filled with variations on a single type as evidenced by the label forced on them when immigrants of color arrived in America. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Bureau of Immigration labeled all newcomers of African descent as “African, black”—a label of identity that continues to group all people of color in a singular category regardless of national origin and without regard to class differences or cultural background. This is largely the result of the practice of analyzing international immigration on the basis of the racial construct (Ottley and Weatherby 190) and was enhanced by the enforcement of the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which favored immigration of Northern Europeans. Such favor negated the experience of immigrants from other areas and adversely impacted the numbers of immigrants from those areas allowed into the U. S. during this time period.

The African Diaspora grew largely by way of the forced uprooting of Africans without regard to family, culture, or language connections. They did not leave their home countries in communal groups; such connections were forged largely through shared traumatic experience. Although other Diasporas were created by forced expulsion, the origins of the African Diaspora

are exceptional because of the culture of isolation. Without a common language, native religion, or culture, black people were thrown together because of color and circumstance. From these disparate, later forcibly amalgamated beginnings, a community grew and with that a group identity. In a Sartrean sense, the African American community grew from the idea of existential situation. They come from various backgrounds, religions, and nations; it is not a common past that unites them. Whether from Africa, the Americas, the islands, or elsewhere, they came to share the label of color in use at any particular time—colored, Negro, black, or African American—because they shared the situation of African Americans and thus lived in a community where skin color defined them as African Americans (Gines 56).

Neighborhoods of mixed residents—blacks and European immigrants—thrived before the Great Migration, but as new migrants came to the cities, they consolidated older black communities, creating visibly black enclaves (Schneider 26). These communities welcomed migrants and relatives of residents as well as immigrants. With these came the idea of a larger spatial identity. In Harlem, blacks from all social classes eventually moved in and whites moved out, creating a central and unified black community of approximately 225,000 by 1930. The numbers of those who migrated are not very large in consideration of the large numbers of African Americans who remained in the South; however, the Great Migration is a hallmark event in American history and in the cultural history of African America. Specifically, in the dramatic changes that resulted in the character and complexities of America, it provided the first real catalyst for change since Reconstruction.

The exploration into the world beyond American borders expanded tremendously with World War I. There was a “burst of patriotism” that infected all Americans, and even before America became involved in the war, Americans followed the progress of the fighting in Europe.

World War I proclaimed a break with the old and heralded a new way of thinking, being, and looking at the world. The war that began in the summer of 1914 ended in November 1918.

While there was great pride in being American and some measure of desire to protect American interests and to serve the country of their birth, there were mixed emotions in the black community about World War I. Many African Americans did not see their role in the “Great War.” According to Nathan Huggins,

At a time when great violence was being done to Negroes through white mob action, when the Negro’s life was being cramped and confined by laws and the custom of Jim Crow, when the American society seemed to choose every occasion to humiliate blacks, at the nadir of American race relations, the nation chose to lead the Western world’s peoples toward social justice, democracy, and self-determination. The irony escaped no one. Most Negroes saw the wartime emergency as an opportunity to bargain for improvement in official policies toward black citizens (35-36).

Some expressed the opinion that it was a “white man’s war,” that was against Germans who “ain’t done nothin’ to me and I ain’t doin’ nothin’ to them” (Ottley and Weatherby 195). Still others saw service in the war as a way to proclaim their loyalty to their country and to stake their claim as equal partners in their nation’s history. The U.S. entered the war in 1917, and for the remaining battle-filled months, American soldiers, including African Americans performed heroically, contributing significantly to the Allied victory. Those at home sold war bonds. In truth, “the majority of New York Negroes rejected the overtures of the socialists and Communists and even the Back-to-Africa movement of Marcus Garvey . . . the Negro has never

known another flag . . . with all the strength of his soul, he is an American and only an American” (Scheiner 135-6).

Many African Americans were already enlisted when war was declared. The District of Columbia National Guard, commanded by African American Major James E. Walker, was called into action immediately to offer protection to the nation’s capital. While many were proud to serve and many more volunteered, racial discrimination found its way into even the process for conscripted service. Black men were called to serve almost 10 percent more often than white men, and of those called from the South, many, if they had been white, would have been eligible for exemption or deferment (Quarles 181). The bias of selection continued into service itself. The Army and Navy believed the black soldier most fit for labor and manual work because of his “familiarity with it and his happy-go-lucky attitude,” and it was not until May 1917 that the first reserve officers training camp was established for “colored men” (Quarles 182). The camp was established at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and efforts continued to use the war as a means to move the nation toward equality for all. A list of demands appeared in *The Crisis*, stating the expectations of the black community in regard to their service:

1. The right to serve our country on the battlefields and to receive training for such service.
2. The right of our own men to lead troops of their own race in battle, and to receive officers’ training in preparation for such leadership
3. The immediate stoppage of lynching.
4. The right to vote for both men and women.
5. Universal and free common school training.
6. The abolition of Jim Crow cars.

7. The repeal of segregation ordinances.
8. Equal rights in all public institutions and movements (qtd. in Ottley and Weatherby 198).

The response to these demands was continued debate about the “colored troops,” to which one Mississippi senator added, “I know of no greater menace to the South than [millions of Negroes who will be armed]” (Ottley and Weatherby 199). Nonetheless, many in the community maintained the belief held by those before them that taking part in the war and its efforts would give them grounds for demanding better treatment after it was over (Quarles 186). They believed that fighting for their country would ensure their equal and deserved place in it. Their participation signaled a move beyond race, beyond the difference imposed on them by society and politics.

According to Mark Robert Schneider’s *African Americans in the Jazz Age: A Decade of Struggle and Promise*, almost 400,000 black soldiers served in World War I, with approximately half of those in France. Four combat regiments saw the battlefields, and the best known of those four was the New York 369th Colored Infantry. These “Hellfighters,” as the French called them, were in the trenches for more than 190 days (8). Their courage, national pride, and fighting spirit were iconic for African Americans after the War, and many identified with them using their experiences to encourage and motivate them to do better, live better, and be brave themselves in the wake of racial and economic oppression. Some studies cite the beginning of the Negro Renaissance with the Hellfighters’ march through Manhattan up to Harlem in February 1919. New Yorkers of all races celebrated and cheered the almost 3000 black soldiers at the formal parade that included black and white dignitaries and elected officials (Schneider 9).

W. E. B. DuBois organized the first Pan African Congress in New York that same year and, two months after the regimental parades, wrote “Returning Soldiers” for *The Crisis*:

By the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over,
we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight the forces of hell
in our own land.

We return.

We return from fighting.

We return fighting.

Make way for democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we
will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.

(“Returning Soldiers” 91)

World War I brought the issue of race and value directly into focus for Americans and for the world. With black units going to war and fighting honorably, many whites had to rethink their position on black inhumanity and ignorance. Many responded with more violence and disenfranchisement to ensure that these new heroes remembered their “place” upon their return from war. It also proved to set a new standard for African Americans; specifically, it provided them a new glimpse into their personhood. They knew their worth, now with their performance in the war and the Allied victory to which they had contributed; the world would have to realize it as well. To the contrary, many more in the white community ascribed to the idea of “racial essentialism”—the “conception of sets of personal characteristics as biologically determined racial identities.” This idea grew in popularity among whites especially in cities as the new black middle class grew (Hale 21).

When the “colored” troops came home, they were determined and optimistic about their futures in their native country although it had hardly made them feel welcome or appreciated. Evidence of efforts to maintain the superiority of white citizens is the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan. The “second” Klan established itself in 1915, during the years and tumult of the First World War when varying factions at home and abroad were bent on establishing their superiority. In 1919, Klan membership numbered more than 100,000 (Quarles 192). By 1925, membership reached more than 4 million and included immigration and migration restriction on its agenda of white supremacy.

The suffrage movement gained political significance during the early 1900s, and the 1920 amendment granting women the right to vote lent an element of positivism to the idea that voting rights were expanding and that one day black Americans would be allowed to exercise the rights legally accorded them in 1865 and 1868 as well. The efforts of the Ku Klux Klan intensified and led to armed confrontations at polling places. Racial violence such as that demonstrated by the Klan during elections had long-term effects. It “deepened the rift between the races and caused bitterness and alienation among African Americans” (Schneider 21). At the same time, it fueled feelings for justice and served to consolidate black communities and to enhance group reliance. There was a series of riots throughout the country, with some were more violent, large-scale, or impactful than others. The Atlanta riots of 1906 and those in multiple cities in 1917, including St. Louis, Missouri; Charleston, South Carolina; Ellisville, Mississippi; Longview, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Chicago, Illinois; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Omaha, Nebraska; were responses to lynchings and the reinvigoration of the Ku Klux Klan. Having been armed and trained to protect the country in the First World War, black men were more empowered to fight back when whites attacked them. The meeting of violence with violence escalated, particularly

during the summer of 1919, which James Weldon Johnson called “Red Summer” because of the bloodshed on the streets of the conflicts (Schneider 3). NAACP Secretary Walter White listed major reasons for the rioting, including race prejudice and the conflicts between whites and Negroes returning from War among them (Schneider 105-6). The return of white soldiers to the American labor force, displaced blacks who had held the jobs. Because many of them had been hired to fill the shortage created by the war, they were “last hired.” After the war, they became the “first fired” (Scheiner 56).

At the same time that violence erupted, a more focused movement from within the African American community resisted stereotypes and segregation with less violence. The movement was designed to prove the intelligence and productivity—the humanness—of black people in America. This movement focused on literacy, racial consciousness, employment, respect, and civil rights and brought with it a feeling of freedom that resulted from not only participation, but also from expanded horizons and travel previously unimagined. The changes that the War brought were felt universally, as Gwendolyn Bennett writes in the story “Wedding Day” (1926),

It seems strange that anything so horrible as that wholesale slaughter could bring about any good and yet there was something of a smoothing quality about even its baseness. There has never been such equality before or since such as that with the World War brought (26).

These experiences bonded them with other African Americans whom they had encountered overseas and increased a sense of self-confidence and national allegiance (Schneider 7). Their optimism was equal to feelings of frustration as America tried to change while keeping some of its conventions, including ideas of racial inferiority, intact.

While the social and political situation of blacks in the United States and particularly in the northeast at the time was precarious, not all African Americans were poverty stricken or uneducated. Rather, some African Americans were gainfully employed, highly educated, culturally exposed, and materially self-sufficient, even well off. In New York, most were employed as waiters, coachmen, bootblacks, waiters or waitresses, domestics, barbers, and hairdressers. In addition to this growing middle class, there were also a few who made inroads in the business world and earned salaries up to \$2 million to \$3 million (Ottley and Weatherby 133). Ministers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers rounded out the occupational community. Similar communities were growing in other urban areas including Atlanta; Washington, D. C.; and Philadelphia. In the world city that New York was becoming, black life flourished in Harlem in the early 1900s. As a result, the people there fared slightly better than their contemporaries in other urban cities and rural towns, and out of these conditions, a black elite emerged. In 1892, the Brooklyn Eagle reported that there was a “Negro 400” (Scheiner 94). Still, for the most part, discrimination was quite prevalent in the social arena, and African Americans were not allowed into white social circles. Therefore, they created their own society, “a separate world; a world with its own churches, its own societies, its own recreational facilities, its own cultural life” (Scheiner 86). These institutions conformed to social patterns inherent in New York City as African Americans patterned their social and cultural institutions “upon [their] American backgrounds rather than [their] African inheritance.” However, because they were excluded from the white social institutions, African Americans relied on their own interpretations of the dominant culture (Scheiner 86). DuBois said of the growing African American society, “Here . . . is a world of itself, closed in from the outer world and almost

unknown to it, with churches, clubs, hotels, saloons, and charities; with its own social distinctions, amusements, and ambitions” (DuBois, *On Sociology* 152).

The settling of African Americans in the Harlem area was in and of itself a modernist idea in theory and practice. Black people inhabiting the area designed for and marketed to upscale whites was a bizarre and foreign concept to some New Yorkers (de Jongh 6). The idea of supplanting the old with the new was resisted initially, but economic gain for the realtors as supply met demand in the new population boon soon superseded concerns for sociological and political tradition. The area that they inhabited was originally envisioned to be a district devoted to the homes for the wealthy and upscale businesses for the residents to shop and trade. This vision contributed significantly to the development of the area that came to hold the dreams of an entire people. In effect, the result was a place where black New Yorkers could be themselves, unrestrained from the preconceptions, prejudices, and stultifying restrictions imposed by white society.

In the early years of the twentieth century, black women struggled to find images of themselves in a culture that glorified whiteness. There were recognized tensions within the community; however, the collective oppressions and prejudices that influenced every aspect of black life ostensibly superseded the internal issues. For example, some black women advocated and were active in the women’s suffrage and feminist rights movement, but any gains made by black women as women were overshadowed by their race. As a result of societal prejudice against the black race as a whole, the contemporary political issue of being a woman was secondary in the female mind at the time. Before they could assert themselves as equal to men of their own race, they had to ensure their equality as people. The majority of the feminist efforts made by black women were directed toward making equality of the races a reality (McDougald

691). In her essay, “Survival and Song: Women Poets of the Harlem Renaissance,” Maureen Honey states that women were “ridiculed by minstrel stereotypes, objectified as beasts of burden, or docile servants, found wanting when measured against white standards of beauty or achievement . . . they attempted to counterpose a reality that affirmed their worth” (297). The goal was to be “seen”—to be recognized as a vital and contributing part of the human community—and as a result more and more black people joined together to create institutions to address issues that confronted the entire black community (Schneider 38). Although the move was away from a racialized existence, the migration toward the cities and the creation of enclaves seemed to reinforce a racial identity and self-awareness. Jessie Redmon Fauset spoke of the sensation this way:

In this darker world . . . there is ignorance and poverty and misery, but at least there are not hands dripping with another people’s blood, hearts filled with hypocrisy, homes gorgeously outfitted but reared over the graves of helpless slaves. And so they dare not become complacent, these dark folk are suddenly content to be black (qtd. in A. Johnson 148).

Becoming self-aware carried with it an awareness of the surrounding world and a desire to know more of it. Therefore, education is one area where massive change was noted in the black community during the early years of the twentieth century. Many made sacrifices to send their children and themselves to school, believing it to be a great equalizer and the avenue for individual and racial advancement (Schneider 34). By 1917, 2132 African Americans had graduated from college. A decade later, at the height of the artistic production of the “New Negro,” 13,580 African Americans held baccalaureate degrees and thirty-nine held doctorates. This growth indicates an overwhelming desire for education, the ability for African Americans to

educate themselves, and the growth of a new economic class of African Americans throughout the United States as more sought opportunities beyond the labor class to which they had previously been assigned (Knopf xix). At the same time that education was valued, it, in fact, became a point of contention within the black community with many believing that intellectuals had lost touch with the “folk” and were more determined to assimilate into white culture than to recognize the value of their own. The debate has its foundations in the divisive social and living conditions forced upon slaves that created house and field slaves. The basic idea is that those who were educated about things in the world were aspiring beyond their reality, seeking to acquire white knowledge and to imitate white people in their lifestyles, intellectual pursuits, and modes of manners and speech. The acquisition of such knowledge and attendant lifestyles led some to believe that these African Americans thought themselves “better” than other black people, and, in effect, sought to separate themselves from the larger black community. The value of work over education and the right to choose one’s field of endeavor were at the foundation of a critical debate within the black community at the turn of the century. The two sides of the debate were symbolized by Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute, and his call to “cast down your bucket where you are.” Many understood his words to be accommodationist in nature and intent and that Washington was encouraging black people to find satisfaction in their roles as labor and second class citizens. W. E. B. DuBois, on the other hand, called for uplift by way of the “Talented Tenth,” the ten percent of the population who would pursue classical education and become directly involved in social change. The conflict is simplified and captured in the poem “Booker T. and W. E. B.” (1969) by Dudley Randall:

“It seems to me,” said Booker T.,

“It shows a mighty lot of cheek

To study chemistry and Greek
 When Mister Charlie needs a hand
 To hoe the cotton on his land,
 And when Miss Ann looks for a cook,
 Why stick your nose inside a book?"

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.

"If should have the drive to seek
 Knowledge of chemistry or Greek,
 I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look
 Another place for hand or cook,
 Some men rejoice in skill of hand,
 And some in cultivating land,
 But there are others who maintain
 The right to cultivate the brain." (Randall qtd in Thompson 18-19).

The debate at the heart of the poem between an ideal of intelligentsia and the "folk" would impact the literary and artistic activity in Harlem and long resonate within the African American community and between the generations as those on each side of the issue struggled to have their say.

Other tensions included those between the staunch pillars of society whose foundations were established in formal institutions, including the church. While many of the more upstanding and most well-known ministers and community leaders discounted secular entertainment as "demoralizing" and "of heathen origin" (Scheiner 100), others saw it as a way to promote artistic

gifts of its congregants and to promote acceptance of those gifts within the larger community. Eventually, social outlets that had heretofore been found inside the church in the form of concerts, lectures, and literary guilds extended beyond the church and into secular society. The impact of the literary society in the community was so widespread and resonant that a prominent paper at the time stated, “Libraries . . . are a part of the household, and the general home life is becoming improved” (Scheiner 102). Journals and popular periodicals carried news of book clubs and review of books by black authors in an effort to encourage black people to read and to purchase books. William Stanley Braithwaite created “Negro Book Week” during which “Negroes” would be urged to buy books by “Negro” authors (Scruggs 558-559).

Many of the books in the home libraries reflected a growing racial and ethnic consciousness in African inheritance and heritage. In the 1900s, books about African history and culture were bestsellers, and by the twentieth century, a “distinctive Negro literature [had come] into being” (Scheiner 102). The foundation of this literature that officially began with Phillis Wheatley and Jupiter Hammond and extended through the nineteenth century, when there were African Americans who published volumes of poetry, pamphlets, essays, and other varieties of literature, “practically all of it unknown to the general public” (James Weldon Johnson 262). With the exception of the slave narrative and abolitionist literature, the writings were not part of a definitive “type” and were usually noted as exceptionalities to much of the literature of the times that depicted black people stereotypically as loyal, carefree, unschooled servants or shiftless, comic parodies. As the new century dawned, the efforts of many African Americans were directed toward political activism with a focus on the centrality of art to politics and history. As art expresses political themes in historical context, it was believed by artists and intellectuals of the time to be intimately intertwined with politics (Gardullo 274). Interest in their

historical background gave African Americans a sense of identity (Scheiner 103). Their common heritage provided a medium through which they could express their race consciousness. This was a grand gesture away from the performative mimicry through which African Americans had previously been seen by the modern world. This mastery of letters is a necessary aspect of the mastery of form. As African Americans reclaimed the voices that had been stripped from them in the nineteenth century, they were able to exert agency over the mask and over their true selves. They could reclaim their voices and become subjects of their performance. As the trappings of the old world fell away, African American leaders and artists had to “filter the absurd noises of minstrelsy” and, at the same time, “recall the sounds of their origins” (Baker 71). Through their writing, African Americans explored their feelings about the caste system as well as stressed the need for a new racial solidarity to cope with the effects of racial segregation felt by the race as a whole (Singh and Scott 103). They became subjects of their performance. According to Foucault in *Archeology of Knowledge*, “The subject of the statement is precisely he who has produced the various elements, with the intention of conveying meaning” (93). Mastery of form extended to literature, theatre, visual arts, and music as the community began the “construction of a field on meaningful sounds” that, according to Houston Baker is necessary for the emergence of a nation and a national identity (71).

Through community organizations, African Americans expressed racial consciousness and racial solidarity, along with a self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment that had been denied them by their white counterparts (Scheiner 86-7). Early in the twentieth century, many of the early fraternal societies formed initially based on the need to provide their members sickness and death benefits that might not have been available through mainstream means. Eventually, the provision of benefits gradually took a backseat to the social aspects of the group (Scheiner 93).

The impact of the societies was far-reaching and, in fact, formed the framework for some of the important structures of the renaissance that was to come. Black associations “paved the way for Garveyism, the Association for the Student of Negro Life and History, and the NAACP—all of which eventually established journals that published black authors during the Harlem Renaissance” (Moses 67).

The growth of the black social organizations and the emphasis on literacy merged into a strong network of book clubs and literary associations. Black literary societies, which had been in existence in some form since the 1700s (Moses 68), were a major social outlet both within and outside of the church. The literary societies offered concerts, lectures, and discussions and sponsored lending libraries and reading rooms (Scheiner 101). The profusion of literary societies and cultural events designed around literature was a major statement for African Americans, who by this time were only two generations removed from the illiteracy that was enforced upon their slave forebears. Some of the most active clubs exerted civic influence and played major roles in promoting literacy, education, and social and political awareness. Other clubs were instrumental in promoting individual artists. One of the most influential of these was the “Saturday Nighters,” popular among the educated and elite of Washington, D. C.

Beginning early in the 1920s, the Saturday Nighters met regularly at Georgia Douglas Johnson’s home in Washington, D. C. Douglas, who had already published two volumes of poetry and had her poems regularly published in *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that was edited by W. E. B. DuBois and novelist Jessie Redmon Fauset, opened her home for established and rising artists as well as to those who enjoyed reading and engaging in vibrant discussions. It was known as a “society through which the most prominent literary and intellectual minds of the 1920s . . . passed”

(McHenry 273). Gwendolyn Bennett, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Marita Bonner, Angelina Weld-Grimke, and Richard Bruce Nugent were regulars in the “circle,” as its long-time members called it. On any given Saturday night, Jean Toomer, Wallace Thurman, Arna Bontemps, Alain Locke, William Stanley Braithwaite, Charles S. Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Countee Cullen, or Langston Hughes might have been in attendance, with occasional visits from W. E. B. DuBois or James Weldon Johnson. For many of these writers, their work found its first audience in the “circle” (McHenry 275). Many who would become known during the renaissance made their first acquaintances at Mrs. Johnson’s home. Langston Hughes met fellow future *Fire!!* editorial board members John P. Davis and Richard Bruce Nugent at meetings of the Saturday Nighters (Rampersad 106).

Throughout the 1920s, Johnson’s living room was a place where established writers, those aspiring to be writers, and those interested in writing could meet and discuss the burgeoning literature of the times. According to Elizabeth McHenry in *Forgotten Readers*, it was here and in similar spaces that much of the daily work of the Harlem Renaissance was done (274). These artists’ work saw public light in the little magazines of the period and in the groundbreaking 1925 anthology *The New Negro*. More mainstream journals such as *Opportunity*, *Messenger*, and *The Crisis* also carried these artists’ work and prompted their recognition through contests and awards dinners like the one held at the Civic Club in March 1924 (McHenry 275). The famous Civic Club dinner, thought by many to be the nexus of the Harlem Renaissance, illustrates the “circle’s” influence. The dinner was organized by *Opportunity* editor, Charles S. Johnson, but the original idea for the dinner to showcase new, young talent appears to have belonged equally to Gwendolyn Bennett, Jessie Redmon Fauset, and Regina Anderson, all of whom were members of the Saturday Nighters at the time

(McHenry 383). The activities of the Saturday Nighters as they supported and developed young writers provides insight into one of the most important of those informal institutions where the cultural productions of the Harlem Renaissance were first presented and made ready for public consumption (McHenry 253).

During the same time that the Saturday Nighters were exploring literature, a new clustering of concepts gained currency: race difference came to be named in cultural and social terms instead of, or simultaneously with, biological ones, and eugenics was among the popular theories of the time. Eugenics—the science of making a better human being, a better American—was of major interest in United States culture, social science, and medicine in the 1920s. Even Zora Neale Hurston, in her anthropological studies, took to the streets of Harlem with measuring instruments to do comparative analysis of skull sizes, which according to eugenic theory should have revealed inclinations toward intellect and biological self-sufficiency. The premise was simple: “Modern nations, especially those beset by immigration, must improve their human stock in order to remain competitive . . . viable” (English 2). Perhaps Hurston understood that eugenics might serve as an ideal lens through which to examine often-overlooked commonalities rather than to stress physiological differences. “The particular history of the United States in the early twentieth century—including widespread immigration and migration—a shift to an urban industrial economy, and the country’s emergence as a dominant global power—help further explain the rise of an ideology that promised to increase national competitiveness and efficiency” (English 3). Within this new paradigm, ethnicity came to be understood more behaviorally than biologically (Frankenberg 13). By 1922, more and more Americans became aware of “a series of changes in the structure of their world, natural, technological, social, personal, and moral. This awareness was based on the extraordinarily rapid accumulation of both new knowledge and

new experiences” (Susman 106). During the 1920s, African Americans built new communities, new institutions, including colleges and schools, and a new culture that would eventually contribute to the overthrow of Jim Crow and the related laws that oppressed them for generations. Blacks as well as whites enjoyed the new era of modernism and good times that came on the heels of World War I. With the proliferation of artistic production and accompanying interest in it, many leaders in the community believed that equality would be achieved through art and literature.

With the influence of eugenics pervading the modernist thinking of the times, sociologically, the improvement of the collective (race or nation) was determined by which individuals should breed (English 1, 2). An extension of this thinking asserted itself in the African American community in regard to artistic production. In other words, if the community leadership wanted to improve the image of the race, they simply had to determine which individuals were encouraged to create and which of those creations deserved promotion. In his 1926 essay, “Criteria for Negro Art,” in *The Crisis*, DuBois “decried the tendency of writers to portray a specific type of Negro and the propensity of publishers to encourage such portrayals . . . of the ‘sordid, foolish, and criminal Negro’ . . .” The type could come to stand for all Negroes rather than the best characters of American blacks. He argued that there was a single priority for all Negro art—the moral uplift of black people. He referenced the longstanding burden and limited opportunity associated with the minstrel stage, “We can go on stage; we can be just as funny as white Americans wish us to be; we can play all the sordid parts that America likes to assign Negroes; but for anything else there is still a small place for us” (258). Forging the place for black Americans on the social, political, and artistic stage was the task undertaken by the African American elders who identified and developed the younger generations of artists. With

that nurturing, however, came a sense of Puritan responsibility and the determination that art must have a purpose and that purpose must be uplift. According to DuBois, “The apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right not by choice but by inner and outer compulsion . . .and slavery only dogs [the black American] when he is denied the right to tell the Truth or recognize an ideal of Justice.” Thus DuBois came to carry the banner for his generation, “All art is propaganda and ever must be . . . I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda” (259). For DuBois, art was purposeful production, created to further a planned agenda and to convey a specific message.

The younger artists disagreed that art should be used only to influence community thought and action and embraced art for art’s sake. They valued the artistic process as they valued the art itself for its aesthetic value and for its ability to communicate multiple messages for the entire community, not just a single message for the elite or the established leadership. The younger artists recognized the organic existence of art in its ability to bear “relation to or hav[e] associations with other similarly structured units but unquestionably and distinguishably different from them” (Rochberg 84). With increased emphasis on its definition, production, and consumption, “art” was the magical word throughout the 1920s. From the standpoint of the younger artists, it was their concern to *create* not to propagandize. To their way of thinking, if black writers would only create art, and not propaganda, then and only then would they come of age (Scruggs 562).

The debate was at the forefront of the renaissance. The textual volley between George Schuyler’s “The Negro Art Hokum” (1926) and Langston Hughes’s “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” of the same year introduced the “speakerly text” into the fray of cultural production of the times as the debate was waged in the pages of national publications.

Schuyler's position was that identifying art or artists as "black" is limiting and insulting and that to expect only "black" art from black artists was as detrimental as the negative images that DuBois railed against. Hughes offered passionate rebuttal and declared that the art created by a black artist is an extension of his reality; therefore, it cannot be anything but black art. In this wake would come *The New Negro* and, in response, the avant-garde little magazine *Fire!!*

The debate between Schuyler and Hughes called into question two major premises of the creative movement that was underway. According to Schuyler,

Negro art "made in America" is as non-existent as . . . the reported sophistication of New Yorkers. Negro art there has been, is, and will be among the numerous black nations of Africa; but to suggest the possibility of any such development among the ten million colored people in this republic is self-evident foolishness. Eager apostles from Greenwich Village, Harlem, and environs proclaimed a great renaissance of Negro art just around the corner waiting to be ushered on the scene by those whose hobby is taking races, nations, peoples, and movements under their wing. New art forms expressing the "peculiar" psychology of the Negro were about to flood the market. In short, the art of *Homo Africanus* was about to electrify the waiting world. Skeptics patiently waited. They still wait (24).

Schuyler also cast doubt on DuBois's idea of "twoness," claiming that there was no dual-consciousness that formed the foundation for the black man's personality. "Aside from his color, which ranges from very dark brown to pink, your American Negro is just plain American" (25).

This nonsense is probably the last stand or the old myth palmed off by Negrophobists for all these many years, and recently rehashed by the sainted [President Warren G.] Harding, that there are "fundamental, eternal, and inescapable differences" between

white and black Americans. That there are Negroes who will lend this myth a helping hand need occasion no surprise. It has been broadcast all over the world by the vociferous scions of slaveholders, “scientists” like Madison Grant and [popular eugenicist] Lothrop Stoddard, and the patriots who flood the treasure of the Ku Klux Klan; and is believed, even today, by the majority of free, white citizens. On this baseless premise, so flattering to the white mob, that the blackamoor is inferior and fundamentally different, is erected the postulate that he must needs be peculiar; and when he attempts to portray life through the medium of art, it must of necessity be a peculiar art. While such reasoning may seem conclusive to the majority of Americans, it must be rejected with a loud guffaw by intelligent people (26).

Ironically, it appears that the point Schuyler makes, that the artists are American first, is exactly the point that the artists themselves wanted to stress. At the same time, however, they recognize that their identity as Americans is not defined in the same way as that of their white counterparts. They share a collective historic memory, and their experiences, their vantage points, their backgrounds were much different. They sought to express and to celebrate the history of the collective and the experience of the individual. Warren Susman asserts, “To be somebody one must be oneself (whatever that means)” (277). The quest to be oneself and the uncertainty that such a quest represents are at the core of the dilemma faced by the younger artists of the Harlem Renaissance.

The idea of Americanness has been equal to whiteness, and whiteness has been the sign of Americanness. A sign, in this instance that of race, can only be identified when placed within its specific system of meaning, and according to William Boelhower in *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature*, the ethnic sign never ceased to circulate in the dominant

cultural map (84). For the younger artists, to be American only was a de facto denial of their ancestry; it is the combination of the two—their Americanness and their ancestry—that celebrated all of the elements that created their existence, their heritage, and the many stories within the community. The fervent assertion of the younger artists of their Americanness and its special attributes is borne perhaps of the exact “twoness” of which Schuyler denies the existence in his 1926 essay. This crisis of identity may be the result of emigration, immigration, and Americanization (Boelhower 19) that contributed to the creation of the cultural enclave that became synonymous with African American progress and literary production at the time. Zora Neale Hurston sums up this conflict in “How It Feels to be Colored Me,” first published in the May 1928 issue of *The World Tomorrow*,

But I am not tragically colored . . . I do not mind at all. 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 . . . No, I do not weep at the world--I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am the granddaughter of slaves. It fails to register depression with me . . . It is a bully adventure and worth all that I have paid through my ancestors for it. No one on earth ever had a greater chance for glory. The world to be won and nothing to be lost . . . It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or to weep (153).

What was becoming clear is that the artist must write about what is true to and about him or her. “That the artist must do, not for art’s sake, but for his own sake, his people’s sake and the sake of humankind” (Wirth 3). Hurston and her contemporaries were searching for a way to meld the

authentic elements—their Americanness and their racialized experience. These were realities in their lives that they wanted to write about to render in art simply because it reflected a reality that was theirs. To seek to live outside of this reality was unthinkable. The idea that there was no such thing as Negro art was unacceptable. Younger artists seemed to understand the conflict more fundamentally than their older, more conservative counterparts. The elders of the community sought to move away from the denigrations of the past; the younger artists saw the past not simply as a utilitarian tool but as inspiration. While remembering the collective past, younger artists wanted to celebrate it, in its ugliness and glory. The conflict then moved within the community borders and became the question of whether black art created by the younger artists did more harm than good for the black masses (Story 294).

In response to Schuyler's essay, Hughes submitted "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." The title indicates the monolithic importance of race in an artist's life.

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, "I want to be a poet--not a Negro poet," meaning, I believe, "I want to write like a white poet"; meaning subconsciously, "I would like to be a white poet"; meaning behind that, "I would like to be white." And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. (27)

From Hughes's perspective, the young man is a Negro poet by virtue of the fact that he is Negro. To move away from his Negroness is to move away from the binary truth that shapes America and its people. In such a system defined by racial signs, it is necessary for the artist to approach the sign of ethnicity or race at what Boelhower calls the "microstrategic level of performance" or much of its potential and significant meaning will be lost (85). Within the binary of race, generations of African Americans have transformed a foreign land into a home and created their

own history, their own celebrations, and mastered their own survival in the midst of hatred and abuse. In Hughes's estimation, for the young poet to seek to create as anything other than a Negro poet is to despise and ignore this history and, perhaps, to adopt a history that is not his. This he cannot do and remain true to himself and his art. Hughes does not indicate that there is a single way to be a Negro poet, but he makes clear his belief that to create art—in his case, poetry—one must be true to oneself. He further implies that it is the responsibility of the artist of color to create as such, for it is through the artists of color and their wonder of their creations that will “cause the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty” (“Artist” 30).

The young man's desire to move away from being a Negro poet reifies the word white as an unconscious “symbol of all virtues” (Hughes, “Artist” 27). Understanding that the racial mountain represents the myriad problems associated with race and is not synonymous with race itself, Hughes saw that the problem was how to move beyond the mountain that was “standing in the way of any true Negro art in America” (Hughes, “Artist” 27). One of the dangerous side effects of the “racial mountain” is the elevation of the bourgeoisie and intellectual over the common folk, the proletariat. There is a hesitancy to use the folk as subject for art because of the need to hide the elements that may evoke recrimination from the elite within the black community and affirmation of the stereotype by the white community.

The so-called common element . . . are the majority . . . They do not particularly care whether they are like white folks or anybody else. Their joy runs, bang! into ecstasy. Their religion soars to a shout . . . These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child. They furnish a wealth of colorful, distinctive material for any artist because

they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations.

(Hughes, “Artist” 28)

Hughes speaks of a celebration of the authentic. It is a failure to strive for reflections of the real that is the hindrance. The elite and those of the comfortable middle class should strive for a more interesting life—an authentic one—not one that mimics that of white people. This celebration of the real is what Hughes seems to value, and it is what he champions in his own work.

Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz. I am as sincere as I know how to be in these poems and yet after every reading I answer questions . . . from my own people. (“Artist” 29-30)

Hughes ends his essay with the declaration that would become the manifesto for the younger artists of the renaissance. In it is the [declaration] that the younger artists have conquered the mountain that would hide their aspirations—the mountain created by societal pressures that would have them stand in its shadow.

The question of what it meant to be an artist of color was central to the younger generation of artists. The two descriptors “artist” and “color” became inextricably linked for them.

Generations of racialized sociology, economics, and politics had made it so; African Americans could not escape their history and culture to create a new one.

The younger artists represented a new generation of talent and determination and new ideas about racial consciousness, community, and identity. There were two groups of New Negroes associated with the renaissance of the 1920s. There were the old guard of New Negroes, considered to be the established leadership and “elite,” including Alain Locke, W. E. B.

DuBois, Charles S. Johnson, and James Weldon Johnson who was the most independently established and forward thinking of the group in Harlem. By 1922, he had written *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* and had edited *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke had talent from production, credibility, visibility, and they became prominent figures late in the movement in or around 1924. They added “glitter, celebrity, and excitement” (Price 22), but credit is due to W. E. B. DuBois and Jessie Redmon Fauset, who set the prolific publishing in motion with their early nurturing of black talent and the showcasing of it in *The Crisis* as early as 1919 when Fauset became literary editor. The “younger” New Negroes, included those who would become the editorial board of the little magazine *Fire!!*: Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, John P. Davis, Gwendolyn Bennett, Aaron Douglas, and Zora Neale Hurston along with the novelists Claude McKay, Dorothy West, and Rudolph Fisher and the poet Countee Cullen. The relationship between the old guard and the new epitomizes the conflict between beauty and truth, art and propaganda.

The younger group celebrated the fast, jazzy lifestyle associated with the Harlem “myth” (Moses 73). They wanted to include this “other Harlem Renaissance” in their work and came to represent the “cabaret school,” an association indicative of Harlem’s widespread nightlife appeal. Some of the community elders disparaged this side of Harlem life, and, therefore, tended to dismiss the younger artists associated with it and dismissed the work of these artists as “ideologically disparate” (Vogel 4). Undeterred, the younger artists used the cabaret as motif and character in their work. It represented a vibrant, exciting side of life that put them in contact with real people in real life situations. John P. Davis, in his story “Ruth Trent Cries,” described the Harlem cabaret as “an escape from a stultifying hot office filled with clicking typewriters.” A

place where there was “raucous laughter; clinking bottles, not all filled with ginger-ale; a heavy, torpid atmosphere saturating the whole green-lighted damp cellar.” The cabaret was a place of familiarity and friends where “the gang came and smothered [one] with greetings” (Davis 19, 20). The attraction was its divergence from work and responsibility, from restraint and routine.

The “cabaret school” did not seek to validate or valorize blackness by championing middle-class values and the ideals of the American family in search of the American dream. Instead the members of the “school” sought to reflect their experiences in their art as well as those of the everyday black person, and for some, these experiences included folk language, menial labor, prostitution, homosexuality, and hard living. These themes, when used for art, were considered to have come from direct and indirect influence of the cabaret and associated with the cabaret craze enjoyed by whites in Harlem. The artists were accused of false consciousness, of “internalizing white views and . . . creating art that had no relationship to their . . . lived experience.” Their contributions were considered “not . . . quite wholesome for Negro ‘literature’ ” (Vogel 5). The cabarets and nightclubs were, for many, “den[s] of iniquity, where the Devil holds high revel” (James Weldon Johnson 179). Upon visiting them, however, many found the average night-club “as orderly as many a Sunday-school picnic has been . . . Anyone who visits them expecting to be shocked is likely to be disappointed” (James Weldon Johnson 179).

Cabarets, and the music and performances they fostered, occupied a key place in Harlem Renaissance debates about the value of “high” and “low” cultural forms. Many were concerned about the place of the “Negro vogue” in the mainstream community although black intellectuals and community leaders of the old guard capitalized in various ways on white attention, support, and curiosity to advance the Harlem Renaissance. It was possible, they thought, that the

celebration of the nightlife was not the best venue for “racial self-definition” (Vogel 3).

Conversely, physician and writer Rudolph Fisher seemed to embrace the white patronage of the nightclubs and the apparent enjoyment that the visitors got out of the experience:

It may be season’s whim, then, this sudden, contagious interest in everything Negro. If so, when I go into a familiar cabaret, or the place where a familiar cabaret used to be, and find it transformed and relatively colorless, I may be observing just one form that the season’s whim has taken (81).

Fisher acknowledges the communal interaction, the call and response atmosphere, of the cabaret,

Cabarets are peculiar . . . They’re not like theatres and concert halls. You don’t just go to a cabaret and sit back and wait to be entertained. You get out on the floor and join the pow-wow and help entertain yourself. Granted that white people have long enjoyed the Negro entertainment as a diversion, is it not something different, something more, when they bodily throw themselves into Negro entertainment in cabarets? Now Negroes go to their own cabarets to see how white people act (81).

This call and response atmosphere encouraged communal engagement and might have contributed to the appeal for the artists of the cabaret school—the connection within a group rather than creating from a space of isolation.

Alain Locke provides an idea of the old guard’s opinion of the cabaret, and he places it in an alternate universe.

Another Harlem is savored by the few--a Harlem of racy music and racier dancing, of cabarets famous or notorious according to their kind, of amusement in

which abandon and sophistication are cheek by jowl—a Harlem which draws the connoisseur in diversion as well as the indiscriminating sightseer. This Harlem is the fertile source of the “shuffling” and “rollin’ ” and “runnin’ wild” revues that establish themselves season after season in “downtown” theaters. It is part of the exotic fringe of the metropolis. (*Harlem* 629)

Younger artists did not dismiss the cabaret nightlife as exotic diversion. For them, it was another vibrant part of life in Harlem. During the renaissance, according to Hughes, “There were mostly intellectuals doing the thinking. The ordinary Negroes hadn’t heard of the Negro Renaissance. And if they had, it hadn’t raised their wages any. As for all those white folks in the speakeasies and night clubs of Harlem—well, maybe a colored man could find some place to have a drink that the tourists hadn’t yet discovered” (*The Big Sea* 228).

The younger artists used the party atmosphere to fuel their art. The rhythms of jazz and blues, the atmosphere of the nightclubs, the energy of gin and champagne blended with the stories of the people who found happiness and alternately drowned their sorrows at the cabaret. At a group level, interest in one of the arts normally influences interest in the other. At the individual level, also, interest in one aspect of the arts often spills over into others (Martin 106). So it was that the rhythms of jazz and blues found their way into the literature of the times, which in turn shared themes with visual art. Much of the literature that was produced was possibly never seen by the public, as there was conflict between the younger artists and the established community leadership, and between the artists and the white publishing houses. Despite the conflicts between the old guard and the new, many African American magazines and other periodicals took the lead in discovering and publishing new and established artists alike.

Following the tradition of the first black newspaper in New York, *Freedom's Journal*, which appeared in 1827, the power and influence of the black press played a major role in the promotion and nurturing of literature within the black community. A minimum of ten additional such papers appeared before the Civil War. Between 1865 and 1920 at least 35 newspapers edited by African Americans became available; Harlem alone had five (Scheiner 106-107). These publications were able to advance and advertise the existence of literary character in the black community (McHenry 85). In his essay, "The Study of the Negro Problems" in *On Sociology and the Black Community*, DuBois makes reference to "the expression of Negro life as found in their hundred newspapers, their considerable literature, their music and folklore and their germ of esthetic life" (83). Many of the most well known and highly circulated of these publications were directly linked to social and political organizations. The Liberty League's newspaper, *The Voice* (1917), with its book reviews and poetry sections featuring work by African Americans, was considered the first newspaper of the "New Negro Movement." More well known and in greater circulation were the NAACP's *The Crisis* (1910) and the National Urban League's *Opportunity* (1923). These two magazines, together with *The Messenger* (1917), formed the three most popular and prolific publications of their kind during the Harlem Renaissance.

Laboring under the belief that [black folk] would not be regarded as human until their art compelled recognition, W. E. B. DuBois served as editor of *The Crisis* from 1910 until 1934. DuBois "had the idea that a small publication would be read which stressed the facts and minimized editorial opinion, but made it clear and strong and also published the opinion of others" ("Editing *The Crisis*" xxviii). Originally subtitled, "A Record Of The Darker Races," *The Crisis* was able "to provoke the production of a body of black literature and the

improvement of race relations” (DuBois, “Editing *The Crisis* xx). Under the influence of Jessie Redmond Fauset when she became literary editor in 1919, *The Crisis* published work by Georgia Douglas Johnson, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Gwendolyn Bennett, as well as Fauset’s own writing, all of which earned her the moniker “midwife” of the Harlem Renaissance. It was her editorial decision to publish Langston Hughes’s “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” in 1920. The NAACP and its publication were critically instrumental in furthering any progress, success, and recognition that the movement received. With DuBois and Fauset, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, both accomplished writers and brilliant thinkers themselves, completed the quartet of NAACP and *The Crisis* leadership that sought to assert the status of African Americans through art and literature. In addition to encouraging, nurturing, mentoring, publishing, and at times even sheltering young artists, these four implemented the Spingarn Prizes and Literature, a competition designed to attract and promote black artists and writers (Wilson, *The Crisis Reader* xxiv). Support from the Spingarn Foundation is only one way that the editors of *The Crisis* sought to introduce black art to the white community and to garner much needed support for it. They also used NAACP and personal contacts to secure publishing contracts and patronage for the artists in an effort to ensure that their work would reach a larger audience.

The National Urban League debuted *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* in 1923. It was one in a series of African American magazines that benefited from the recent publications of several volumes of black poetry and the burst of energy that suffused through the black community at this time. *Opportunity*’s first editor, Charles S. Johnson, was educated as a sociologist and simultaneously served as director of the Urban League’s Department of Research and Investigations. Accepting “the challenge of smashing the stereotypes that white America had concocted” (Wilson, *The Opportunity Reader* xviii), Johnson single-handedly made

Opportunity an expression of “New Negro” thought. In 1924, Charles S. Johnson had “recently observed a change in growing self-consciousness” and decided to hold a dinner to celebrate this new school of writers (Nadell 34). Around 1923, *The Messenger* and *Opportunity* began to become more focused on literary production. The *Opportunity* Civic Club dinner of March 1924 “changed the history of the renaissance in that moment by connecting black artists and white publishers and patrons” (Price 21). Several things grew from the Civic Club dinner. Locke was invited to edit a special issue of *Survey Graphic*, “Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro,” the focus of which was Harlem and out of which grew *The New Negro*. Charles S. Johnson developed the idea of hosting additional dinners at the New York Civic Club to link Harlem writers with white intelligentsia in an effort to make inroads to the white publishing establishment and to contribute to a better understanding between the races through literature and art (Wilson, *The Opportunity Reader* xix). He announced the first of three *Opportunity* awards contests in 1925. Under his editorial leadership, Zora Neale Hurston, Eric Walrond, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen were frequent contributors to the magazine.

The Messenger did not have connections to a civil rights organization as did *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*; however, it was founded and published by socialists and civil activists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen from 1917 until 1928. During its eleven-year run, the journal boasted of being “the only magazine of scientific radicalism in the world published by Negroes” (Wilson, *The Messenger Reader* xx). Among those published in its pages were Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Bennett, Arna Bontemps, and Georgia Douglas Johnson. George Schuyler had a column in the magazine that regularly addressed contemporary issues and was a stage for his sharp wit and biting satire. In *The Big Sea*, Langston Hughes remembers *The Messenger* as a “Negro magazine that had a curious career” (233). In its infancy,

it was considered radical, but it evolved to become a kind of Negro society magazine and a “plugger” for Negro business, complete with photographs and “prominent colored ladies and their nice homes” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 233).

Published between 1918 and 1933, the newspaper *Negro World* was also instrumental in promoting young voices. The organ of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) founded by Marcus Garvey, the weekly newspaper published news, editorials, poetry, and literature. Garvey is usually credited with “planting the seeds of race consciousness and Pan-Africanism,” and his publication also had a strong literary and artistic influence on readers. There was conflict between Garvey and DuBois because of the divergent views: Garvey advocated separatism while DuBois encouraged integration, and many overlooked Garvey’s influence on the literary aspects of the Harlem Renaissance (Martin 5-6). Garvey’s weekly periodical grew in circulation to 200,000 and enjoyed nationwide distribution. While other publications of the time were accused of preoccupation with white acceptance, the readership and circulation of *Negro World* were proof that a market of black consumers for black literature existed. It boasted a “who’s who” of journalistic figures as editors, associate editors, and literary editors. By 1920, *Negro World* “became a focal point of a mass preoccupation with the arts, especially poetry, which was unequaled by any other of the better known publications of the renaissance” (Martin 5). Some of the regular contributors had established publishing reputations when they appeared in *Negro World*, including Eric Walrond and Zora Neale Hurston, who probably was provided with her first large-scale, national and international exposure in *Negro World* as African American seamen carried the paper with them on their travels throughout the world (Martin 73). For many others, *Negro World* became an important outlet for their early writing. They moved on from there to the “bright lights” of the Harlem Renaissance (Martin 27).

Garvey's Pan-Africanism allowed *Negro World* to be different and more outspokenly radical than other publications of the day, and the paper "represented the artistic voice of a generation in a way its rivals could not" (Martin x). Garveyism and *Negro World* are credited with playing a critical role in providing the infrastructure for the Harlem Renaissance. The periodical pioneered a fully developed book review section, and its literary competition of 1921 "significantly predated" those of *Opportunity* and *Crisis*. Locke himself published in *Negro World* and many of the contributors to *Negro World* went on to appear in *The New Negro* (Martin 156).

The publication known as the foundational text of the Harlem Renaissance, *The New Negro*, edited by Locke, had its beginnings in the magazine *Survey Graphic* in the tradition of special issues designed "to follow the subtle traces of race growth and interaction through the shifting outline of social organization and by the flickering light of individual achievement" (qtd. in Kirschke, *Douglas* 15). *Survey Graphic* dedicated the March 1925 issue to the artistic and cultural boom taking place in Harlem. The Harlem issue was subtitled "Mecca of the New Negro" and followed issues on New Ireland (November 1921), the New Russ (March 1923), and the newly awakened Mexico (May 1924). The foreword to the issue, titled "The Gist of It," explains, "If *The Survey* reads the signs aright, such a dramatic flowering of a new racespirit is taking place close at home among American Negroes, and the stage of [the] new episode is Harlem" (Locke, "Gist" 627). When the special issue appeared, the response was so great that its editor, Alain Locke, took the project to the next level: a published anthology of artwork, poetry, and prose by New Negroes, with attention to the younger artists. The anthology included fiction and plays, but also political writings and sociological commentary that joined with the other creative efforts "to reverse the imagery, signs, and symbols of racial oppression into figures of Pan-African empowerment" (Kalaidjian 84). The anthology was equally well received in the

white community, giving whites some insight to black culture; however, it was also met with criticism as some critics saw the text as mimicry of white forms. Kalaidjian asserts that the work is the beginning of a tradition of black formalism—one that is a vital part of Western traditions (85).

The forms may have been in the Western tradition, but the voices were African American. In his essay, “Youth Speaks,” in the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, Alain Locke states,

Racial expression as a conscious motive, it is true, is fading out of our latest art, but just as surely as the age of truer, finer group expression is coming in—for race expression does not need to be deliberate to be vital. Indeed at its best it never is . . . We have lately had an art that was stiltedly self-conscious, and racially expressive. Our poets have now stopped speaking for the Negro—they speak as Negroes. Where formerly they spoke to others and tried to interpret, they now speak to their own and try to express . . . They have stopped posing, being nearer to the attainment of poise. The artistic problem of the young Negro has not been so much that of acquiring the outer mastery of form and technique as that of achieving an inner mastery of mood and spirit . . . They have shaken themselves free from the minstrel tradition and the fowling-nets of dialect, and through acquiring ease and simplicity in serious expression have carried the folk-gift to the altitudes of art. There they seek and find art’s intrinsic values and satisfactions—and if America were deaf, they would still sing (659).

Not just to imitate but to create—that is the true removal of the mask—the mastery of form, and this in itself was rife with conflict—between the races, in the publishing houses, and between the generations.

With the publication of *The New Negro*, the elder guard of the African American literary community seemed to realize the power of the younger artist and seemed to be passing the torch and the responsibility of creating and representing the life of the community to the next generation. Their outpouring of creativity seemed to encourage DuBois to soften his rigid position that art be propaganda although there was far from full repudiation of his earlier statements. In his editorial column in the January 1926 issue of *The Crisis*, he says,

We want to stress the fact that while we believe in Negro art we do not believe in any art simply for art's sake . . . In *The Crisis* at least, you do not have to confine your writings to the portrayal of beggars, scoundrels, and prostitutes; you can write about ordinary decent colored people if you want . . . Use propaganda if you want (qtd. in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 141).

Locke comments on the hesitation of those currently in positions of influence to embrace the future of African American literary production. In his essay, “Negro Youth Speaks” (1925) in *The New Negro*, Locke writes, “Youth speaks, and the voice of the new Negro is heard. What stirs inarticulately in the masses is already vocal upon the lips of the talented few, and the future listens, however the present may shut its ears” (47).

The New Negro itself is a form of mastery, and, as an anthology, was a communal project that drew its strength from the special circumstances that fostered its success. It “[drew] on resources, talents, sounds, images, rhythms of a marooned society . . . existing on the frontiers of all American promise, profit, and modes of production. It thus seeks its inspiration in the very

flight, or marronage, to the urban North of millions of black folk” (Baker, *Modernism* 77). In their frontier existence, black artists were confronted with the challenge of making themselves seen in their new world. “If the younger generation was to proffer ‘artistic’ gifts, such gifts had first to be recognizable as ‘artistic’ by Western, formal standards and not simply as unadorned or primitive folk creations” (Baker, *Modernism* 86). DuBois emphasized one step toward the realization of this in his essay, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out,” published in *The New Negro*, “. . . For the first time in America, the American Negro is to-day universally recognized as capable of speaking for himself” (411).

In *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, Houston Baker calls *The New Negro* both the “speaking manual and the singing book of a pioneering civilization freed from the burden of nonsensically and polemically constrained expression” (84). He calls it the “first national book” of African Americans, offering streams of tendency in our collective lives and an actual construction within its pages of the “sounds, signs, images, and signs of a nation” (85). *The New Negro* suggests that any Afro American expressive project must find its ultimate validity in a global community—the world, black masses, as it were—of Africans, both continental and diasporic (Baker, *Modernism* 80-81). If they must be confined to race, then they would convert it to a creative tool of collective will. The younger generation transformed the “handicap” of race into an offensive rather than a defensive position. Rather than be complacent with the success of *The New Negro*, they were inspired to create outside the permissions and editorial control that had governed their previous work. These controls were of the old guard, and they would use the tools and experience gleaned from interaction with the old guard to make their stand.

Magazines, periodicals, and special editions like *The New Negro* from the black and mainstream press defined the Harlem Renaissance. They promoted aspiring and established

writers, political and sociological commentary on the times, and the debates on art and propaganda and between those who hailed the renaissance and those who decried its existence as white propaganda. By the middle of the 1920s, both mainstream periodical and the black press were engaged in the cultural production of the times. Titles in circulation included *American Mercury*, *Nation*, *New Republic*, *Masses*, and *Liberator*, *The Quill*, *Challenge*, *New Challenge*, *Harlem*, *Stylus*, *Black Opals*, *The Voice of the Negro*, *Half-Century Magazine*, *The Golden Age*, *Dawn*, *Metropolitan*, *Mirror*, *Brown American*, and *Fire!!* DuBois recalls receiving a letter in 1910 from Albert Pillsbury, former Attorney General of Massachusetts, wherein Pillsbury says, “If you have not already determined to publish a magazine, for heavens’ sake, drop the idea. The number of publications now is as many as the ‘plagues of Egypt’” (Wilson, *The Crisis Reader* xxviii). DuBois and others persisted, and *The Crisis*, having served as a model for other periodicals, remains today in circulation.

Despite the “plague” of print opportunities already available, artists and editors continued to develop new organs by which their political views and artistic efforts could be shared with the public. Many of them embraced the avant-garde in their politicized couplings of image and text, art and journalism, poetry and visual agitation (Kalaidjian 3). The creative spirit of the times prompted some artists to create their own publications in the tradition of the “little” magazine, so called because of its circulation. Little magazines tended to publish writers who may not otherwise be published and to address issues that were often not addressed in mainstream press and publications. Modernism was the catalyst of the little magazine by providing an outlet for creativity that may have otherwise been untapped, promoting independent thought, and allowing exploration of nontraditional ideas; at the same time, little magazines were critical to the rise and influence of modernism and its impetus to move beyond convention and standard.

Little magazines are by definition magazines that do not make money; they are trying to promote new ideas or forms of art rather than sales. They are usually funded by a small group of supporters, and a few paying subscribers, and are created to provide an outlet for work that would not appear otherwise. The little magazine is always in an adversarial position with regard to the dominant culture, and when it loses that adversarial edge, or the enthusiasm of its backers, it dies.

Thus most little magazines have a very short run (Carroll 201).

Oftentimes, the pages allowed debate about issues of contemporary controversy. These debates as they occurred at the height of the little magazine's popularity between the wars, fostered an alternative discourse. The debates raged between the younger generation and the established leadership, between the elite and the proletariat, and between the accommodationist and the radical. For the avant-garde, the "battle against authoritarian politics and aesthetic elitism [was] waged in the pages of America's little magazines between the world wars" (Kalaidjian 9).

The most central value in avant-gardism has long been the high premium placed on change, change of an absolute and total nature. Creative artists exhort one another to counter what exists with something new and to expand the boundaries of their art. They rapidly lose interest in what is and continue to strive for the next wave (Cameron 221-2). The first major change of the times was the proliferation of black writing and art published in the mainstream modernist magazines, such as *American Mercury*. There were negative aspects to publishing in white magazines, but black writers found these journals to be crucial to their careers. They reached a larger, more mainstream audience than did black magazines, and they encouraged types of ideological freedom and artistic experimentation that African American editors tended to avoid. *Fire!!* and the subsequent *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, edited by Thurman, were

steps away from the established black periodicals as much as from white magazines. Like *Fire!!*, *Harlem* was short-lived; only one issue was produced.

A dialectical logic pervades these writings and asserts itself as oppositional binaries within the black community: the old and the new and the conservative and the daring. Within the arts, there seem to be only two camps, the traditionalists and the vanguard. According to Catherine Cameron, in “Avant-Gardism as a Mode of Cultural Change,” these are battle camps at such odds that no mediation can reconcile their differences” (222). At the foundation of a dialectic is the idea that while the parties involved may not agree, they do have some basic element in common that is foundational to the debate. For the Harlem Renaissance artists, that common element was their collective experience within the African American community. The conflict raged between the established and bourgeois old guard and the new guard that valued the proletariat, the common folk.

The avant-garde is kept vital through conflict, both real and imagined. While creative artists do not come to blows with their audience, they are hostile and distant from the mainstream. The principal vehicle for communication is their art form, and it is designed with a considerable amount of shock value in mind. The desire to jolt the middle class is perhaps the main vestige of the Romantic era belief that artists should change society (222).

A significant feature of little magazines is a focus on topics that would have been quite shocking in their times, as certainly lust, prostitution, homosexuality, and poverty were during the 1920s. Featuring these topics was designed to challenge established restrictions that “bind the mind and spirit of man” —those limits understood in the spirit of the avant-garde to “tie art and culture to history, memory, correspondences, associations, identity, structure, order, and value

judgment. Most important to the spirit of the avant-garde is the claim to have opened up exploration uncharted, infinitely expanding areas of new sensations and qualities, to have discovered or invented (or both) viable new relationships and forms . . .” (Rochberg 79). The younger generation transformed the “tragedy” of race into an offensive, rather than a defensive, position; they turned it into an incentive. Rather than be complacent with the success of *The New Negro*, they were energized to create outside of the permissions and editorial control of the old guard. They would use the tools given to them by their elders to make their stand against the elders’ ideals.

Fire!! was a connection between the old guard and new even as it pointed toward a new attitude. Further evidence of the connection is in its reaction, response, and rebellion and its intended purpose and themes. With the subtitle, “Devoted to Younger Artists,” the magazine was considered as a type of angry and irreverent declaration of independence. From the outset, the magazine sought to be different from even *The New Negro*. Only two years after the *Survey Graphic* issue on Harlem had first popularized the idea of a cultural awakening and one year after the debut of *The New Negro*, the younger artists of *Fire!!* “self-consciously set out to liberate themselves from W. E. B. DuBois, Charles S. Johnson, and even Alain Locke” (Hemenway 45). They set out “to stage, as it were, a renaissance within the Renaissance” (Fabre and Feith 23). As the first black magazine that was independent and essentially literary, *Fire!!* was designed to be deliberately provocative. The *Fire!!* artists have been compared to Russian avant-garde artists who advertised their Russian Futurism as “A Slap in the Face of Public Taste” (Kalaidjian 91). Based in modernist themes of self-awareness and racial consciousness, the work in *Fire!!* reflected a lack of concern with the propaganda of racial uplift. Further, it asserted its difference by (1) indicating an awareness of the world beyond the United States; (2) featuring

work by women; (3) addressing themes that many thought should stay in the shadows of the community—prostitution, homosexuality, race consciousness, and Pan-Africanism; and (4) featuring new artists who, with no white or established oversight, showed great promise.

The long, hot summer of 1926 proved ripe for the sowing of seeds that would become *Fire!! Devoted to Younger Negro Artists* as the members who would become editorial board planned their new magazine. They were a group of seven—Richard Bruce Nugent, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, John P. Davis, Aaron Douglas, and Wallace Thurman—who were often joined by Rudolph Fisher, Dorothy West, Eric Walrond, Helene Johnson, Dorothy Peterson, Harold Jackman, Augusta Savage, and Countee Cullen. Such a gathering of diverse interests and phenomenal talent gave way to “festivities [that] were raucous with brilliant talk, and as the evenings wore on, outrageous good times” (Hemenway 43). In a deliberate attempt to raise the ire of the intellectual literati and to amuse themselves, Thurman and Hurston called their group the “Niggerati,” which captured their image of themselves: “clever, cultured, talented, perhaps a bit pretentious, but urbane enough to recognize that fact and to find their own pretense amusing” (Wirth 1). Thurman lived in the West 136th Street brownstone that came to be called “Niggerati Manor” where they spent many of their evenings inside the manor, among the roaring parties, spirited debates, and tall tales, they planned a future for their art. The seven young artists came to Harlem from Washington, D. C., the Midwest, the South, and the West following their dreams to be writers and following the siren call of Harlem. They met at literary club meetings, at parties, at Civic Club dinners, and/or over lunch with editors of *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*. Many of them had work published in Locke’s *The New Negro*. They were modern, well traveled, and worldly (Price 166), and as their aspirations brought them together, they came to realize that they shared a common purpose.

There are various accounts of those first meetings. Nugent claims the original idea for the magazine belonged to Hughes. “He suggested that maybe someone should start a magazine by, for, and about the Negro to show what we could do” (Rampersad 134). Thurman’s biography by Eleonore van Notten reports that only Thurman, Hurston, and Bennett were in attendance at the formative meetings of *Fire!!*; however, other accounts credit Thurman, Hughes, Hurston, Nugent, Davis, Bennett, and Douglas for the original idea, the pledge to create, and the determination to succeed. According to Tolson, “the proposition took on the character of a heroic venture” (126). The first meeting was held in a cellar café in Greenwich Village (Tolson 126) and the address for the *Fire!!* headquarters was reportedly first in Greenwich Village and then in a room on 138th Street before moving to Niggerati Manor. One fact is without dispute: Thurman was the unanimously agreed upon editor-in-chief from the very beginning. He was “the logical source of all things Negroid,” according to Nugent, and he was the recognized leader of the Harlem avant-garde. As such, he was the leader of the niggerati and the niggerati saw themselves as leaders of the New Negroes (van Notten 132, 133). Thurman, Hurston, and Hughes formed the core of the editorial board.

According to Hughes in *The Big Sea*, the plan was well organized over a series of sweltering summer days. Each editor was expected to contribute \$50 of his or her own money, with patrons to be solicited to finance the balance. The seven accepted certain responsibilities: Thurman was to edit; Davis to manage the business affairs; Nugent was to take charge of distribution. In addition to their financial promise, the others were “to serve as an editorial board to collect material, contribute [their] own work, and act in any useful way that [they] could” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 236). The seven shared several commonalities. They were all in the same age group, although Hurston did conveniently present herself as ten years younger than her

actual age, and they were all actively interested in black literature, reading it and producing it. They shared a bohemian Harlem existence. Most of them traveled in and out of the city, often staying with friends when and where they could. Their collective experience was underscored by collective rebellion against artistic perceptions of the old guard and reinforced by the “heated response they managed to provoke” (van Notten 133). Hughes highlights the congeniality among the group, “For artists and writers, we got along fine and there were no quarrels” (*The Big Sea* 236). The reasons that the members of the editorial board chose to work with the project may be as varied as the tasks they were assigned. According to van Notten, Hughes was well aware of the publicity that would accompany his affiliation with the journal, and Hurston most likely sought additional audiences beyond her classmates and professors for folk theories and tales as she had not yet published her first book. For Thurman, it may have been a way to assuage the ebbs and flows of his self-esteem, and Davis probably took advantage of his advanced educational experiences to foster feelings of superiority (134). Individual motivations aside, there was by all accounts a group character within the *Fire!!* artists and in the larger creative Harlem community at the time. The artists needed each other for ideas, encouragement, and inspiration. Flourishing within the group did not detract from their own personalities, nor did it diminish the expression of such in their work. There is more evidence in their prolific output that such a group consciousness expanded their potential, opportunities, and connections (Kirschke, *Douglas* 50). The enthusiasm with which they planned *Fire!!* and their familiarity with the little magazine movement are both clear in Nugent’s recall that it was “thrown together like European small magazines” (Schmidt 161). The seven were embarking on a project with critical implications. If they were successful, they would be an artistic force unlike any ever seen, and the established, bourgeoisie, conservative old guard would have to acknowledge them

on their terms. Inspired by Hughes's "Negro and the Racial Mountain," these terms were further explicated after a meeting of the editors in an open letter written by Aaron Douglas on stationery for the magazine that he had designed.

We are all under thirty. We have no get-rich-quick complexes. We espouse no new theories of racial advancement socially, economically, or politically. We have no axes to grind. We are group conscious. We are primarily and intensely devoted to art. We believe that the Negro is fundamentally, essentially different from their [sic] Nordic neighbors. We are proud of that difference. We believe these differences to be greater spiritual endowment, greater sensitivity, greater power for artistic expression and appreciation. We believe Negro art should be trained and developed rather than capitalized and exploited. We believe finally that Negro art without Negro patronage is an impossibility (qtd. in Kirschke, *Douglas* 87).

While some writers and artists were concerned that elevating the folk—with their folkways, vernacular, and simple values—was in fact creating a "cultural universal" that would reinforce artificial differences between the races and reify the stereotypes that the white community valued and that the black community had committed to destroy, the younger artists sought to include them as a vital part of the black community, where they found "beauty among the flotsam and the jetsam of life" (Tolson 60)—as a truth that deserved recognition in their art. In an interview with Robert Hemenway, Nugent indicated that the *Fire!!* artists were "hoping to introduce a truly Negroid note into American literature" (Hemenway 45). Their efforts became part of a larger one: "the artists' allegiance to the folk" (Hemenway 50). By and large, the New Negro leadership tended to be light-skinned, private school-educated members of the bourgeoisie and extremely class conscious, embracing the DuBoisian idea of a Talented Tenth. The Niggerati

were loath to participate in the kind of elitism that the Talented Tenth practiced, that is mimicry of exclusivity and elitism within their communities. Rather, they wanted to embrace the common African American. Hughes, Hurston, Thurman, Douglas went to public or historically black schools, with the exception of Hurston's master's degree from Barnard, and "they identified with the proletariat. . . In every manner possible, the editors of *Fire!!* had consciously differentiated themselves from the elitism of the leadership" (Price 177).

According to Anne Elizabeth Carroll in *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance*, "*Fire!!* demonstrates [a] masterful approbation of the form of avant-garde little magazines to serve [the artists'] interests and needs" (221). In December 1925, Douglas wrote to Hughes,

Your problem Langston, my problem, no our problem is to conceive, develop, establish an art era. Not white art painted black . . . Let's bare our arms and plunge them deep through laughter, through pain, through sorrow, through hope, through disappointment, into the very depths of the souls of our people and drag forth material crude, rough, neglected. Then let's sing it, dance it, write it, paint it. Let's do the impossible. Let's create something transcendently material, mystically objective. Earthy. Spiritually earthy. Dynamic. (64)

Contributors to *Fire!!* broke new ground in their use of the techniques of the avant-garde to explore racial consciousness. They clearly sought to avoid the appearance of assimilation as they established themselves as independent of the New Negro movement while at the same time specifying that *Fire!!* was a black publication (Carroll 210).

Fire!! was designed to respond to perceived limits on artistic freedom. Even the name was a social commentary. According to Langston Hughes in his autobiography, *The Big Sea*,

“The idea [behind the name] being that it would burn up a lot of the old, dead conventional Negro-white ideas of the past” (235). In the manner of the European poets of the nineteenth century, these younger artists sought to shock the establishment, “*epater le bourgeois* into a realization of the existence of the younger Negro writers and artists, and provide [them] with an outlet for publication not available in the limited pages of the small Negro magazines then existing” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 235). *Fire!!* was “the first Negro journal of artistic expression” (Tolson 46) and represents the “originality, unpredictability, creativity, passion, veracity, and vitality” (Price 18) of the times, and the artists chose fire as the foundational metaphor and name of their publication. Like a collective working in a single Prometheus-like act, the *Fire!!* artists saw their work as delivering a type of power into the hands of black folk. This *Fire!!* was to alter the history of the community and issue forth a new way of creative thought. The metaphor fit the lively energy of artists, and it also represented their desire and design to destroy the old paradigm and to create a new society of writers and artists free to create outside of the control of white publishers and the older black intelligentsia and power structure. The addition of two exclamation marks was intentional with the word “fire” to serve as the sounding of an alarm. The title was designed to evoke an awakening along with an intense heat, the power of fiery destruction, and fire’s redemptive properties, and the editors promoted the metaphor within and beyond the publication. The poetry section is “Flame from a Dark Tower,” the editorial comment is entitled, “Fire Burns,” and Thurman autographed at least one copy, “Flamingly.” The foreword introduces the metaphor.

FIRE . . . flaming, burning, searing, and penetrating far beneath the
 superficial items of the flesh to boil the sluggish blood.

FIRE . . . a cry of conquest in the night, warning those who sleep and revitalizing those who linger in the quiet places dozing.

FIRE . . . melting steel and iron bars, poking livid tongues between stone apertures and burning wooden opposition with a cackling chuckle of contempt.

FIRE . . . weaving vivid, hot designs upon an ebon bordered loom and satisfying pagan thirst for beauty unadorned . . . the flesh is sweet and real . . . the soul an inward flush of fire . . . Beauty? . . . flesh on fire—on fire in the furnace of life blazing . . .

“Fy-ah,

Fy-ah, Lawd,

Fy-ah gonna burn ma soul!” (1)

The last lines are from the spiritual written by Hughes and set to music by Hall Johnson, with a nod to Negro spirituals of old. According to Nugent in “Lighting Fire,”

While I was rooming with Wally, at whose house most of us gathered for rap sessions (with Langston always guiding unobtrusively), the Negro Quarterly was born. Langston had written a spiritual for which Hall Johnson had written the music—a spiritual called “Fire!” So naturally, the Quarterly was named “*Fire!!*” (1).

The publication of “Lighting Fire” articulates dramatically the passion and energy—bordering on desperation—that fuels these artists’ desire to create on their own terms—to unleash their ideas and their voices without censorship or filter. The overt statement of the goals of the magazine as “interested only in the arts” (*Fire!!* 2) emphasizes the quarterly as an avant-

garde effort and directly refutes what had become a struggle for commercial profit and success. The language “implies a distancing of art from politics that both echoes the interests of the avant-garde and distances the editors from those like DuBois, with this insistence that the arts should serve purposes of propaganda” (Carroll 203).

The artists question the will to power that seems to guide the actions of the old guard—achieved, ambitious individuals—defined by the striving to reach the highest part of life, which was criticized as being conceived as equal to or recognized by white America. The *Fire!!* artists seem instead to be drawn by a will to meaning expressed by their singular styles unified in a single volume defined by its diversity. Although *The New Negro* featured many contributors, it was conceived and published by a single editor; *Fire!!*, on the other hand, was the collaborative effort of seven vibrant minds in a “special” time and place. Because of the collaborative spirit that produced the journal, Thomas Wirth calls it, “the Harlem Renaissance incarnate” (3). There is the sense that the group was aware of the implications of their actions. According to Douglas,

We were consciously making art. We were constantly involved in the process of turning this thing of concerned Blacks meeting in this place and telling jokes of all sort lightheartedly. Turning this into art of some sort . . . This togetherness was the thing that created the Renaissance that made it sort of special and sort of monumental in a certain sense (qtd. in Price 168).

The project began congenially and with great momentum, but only three of the seven contributed the agreed-upon start-up money although they promised to send it from college aid, paychecks, or begging (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 236). By the time fall arrived, Thurman was left with the majority of the responsibility for completing the editorial tasks. In addition to returning to college campuses—Hurston, Hughes, and Davis to study at Barnard, Lincoln, and Harvard,

respectively—there were job responsibilities to fulfill as well. Bennett was working at Howard and continued her column, “The Ebony Flute” in *Opportunity*, Davis was working with the editors at *The Crisis*, and Douglas and Nugent’s foci were on art, and, thus they were not helpful on the editing. Thurman was determined to carry the project through to fruition. He was a noted perfectionist and was determined to have the best quality paper “worthy of the drawings of Aaron Douglas,” and the type had to be only the best, “worthy of the first Negro art quarterly” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 236).

By the time of publication, the magazine was only forty-eight pages, but within those pages the contributors offered for consumption their ideas on jazz and blues, Harlem nightlife, menial labor, sexuality, domestic discord, racism, and kinship with Africa. For its aspirations, ill-fated management, and short life span, David Levering Lewis has called *Fire!!* “a flawed, folk-centered masterpiece” (195). In addition to tackling controversial subject matter, the work in *Fire!!* is revolutionary in its various approaches to racial identity among its contributors. Some of these approaches are more overt, such as the image on the cover and some of the interior drawings. Other references are inherent in the stories and poems. “Though their creators are all black, their racial identity is only sometimes reflected in the content of their work or in the characters they portray” (Carroll 217). Likewise with their writing styles. *Fire!!* contributors employed various dialects, rural and urban, from the South and the North and a variety of terms usually considered offensive, including “nigger,” “chineeman,” and “Kluxer” (Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 93). In other words, the writers did not seek a standardized template for their work and there was not an editorial authority to impose one.

The magazine was to represent the more common folk; however, it was not in the plan for the magazine itself to *look* or *be* common. Thurman was determined for the magazine to

make a statement from the startling red and black cover art to the expensive paper that would bear this most promising gift to the public. In an attempt to gain agency and control over their art and audience, the young artists mined the most ancient and fundamental of the elements to identify their publication, the embodiment of their rebellion. *Fire!!* artists used mixed media—literature and visual art—to demonstrate that an *entire* race of people could not be reduced to a single definition. Within the media, there were various themes and styles. As authors of the individualistic, they valued individuality of self and the diversity of the collection.

The hallmark of the magazine as something wholly different was announced on its cover, which was a deep crimson and originally printed on an expensive “de luxe” stock (Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 78). An obviously Negroid figure in silhouette blankets the entire front cover; the title is superimposed at the figure’s hairline. A rendering of the Sphinx is also part of the image, and the Sphinx shares the facial features of the larger image. The identification with things African on the cover proclaims that this is an unapologetically Negroid piece. The use of rich colors, the lack of words other than the complete title, and the dramatic use of images of a black person and a well-recognized African icon, declare the magazine as something unlike anything that has ever come before. Douglas’s cover for *Fire!!* was a provocative interpretation of Africanism. In its geometric simplicity, it appeared almost abstract. It is one of Douglas’s more original creations (Kirschke, “Oh Africa!” 79).

As avant-garde as the project was, one paradox of the undertaking is evident on the inside front and back covers where there are full page advertisements for the more mainstream and/or popular journals, *New Masses* and *Opportunity*. The *New Masses* advertisement features “Southern Snapshots” by George S. Schuyler, Hughes’s editorial adversary who months before had declared Negro art “hokum.” At the time, *Opportunity* was edited by old guard member,

Charles S. Johnson but employed two *Fire!!* constituents, Eric Walrond and Countee Cullen as Assistant Editor and Business Manager, respectively. The commercial reality of *Fire!!* lies on the first inside page, where, following a list of patrons that includes Carl Van Vechten and Arthur Huff Fauset (Jessie Redmon Fauset's brother), a statement appears that alternately declares *Fire!!* free from commercial influence and asks for financing through future subscriptions:

Being a non-commercial product interested only in the arts, it is necessary that we make some appeal for aid from interested friends. For the second issue of FIRE we would appreciate having fifty people subscribe ten dollars each, and fifty more to subscribe five dollars each.

We make no eloquent or rhetorical plea. FIRE speaks for itself. (2)

It is signed, "Gratefully, THE EDITORS." Created in the midst of bringing the project to fruition, this statement makes it clear that the editors, or Thurman at the very least, were sure that the inaugural issue would sell well with its cover price of one dollar and attract a loyal following that would finance the second and subsequent issues. Moreover, the solicitation of subscriptions is a determined move away from the white patronage upon which many of the writers and artists during the Harlem Renaissance depended for economic survival. Moving away from white patrons who had "played a major role in securing an audience for many of the group (Tolson 45) was a statement not only of agency over own artistic production but also of economic self-sufficiency.

For *Fire!!* to reach the goal of pure literature, the Victorian morals had to be "confronted directly and shocked into retreat" (Hemenway 49). In April 1926, H. L. Mencken's *American Mercury* was banned within the city limits of Boston because of a short story about a prostitute,

“Fanny Fewclothes.” Mencken’s arrest and trial for selling the magazine in the city despite the ban were widely publicized. Thurman admired Mencken whose ideology influenced him and informed his own perceptions, and it seems that Mencken’s daring subject matter and his refusal to comply with the ban “provoked in Thurman and Nugent an exhibitionistic yearning for similar notoriety” (van Notten 138). According to Nugent, Thurman then sought an illicit piece, one designed to get the journal banned in Boston. From this, it was decided that the topics of prostitution and homosexuality would be topics to generate this response (Hemenway 48). Thurman and Nugent took sexual taboos as “the leading image of their rebellion (van Notten 138). The thematic choices in the stories, poems, and drawings in *Fire!!* addressed these matters by offering “frank and non-moralizing depictions of non-normative sexuality” (Vogel 210). Thurman’s “Cordelia the Crude” and Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” feature prostitution and bisexuality, respectively, and were the pieces they hoped would sensationalize the journal.

The layout of the publication’s pages was obviously designed to heighten the planned shock value of their content. The first story is Thurman’s, “Cordelia the Crude, A Harlem Sketch,” but on the opposite page is a drawing by Nugent of a woman lounging against a palm tree. The woman is naked and is physically the antithesis of an “American beauty.” She has a rounded belly, sagging breasts, and round, full hips, Her face is obscured, but she is clearly a black woman. Her hair is in several plaits standing like a crown atop her head. Thurman’s story, written in elegant, classical prose, recounts the journey of Cordelia, a “sixteen year old matronly mature” young woman from the rural South to Harlem and from sexual awakening to prostitution. With his first sentence, “Physically, if not mentally, Cordelia was a potential prostitute, meaning that although she had not yet realized the moral import of her wanton promiscuity nor become mercenary, she had, nevertheless, become quite blasé and bountiful in

the matter of bestowing sexual favors to young men” (5), Thurman leaves nothing to chance in ensuring that his audience has a clear understanding of the story’s theme and content.

Nugent’s stream of consciousness piece, “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade,” adds a sense of realistic immediacy to the magazine because of references to actual people, places, and recent events. His elliptical prose piece explores themes of homosexuality and bisexuality, hidden desires, and interracial relationships. While the most revolutionary in terms of style, “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” is also the most sexually provocative piece in the entire issue. Editors of subsequent little magazines would not attempt to print anything as suggestively daring until almost twenty years later (Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 140).

Other works in *Fire!!*, have taboo topics as themes. With interracial relationships as its subject matter, “Wedding Day,” by Gwendolyn Bennett, is set in Paris, “before colored jazz bands were the style,” (25) and features a white American prostitute, a black expatriate boxer. Their plans to marry go awry because “‘she just couldn’t go through with it,’ white women just don’t marry colored men” (Bennett 28). “Sweat” is one of two pieces by Zora Neale Hurston featured in *Fire!!* and is set in her home state of Florida, the setting for much of her subsequent work. The southern setting is one aspect of her work published in *Fire!!* and elsewhere that sets her apart from many of her new guard contemporaries. The story of Delia, a washerwoman, and her husband Sykes, who lives off of her wages and ridicules her for how she earns them is one of infidelity, domestic abuse, and violence that leads to death.

Hurston’s second piece, “Color Struck,” a one-act play, explores one of the most controversial and closest kept secrets of the black community—intracial color prejudice. The title of the play had become Hurston’s calling card as she became known around Harlem for extroverted eccentric behavior. Around the time that she learned that her play would be

performed at a nearby playhouse, she entered a 1925 Opportunity dinner, shouting “COLOR STRUCK!” The play appears to be about a cakewalk in rural Florida, but under the carefree surface is a woman who is “color struck”—so self-conscious about her own dark complexion that she jeopardizes the relationships and lives of the people she loves.

“Flame from a Dark Tower” is the poetry section, the name of which is directly related to Countee Cullen’s contribution, “From the Dark Tower.” Later, in December 1926, Cullen would become a regular contributor to *Opportunity* with his column “Dark Tower” that he maintained until September 1928. The “Flame from a Dark Tower” section contains ten poems from seven poets, including Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Helene Johnson, and Cullen. The other three poets whose work is featured, Waring Cuney, Edward Silvera, and Lewis Alexander, were not as well known at the time, but Silvera and Cuney, along with Hughes and William Allyn Hill later became known as the Lincoln Poets as the result of their contributions to the 1930 anthology, *Four Lincoln University Poets*, edited by Hughes. The anthology was published worldwide, and the spirit of the four continues on the campus of Lincoln University in a long-standing literary society called “The Lincoln Poets.”

In the poetry are themes of nature and death, but also subversive ruminations on plight of African Americans in Cullen’s “From a Dark Tower,” the opening poem in the section. Using the classic form of the sonnet, Cullen’s style varies from the modern forms of many Harlem Renaissance poets. “From a Dark Tower” uses the symbols of planting and harvest to explore the ideas of unfulfilled dreams while evoking the plantation bondage of African American experience. The poet declares “We shall not always plant while others reap . . . that lesser men shall hold their brothers cheap” (16). Johnson’s “A Southern Road” focuses on the victim’s lynched body “parched beneath a burning sky . . . swinging alone” (17). Silvera’s “Jungle Taste”

celebrates blackness in the “coarseness in the songs of black man” and the “beauty [and mystery] in the faces of black women” (18). Cuney’s “The Deathbed” is a variation on the theme of faith in the face of death as the speaker wonders about his kinfolk “who kept on praying” and “what it was they could be saying” (19). Alexander’s “Little Cinderella” uses a familiar, mainstream fairy tale to explore prostitution on urban street corners (19). Hughes’s “Elevator Boy” (20) and “Railroad Avenue” (20) explore urban existence. “Elevator Boy” uses dialect to express the point of view of an elevator operator at a hotel in New Jersey. From his perspective, life is a game of chance with the same ups and downs as the elevator.

I got a job now
 Runnin’ an elevator
 In the Dennison Hotel in New Jersey,
 Job ain’t no good though.
 No money around.

“Railroad Avenue” (21) has all of the elements of urban folk life—cabaret life—including fish joints, pool halls, and street corners for lounging. The repetition of the words “laughing” and “laughter” resonating within the community but “leaving untouched the box car/Some train has forgotten” is a summative comment on the joy and sorrow that coexists within the insularity of the black community as well as the lack of opportunity represented by the abandoned train car in the middle of the track.

In later writings, Thurman refers to Bontemps’ work as “monotonous and wordy mystic evocations which lack fire and conviction.” About Cullen’s work, he said, “one finds significant traces of the spirit that moulded [sic] the utterances of the older Negro literatures . . . Cullen is the symbol of a fast disappearing generation of Negro writers” (qtd. in van Notten 144). For

purposes of *Fire!!*, it seems that Hughes' and Cullen's works are placed in juxtaposition, as diametric opposites in their representation of the conflict between the new guard and the old, as Cullen's poetry was "classicist and conservative," and Hughes' was "experimentalist and radical" (Tolson 57).

The artwork in *Fire!!* includes two pieces by Nugent, the aforementioned nude and a drawing of another nude woman in an art deco setting with what would now be called an Afro hairstyle. Three inside drawings by Douglas are of an African American preacher, an artist, and a waitress. More so than the bold, cubist-inspired, unapologetic consciousness of the front cover, these contour drawings, created by a series of uninterrupted lines, absent of any shading, illustrate his typical style (Kirschke, *Douglas* 75). Douglas also has three postage-stamp sized drawings of an African mask in the later pages of *Fire!!*, and a large variation of that mask done in bolder black ink on the back cover. Douglas's mask drawings feature slits for eyes that resemble the African masks of the Ivory Coast (Kirschke, "Oh Africa!" 77). The larger mask on the back cover offers the editors' final word on the creation of their publication. They have exercised the necessary agency over the mask so that the voices that come from behind the mask-in-motion within the pages of *Fire!!* are authentically their own.

The essay, "Intelligentsia," by Arthur Huff Fauset is one of the two editorial pieces that close the journal. Polemic in its criticism of those intellectual imposters that Fauset identifies as "Intelligentsia," the essay is provocative in language and meaning and also because Fauset's sister, Jessie Redmon Fauset, prominently served as editor for the more conservative *The Crisis* and represented the old guard intellectuals. Fauset speaks directly about those who would criticize *Fire!!*. Anticipating negative responses from those in the "most benighted" of societies, Fauset describes the Intelligentsia as "feigning spiritual chumminess with the true intellectuals

who are accomplishing things” (46). For them, Fauset claims, “Literature . . . is measured by its mystic qualities or its pornographical settings,” asserting that the sensational quality of literature is more noteworthy for the Intelligentsia than the quality of the literature—particularly that within the pages of *Fire!!*—itself.

Retrospective, academic examination of *Fire!!* provides a distant, yet awe-inspiring view to the editors’ daring, creative, and militant spirits. Contemporarily, however, the reality was far different. After others on the editorial board returned mid-project to other pursuits, Thurman maintained his determination to bring *Fire!!* to print. His skills of persuasion were used to cajole the publisher to print and release the magazine although the \$1000 expense (approximately \$12,000 in today’s dollars) was far from paid. Letters to Hughes provide some insight into Thurman’s determined struggle to get the journal into print.

Fall 1926

[I] corrected the whole damn thing—then dummied the magazine—alone. Zora had a date. Jeanette was in South Norwalk. Bunnie could not be found. Neither could Bruce. Aaron eluded me. Hence I toiled until I am about to scream all sorts of *Fire!!* calls . . . God damn *Fire!!* and all the editors.

The letter is signed, “Near unto death, Wallie” (qtd. in Singh and Scott 107).

Fall 1926

Well I have the page proofs. . . I got together \$75.00. Don’t ask me how . . . If you can get \$25.00 anyplace, anywhere between now and Monday please send it muy pronto, and please try to get it. *Fire!!* should be ready by Tuesday or Wednesday . . . Just one more complication and I will be ready to blow up . . . *Fire!!* is certainly burning me (qtd. in Singh and Scott 110-111).

The editors worked after the journal was published to pay off the debt. Nugent relied on the nurturing “circle” of the Saturday Nighters, asking Georgia Douglas Johnson to try to secure subscriptions for the first issue (McHenry 272). Thurman’s paychecks from other employment were impacted, including being subject to garnishment, over the next four years, and Hughes and Hurston contributed work to *The World Tomorrow* to repay money that the magazine had lent for *Fire!!*’s production. According to Hughes in *The Big Sea*, “Whenever I sold a poem, [my income] went . . . to *Fire*” (237). Hurston sought to sell subscriptions during her folklore collecting trips in an effort to get financing to retire the debt of the first issue and hopefully prepare for the second (Hemenway 46). In a March 1927 letter to Hughes, she wrote that she had 110 “guaranteed subscribers for Jacksonville alone” (qtd. in Kaplan 93). Thurman led the team in his determination that *Fire!!* would be a success, and, while struggling to pay for the first issue, was already planning the second one although it never materialized.

(Undated)

If I do proceed with another issue of *Fire!!*, as I am aching to do, I must insist that the price be 50 cents. And \$2.00 per year. If you promise to aid me in these monthly \$35.00 payments and if the rest will cooperate just a little bit to help the two of us I don’t mind even losing my job. I can prostitute myself long enough to get out another issue of *Fire!!* (qtd. in Singh and Scott 111).

There were other issues that affected the smooth production of the first issue of the publication that they eagerly anticipated. Nugent’s story was destroyed accidentally in Hurston’s apartment. He rewrote the entire piece on a roll of toilet paper and handed it to Thurman (Hemenway 46). In an effort to generate the necessary funding, it was Nugent’s job to circulate the magazine upon its publication and to collect fees from subscriptions. Very often, according

to Hughes, “Bruce, who had no job, would collect the money, and on account of salary, eat it up before he got back to Harlem” (*The Big Sea* 237). Not only could Nugent not be counted on to collect the money, he reportedly refused to read any of the proofs, including those of his own work (Rampersad 137).

One of Thurman’s most significant decisions as editor-in-chief was to eliminate the influence of the old guard by barring them from participation in the new publication, for the group planned a “new, exciting” vehicle that would go far beyond *The Crisis* or *Opportunity* (Price 78). Locke had apparently offered financial and other support as a patron; however, his name does not appear in the list of patrons, and Thurman’s letters regarding financial woes do not indicate his assistance there. According to Hemenway, “the young editors very quickly went off on their own, and Locke’s support was either discreetly withdrawn or discreetly rejected” (45).

Adding to the sensationalism of *Fire!!* was its support of what was perhaps the most popularly controversial novel about the times, Carl Van Vechten’s *Nigger Heaven*, published in August 1926. The title was a reference to restricted seats in segregated theatres, and all the characters were African American. That the novel was written by a white man sensationalized the book’s release. That Van Vechten had been welcomed into the inner circles of Harlem and had used information gained there in his story made matters worse. Reactions varied. Younger artists including Thurman and Hughes, who predicted, “Colored people can’t help but like it,” (Lewis 134) joined with the more progressive old guard Charles Johnson and James Weldon Johnson in support of Van Vechten. In response to negative reception, James Weldon Johnson wrote of the novel, “It is truth, and it is life as you and I know it to be. We could find a counterpart in Harlem life for everything Mr. Van Vechten has pictured in his book” (qtd. in

Lewis 181). Others vilified the book and its author. DuBois, Cullen, and Locke joined the community of Harlem readership in their contempt. It is said that many hid the fact that they read the novel, even encasing in it brown paper covers so that they would not be caught with it. The title itself seemed to confirm some fears that Van Vechten was not sincere in his interest in “all things Negro” and that he was a literary voyeur, exploiting his connections and friendships in Harlem for financial gain. In addition to their displeasure with the title, these readers saw the book as “a blow in the face” and an “affront to the hospitality of black folk and the intelligence of white” (DuBois, *A Reader* 516). Van Vechten lost friends over what he believed to be a tribute to them. Cullen, who had been a close friend, did not speak to him again for fourteen years because of the book (Watson 103). For many of the old guard, the crux of the conflict may have indeed lain in the pages of Van Vechten’s novel and the younger artists’ support of it. Huggins states, Van Vechten, who in his own words became “violently interested in Negroes” (Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* 99), [had found] the same emotional release in Harlem that whites had discovered in the fantasy cum-reality of the minstrel personality” (305)—the same personality against which DuBois, Johnson, and others had waged a battle of intellect, art, and propaganda. However received, *Nigger Heaven* signaled that it was time to break from the “old genteel literary traditions” (Lewis 191). Thurman was inspired by the primitive vulgarity in Van Vechten’s novel and wanted to follow his example in creating a work that would shock the community out of complacency. In addition to his unintentionally providing a model of rebellion, Van Vechten is listed among the patrons of the magazine, and the editorial, “Fire Burns” is, in part, a positive review of *Nigger Heaven*. In “Fire Burns,” Thurman comments on the fragility of public acceptance and its relationship to as he suggests that time will see Van Vechten “applauded” for his novel in years to come equally as he was “vilified” at the time of

publication (47). Speaking of *Nigger Heaven* with what seems to be foreknowledge of the life of *Fire!!* as it was challenged by negative reviews and financial troubles through the years to its being heralded as an important publication of the Harlem Renaissance, currently studied for its content and creative spirit, Thurman says,

Prophecies can be fulfilled or else belied with startling two-facedness throughout a series of generations, which, of course, creates the possibility that the fulfillments many outnumber the beliments and thus gain credence for the prophecy of posterity (47).

Post-publication, Thurman wrote, “We want *Fire* to be provocative—want it to provide the shocks necessary to encourage new types of artistic interest and new types of artistic energy” (qtd. in Hemenway 49). In “Negro Artists and the Negro,” published in *The New Republic* in 1927, Thurman explained the impetus for *Fire!!*

Fire [sic] like Mr. Hughes’ poetry was experimental. It was not interested in sociological problems or propaganda. It was purely artistic in intent and conception. Its contributors went to the proletariat rather than to the bourgeois for characters and material. They were interested in people who still retained some individual race qualities and who were not totally white American in every respect save color of skin. (37)

For the rebellion to make sense, the *Fire!!* artists needed readership from within the community they sought to offend. Among the many ironies of the project is that the readership whose lives *Fire!!* sought to relate to would probably not purchase the magazine. However, from its inception, *Fire!!* was directed at the readers of the “other magazines” who would read *Fire!!* and see that it was different (Hemenway 49). Cullen suggested in his column, “Dark

Tower,” that *Fire!!* would “only offend the unsophisticated” (qtd. in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 81). Calling *Fire!!* the new literary venture of the newer Negroes (Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 81), Gwendolyn Bennett noted its publication in her *Opportunity* column, “The Ebony Flute,” giving full editorial credit to Thurman. Price suggests a possible conflict of interest (174); however, Bennett’s lack of self-congratulations may have resulted from the troubles that Thurman solely shouldered during the saga of the journal’s publication.

The reaction of shock and recoil to *Fire!!* was not as dramatic as hoped and planned. According to Cameron, “Shock by nature is the product of novel experience. With repetition, it becomes expected” (222). For the most part, white critics did not notice *Fire!!*, and many in the black community vigorously attacked and dismissed it. In *The Big Sea*, Hughes claims that *Fire!!* had plenty of cold water thrown on it by the colored critics” (237). Rean Graves of the *Baltimore Afro-American* declared, “I have just tossed the first issue of *Fire*—into the fire and watched the cackling flames leap and snarl as though they were trying to swallow some repulsive dose” (qtd. in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 83). Graves called Douglas’s contributions “hudge pudge” and claimed that he had “ruined three perfectly good pages and a cover with his illustrations” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 237). Graves accused Countee Cullen of “obscur[ing] . . . thought in superfluous sentences,” and noted Hughes’s “usual ability to say nothing in many words” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 237).

Others were patronizingly critical of the artistic rebellion against imitation as is indicated by Locke’s response in *Survey*.

Fire was a charging brigade of literary revolt [but] if Negro life is to provide a healthy antidote to Puritanism, and to become one of the effective instruments of sound artistic progress, its flesh values must more

and more be expressed in the clean, original, primitive, but fundamental terms of the senses and not, as too often in this particular issue of *Fire*, in hectic, imitation of the “naughty nineties” and effete echoes of contemporary decadence (qtd. in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 82).

Benjamin Brawley was the most negative in his reaction to *Fire!!* A scholar who was impatient and disdainful of the emerging commodification and romanticism associated with all things black, Brawley’s own work focused on the social and intellectual development of African Americans in American society. He was known in the literary and academic communities to be exacting and exceptionally efficient. His essay, “The Negro Literary Renaissance,” in the April 1927 issue of *Southern Workman*, provided the attention to the taboo topics that Thurman and Nugent had anticipated. Brawley complained of “sordid” and “forbidden themes,” and summarized his opinion of the entire production, “If Uncle Sam ever finds out about it, it will be debarred from the mails” (236). He continues in the essay with his assertion that the emergence of jazz and blues resulted in three things:

1. A lack of regard for any accepted standards whatever, including the acceptance of free verse simply because it lacks restraint
 2. A preference for sordid, unpleasant, or forbidden themes
 3. A turning away from anything that “looked to be good, honest work in order to loaf and call oneself an artist”
- (Brawley 233).

Brawley uses this list to enumerate all that was wrong with *Fire!!* and its creators, focusing on “an unwillingness to work” read in Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” and in Hughes’s

“Elevator Boy,” wherein the speaker ruminates about quitting his job running the elevators in a hotel in New Jersey. Brawley includes the last lines of Hughes’s poem (I been runnin’ this/Elevator too long./Guess I’ll quit now) only to emphasize his belief that the younger generation had a general distaste for honest labor. The rest of the poem, according to Brawley “will hardly do for quoting in this magazine” (234). About the other content, Brawley states that the first article (Thurman’s “Cordelia, the Crude”) should not have been written and definitely not published; one of the poems succeeds only because of the “strength of its swearing” (234). Brawley acknowledges the technique and promise of some renaissance writers, such as Walter White, Claude McKay, and Eric Walrond, stating, “these men would have written . . . if there had been no ‘renaissance’ at all” (237). Of Cullen, Brawley calls his work sophomoric, but included him as a poet of note (224). However, of the “younger group of writers,” he states that “one after another” they have “refused to master technique” and they have “been overpraised and . . . their vulgarity has been mistaken for art.” In his opinion, the day of jazz is over, and he is adamant, “He who is a poet in the new day must not only have vision; he must labor unceasingly to give that vision beautiful and enduring form” (237). The *Fire!!* artists failed in Brawley’s view to do so, and so, in his opinion, were undeserving of the awards and recognition already won that had led them to believe that their effort was art on any level. His criticism extended beyond the single publication to the artists themselves. Brawley’s exasperation with the younger artists stems apparently from the mediocre achievements of a group of young people who “have been encouraged as perhaps . . . never before in the history of American letters” (234). Later, in his 1966 *The Negro Genius: A New Appraisal of the Achievement of the American Negro in Literature and the Fine Arts*, Brawley gives *Fire!!* only one sentence: “Fire, ‘a quarterly devoted to the Younger Negro artists,’ was issued in November, 1926, under the editorship of Wallace

Thurman, and its flame was so intense that it burnt itself up immediately” (264-5). Considering his immediate response to the publication, it is compliment enough that in a volume that begins its study of African American genius with the likes of Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, and Gustavus Vassa, it got any mention at all. Hughes and Hurston would later out-pace Brawley’s harsh criticism of them, writing for many years, creating enduring work that continues to be studied and widely read. Hurston’s work went out of print, and she faded from the public stage in the 1950s. However, the rediscovery of her work in the early 1970s and her re-emergence in American literature is significant in the study of her work in folklore and during the Harlem Renaissance.

A more positive, yet still controversial review of *Fire!!* appeared in *Bookman*, a mainstream journal known as one of the nation's longest-lived monthly magazines about literature and related matters. *Bookman* commended the journal in its November 1926 issue for appearing “at a time when the Negro shows ominous signs of settling down to be a good American . . . As the Negro begins more and more to measure up to the white yardstick of achievement, he will gain a merited position in American society.” The review concluded, “It is hoped that he [the black writer] will find in this new Negro quarterly the thing he needs to keep his artistic individuality” (Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 81).

Part of the historic controversy surrounding *Fire!!* has come from an erroneous recollection of DuBois’s public negative reaction to the journal. As the acknowledged leader of the African American intellectual community, DuBois’s reaction was critical in the assessment of the editorial board’s success or failure in the publication overall and in the effect of the shock value that was critical to the piece as rebellion. Hughes recalls, “Dr. DuBois in *The Crisis* roasted it” (237), and it is possible that Hughes remembers it as it was expected to happen. In

fact, however, in the January 1927 issue of *The Crisis*, DuBois praised the art and the layout, and said, “We bespeak for it wide support.” (qtd in Johnson and Johnson, *Propaganda* 82). It may be true that DuBois was privately less than pleased with the venture. In an undated letter to Cullen, journalist Fred Bair writes, “I was so indiscreet as to mention Thurman and *Fire!!* the first thing . . . when I went to see DuBois. It hurt his feelings so much that he would hardly talk to me” (qtd. in van Notten 151).

Although *Fire!!* was a critical aspect in the conflict between old and new, the old guard appeared to be reluctant to show their displeasure in the mainstream. The final contradiction to any public outcry that the editorial board expected came with an invitation from the NAACP for Hurston, Thurman, Bennett, and Hughes to read from *Fire!!* during a Civic Club tea on January 2, 1927 (van Notten 151). A letter from Thurman to Hughes indicates that he read Hughes poetry in Hughes’s absence. “The *Fire* meeting was great. I read your poetry and made a grand hit. From now on, I substitute pour vous” (qtd. in von Notten 186). It appears that the old guard would not air in public their displeasure with those whom they had granted their first recognitions for writing, whom they had employed on the editorial staffs, and whom they first recognized with national publication. At the same time, the recognition of work in *Fire!!* at a Civic Club tea only months after its publication signaled that there was some appreciation for the artists and their efforts.

According to Hughes, there were several hundred copies of *Fire!!* in storage in the basement of a building that caught fire (*The Big Sea* 237). Although the bulk of the unsold issues burned, Thurman remained financially tied to the publication. In the wake of the financial failure and disappointment in its reception, the younger artists initially remained clear in their

purpose: to produce a publication where the focus was art for its own sake and to refrain from producing art for purpose or propaganda. In October 1927, Hurston wrote Alain Locke,

I suppose that “Fire” has gone to ashes quite, but I still think the idea is good. We needed better management that’s [sic] all. Don’t *you* think there ought to be a purely literary magazine in our group? The way I look at it, “The Crisis” is the voice of the N. A. A. C. P. and “Opportunity” is the same to the Urban League. They are in literature on the side, as it were . . . Don’t you think too that it is not good that there should be only two outlets for Negro fire? (qtd. in Kaplan 109).

In *The Big Sea*, Hughes acknowledges that *Fire!!* “taught him a lesson about little magazines. Since white folks had them, we Negroes thought we could have one, too. But we didn’t have the money” (238). There were no other issues of *Fire!!*, and the seven members of the editorial board went on to pursue other projects. Thurman, however, was determined to produce a successful and true Negro literary publication. He had an intense feel and understanding for his audience and looked “forward to a future in which the Negro audience would be free from cultural insecurity” (Scruggs 559). He “laughed a long bitter laugh” when *Fire* collapsed and set to work again (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 238). His next venture would be another little magazine, *Harlem*.

Thurman planned the 1928 debut of *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life* where he would serve as editor, Douglas as art editor, and S. Pace Alexander as managing editor. Other contributors were Hughes, Locke, Helene Johnson, George Schuyler, Douglas, and Theophilus Lewis. The contributions from the “older” artists, including Lewis, whose review of *Fire!!* was clearly negative, indicate a spirit of collaboration between the old and new guards. However, still determined to continue the productivity and presence of “younger artists,” however,

Thurman installed younger artists as a staff for the journal and invited Locke to contribute. In the solicitation to Locke, he says, “I am mighty glad of the chance to be able to edit a magazine and let someone else worry about financial end, in fact, after *Fire!!*, that is the only way I would ever venture forth again” (Singh and Scott 166). He described *Harlem*,

[as] a general magazine, containing verse, fiction, essays, articles on current events and debates on racial and non racial issues. We are not confining ourselves to any group either of age or race. I think that is best. The Crisis and The Messenger are dead. Opportunity is dying. Voila here comes Harlem, independent, fearless, and general trying to appeal to all (qtd. in Singh and Scott 166).

In his introductory editorial in *Harlem*, Thurman wrote that the problem with white magazines was not any resistance to black art, but rather the fact that few black people would consistently *buy* a white magazine just for the black contributions, and hence one could not reach one’s primary audience through such publications. It was the black editors that, in Thurman’s view, hampered artistic freedom. The New Negro artist “revolted against shoddy and sloppy publication methods, revolted against the patronizing attitudes his elders assumed toward him, revolted against their editorial astigmatism and their intolerance of new points of view” (Hutchinson 129-130), and thus felt constrained and without options. *Harlem*, too, had only one issue, which appeared in November 1928. Disillusioned by this failure, Thurman did not again venture an attempt at a literary journal.

The one issue of *Fire!!* that ever appeared had been out of print for several decades when it was rediscovered by a modern public in 1982. In his work with Thomas Wirth to research the people and events of the Harlem Renaissance, Richard Bruce Nugent recalls,

[I found] among my paraphernalia a copy, battered and torn, of this ancient magazine [and] when I gave it to Tom . . . [it] triggered this present effort to share it with more people than the few who owned the private collections or visit the closely guarded varieties in libraries (Nugent “Lighting Fire” 1).

The publication has been reprinted in its original size and format, retaining the striking contrast of the original red cover with Douglas’s heavy ink artwork, as well as the advertisements on the front and back covers. Perusing the replica of the 1926 publication allows the reclaiming of a bit of Harlem Renaissance history, and the absence of editorial introduction or afterword within the reprint itself lends considerably to the appreciation of the original work and the artists’ vision. Nugent’s “Lighting Fire” and Wirth’s “Fire in Retrospect” are published together as a separate four-sided insert, printed on the same size paper and using the same typeface as the journal itself, which contributes to the effect of the 1982 reissue of *Fire!!*

Although “*Fire!!* did not illuminate any clearly defined group aesthetic in accordance with established literati expectations, it did “illuminate the degree to which each author was faithful to his or her individual artistic vision” (Price 166). It was important because it showed an effort on the part of the organizers to break from the confines of Harlem leadership, both black and white, and to express themselves freely and without censorship to a younger, separatist-in-thinking and more militant black audience (Kirschke, “Oh Africa!” 78). One of the efforts of the *Fire!!* artists was to prove that they in their blackness shared much with their community while being individuals at the same time. The differences were not to be smoothed out to result in one amalgamated group of sameness. The differences were to be celebrated within the group and outside of it—that is the sense of American-ness that they brought to the project. The artists claiming an individual position, free from controlling efforts of a governing

body and ideas about the social responsibility of art, allow for experiments in content and style and a more complicated definition of African American identity than was offered elsewhere (Carroll 222). This set the stage for further experiments in race consciousness and letters, including movements in Black Arts, the Asian American literary community, and others that followed. The voices of the *Fire!!* editorial board, Wallace Thurman, Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, John P. Davis, Gwendolyn Bennett, Aaron Douglas, and Zora Neale Hurston “collaged African and vernacular traditions with revisionary gender roles” (Kalaidjian 86). The amalgamation of these voices and subject matter was a first of its kind that would create subject positions that would be revived in arts movements after World War II and in the last half of the twentieth century as other marooned groups began to raise their own voices. It is unfortunate there was only one issue of *Fire!!* If there had been more, other elements of African American identity exploration would have surfaced. The magazine has been called a spirit . . . worthy to continue flaming (Carroll 222).

As early as 1940, Hughes cast the excitement of the renaissance and the vibrancy of the Roaring Twenties in a different, nostalgic light that seems to harbor a sense of regret while providing some insight.

All of us know that the gay and sparkling life of the 20s was not so gay and sparkling beneath the surface as it looked . . . It was the period when the Negro was in vogue. I was there. I had a swell time while it lasted. But I thought it wouldn't last long. For how could a large and enthusiastic number of people be crazy about Negroes forever? But some Harlemites thought the millennium had come (*The Big Sea* 227, 228).

The end of Prohibition played a large role in dulling the allure of the Harlem nightlife, and as crime followed hard times into the streets, white patrons sought their exotic fantasies elsewhere. The movement further declined in 1929 with the stock market crash and was truly ended with the Harlem riots in 1935. Harlem, the “greatest Negro city” had experienced widespread degeneration complemented by tenements, un- and under-employment, high rents, and overcrowding. The riots were the result of disenfranchisement and “growing unrest” and discontentment of Harlem’s citizens in the midst of the Great Depression. Hard living was common in Harlem even in its most prosperous years, but the days of the Great Depression made life much more difficult for the average African American and for the artists of the day. In the glory days before the Depression, the average weekly income for a black working man was \$18, and almost 60 percent of black women worked, a rate four times that of native-born white women (Ottley and Weatherby 265). When the stock market crashed, many lost their jobs and were forced to “go on relief,” becoming a part of what was to become a generational cycle of welfare and poverty. The effect was dramatic. The liquor stopped flowing, the novelty of literary black folk had worn off, and the economic depression of the 1930s set in, so white benefactors tended to turn to other amusements (Martin 131). Once again, America had been plunged into chaos, this time in the midst of modernist extremes.

It is possible, then, that the end of the Harlem Renaissance coincided with the fading of avant-gardism. Avant-gardism seems to have been too frivolous, individualistic, and apolitical an artistic ideology for the socially conscious and politically aware years of the 1930s. Activities became more practical as creative individuals tried to reach a mass public under government programs such as the Works Progress Administration (Cameron 223). So with the turning of the decade, the generous, good times both uptown and downtown were over and with them the

patron support, the scholarships, awards, and prizes. Commenting on the post-renaissance era, Tyler Schmidt concludes, “Niggerati Manor is now defunct, its ilk lost to drink, tuberculosis, and, for the lucky ones, old age, and the Harlem Renaissance has become the stuff of academic study and cultural legend (161). Work continues but of a different sort. It is not the sparkling dazzling magic of uptown. This work is borne of despair, of dreams deferred. The work is funded by the government and the protest begins to change course. The aesthetic has been altered to accommodate social reality. During the Depression, the black writer, in order to meet the black reader, had to ensure that his writing was not too radical, but not too accommodating either. It could be neither too aggressive or too cheerful and uplifting because it had to truly reflect the mood of survival of the times.

James Weldon Johnson declared the Harlem of 1930 as “still in the process of making” (281). He claims that it is a “large-scale laboratory experiment in the race problem.” Some of his idealism has been disproved in the decades since his writing of *Black Manhattan*. At the same time, however, Johnson’s declaration that “through his artistic efforts the Negro is smashing [the] immemorial stereotype” and that “he is an active and important force in American life; that he is a creator as well as a creature; that he has given as well as received; that his gifts have been not only obvious and material, but also spiritual and aesthetic; that he is a contributor to the nation’s common cultural store; in fine, he is helping to form American civilization” (284) can be applied to other Americans of color. The “laboratory experiment” that he has claimed Harlem to be was groundbreaking in that it produced the framework for other movements to follow.

At the height of the Harlem Renaissance, the leading Harlem intellectuals understood that they were creating and promoting poems and stories that reflected escape from Southern Jim

Crow laws, physically and mentally, through migration. They understood that their work, even that which was denounced as mimicry, was in response to the migration experience, urbanization, and the walks of life borne from it. American scholars have come to understand that the Harlem writers have contributed significantly to the nation's literature and that the artists themselves, including the *Fire!!* editorial board, are central to the American experience (Schneider 81). As such, they have provided the statement that initiates discursive exchange within American literature and invites artists of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds to respond with statements of their own American experiences. "The task of the spokesperson who would engage the sound of folk conversion is to situate himself or herself in productive relationship to a field marked by awesome strategies of deformation and mastery. "It is this discursive field that links us bone of the bone, flesh of the flesh" (Baker, *Modernism* 95) and moves us toward each other rather than toward the center of otherness.

Gradually, the possibilities that these writers envisioned, experienced, and wrote about became a part of the broader culture. They contributed to a sense of identity—a sense of racial awareness and consciousness—that made African Americans feel proud to be in their own skins and proud to be a part of their community. Their most important contributions to American life were the poems and stories that made thousands of readers understand "that their lives mattered, that their problems were common to millions of other black people, and that their hopes might someday be realized" (Schneider 85).

Some of the artists and their works faded into obscurity after the heyday of the renaissance. However, distance often provides a sharper lens through which to view experience and production, and the impact of the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance has been more clearly seen and appreciated through the years. Increased political and literary activity

during the 1960s brought Harlem Renaissance voices and literature back into focus on a larger scale, and the renaissance was recognized as an influence for the Black Arts Movement.

Academically and socio-politically, the artists, their publications, and Harlem itself have been the subject of a voluminous analysis and critical examination. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Wallace Thurman, and their contemporaries are studied along with the social and political theories of W. E. B. DuBois, Benjamin Brawley, Walter White, and Marcus Garvey as foundational to the study and understanding of American and African American history and American and African American literature. Many of the artists and leaders of the Harlem Renaissance might be intrigued or, in Brawley's case, offended, that contemporary literary and cultural study places the work of the Niggerati alongside that of the old guard intellectuals for a comprehensive examination of the Harlem Renaissance as a cultural movement. The irreverence and lack of convention that created tension between the younger artists and their mentors is now cited as evidence of their literary authority as they demonstrated that challenging convention is an effective, even practical method, to express the joys, the pressures, and the complexities of life within the African American community. The themes, styles, and modernist considerations of the Harlem Renaissance artists have influenced literature and persist as important aspects of the national literary tradition. As Mark Schneider asserts in *African Americans in the Jazz Age: A Decade of Struggle and Promise* (2006), "No meaningful cultural creation disappears forever" (95).

Nathan Huggins claims that the most important gift from the renaissance is a lesson from its failures; one of which is the complicated navigation required to create authentic art while struggling with race consciousness and national identity. Henry Louis Gates acknowledges the value of the numerous texts created during the era, but asserts, "Most critics agree that [the

renaissance] failed to find its voice” (*Signifying* 224). Full appreciation of the conflict and criticism of the day, accompanied by the issues of racism, patronage, and funding leaves a student of the renaissance awed that they raised their voices at all. In David Levering Lewis’s estimation, “because its racial objectives were . . . unrealistic for the times . . . the black arts and letters enterprise of the twenties and thirties was dealt a shattering contemporary defeat” (xxiv). However, he concedes that the Harlem Renaissance, along with the “Literary Radicals of the Village” had major impact on the evolution of American modernism and left a solid foundation significant and critical to the national experience. According to Lewis, “The men and women of the Harlem Renaissance may have failed themselves in their day, but not us in ours” (xxv). For the descendants of the artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the movement did not fail. Their efforts and the spirit that fueled them would speak down through generations and across the American landscape to fuel and ignite literary movements in cultural enclaves and among the diverse people of the United States as the voices of Americans of color continued to emerge.

Chapter Four

Of Golden Mountain and Paper Sons: The Asian American Experience

The development of human beings in the future is going to depend largely on what happens in Asia.

W. E. B. DuBois

*Huge dreams of fortune
Go with me to foreign lands,
Across the ocean.*

Rizan

I know deep down in my heart that I am an exile in America.

Carlos Bulosan

*OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
tho' they come from the ends of the earth!*

Rudyard Kipling

*O, don't ever marry a daughter to a man from
Gold Mountain*

*Lonely and sad, her only companion is her
cooking pot!*

Marlon Kau Hom

By the 1920s, America had become entrenched in a commodity culture, reinforced by popular journalism, radio, and film. The “Roaring Twenties” were in full effect with attitudes of expansion and expense, and Americans were caught up in the Jazz Age momentum of realizing the power of their nation in the aftermath of World War I, unwittingly forming a national

identity, and redefining American culture. Avant-garde creativity was not limited to New York, although much modernist activity was situated there. Signs of avant-garde activity were everywhere across the continental United States and into its burgeoning territories.

According to the Chinese Lunar calendar, the year 1926 was the Year of the Tiger. As such, it was anticipated to be a year of bravery, competitiveness, and unpredictability. Several things took place that hold their own significance individually, but when considered together, they signaled momentous changes in the landscape of American culture. In 1926, the United States of America celebrated 150 years of freedom from British rule; *Fire!!*, symbolic of the major literary movement in Harlem, made its first and only appearance; and the Chinese detective Charlie Chan debuted on the screens of the burgeoning movie industry. To accommodate increased automobile travel, Route 66 opened, running between Chicago, Illinois, and Los Angeles, California; and providing a major artery for the American focus on expansion in the West. With the railroad little more than fifty years old, Route 66 symbolized the modern era and extended the symbolism of the railroad as an icon of western expansion and the conquering of the frontier. Like the railroad, the new highway realized the connection between American cultural, political, and social norms and ideals of the east coast and the possibilities of the untamed and exotic Wild West. Route 66 provided topographical reality to what Walter Kalaidjian calls a “new map of modernity,” which would shift the boundaries of critical reception that have segregated the interbellum avant-gardes in the United States from contemporaneous transnational, African-American, feminist, and proletarian traditions of cultural critique (5).

In the decades leading to the 1920s, this new map had become populated increasingly with peoples from different parts of the world, and the 1920s saw an increase in the movement of

its citizens as well as an influx of immigrants as the country expanded to explore the wealth and opportunities in the West. These additions challenged the established ideas of national culture and identity and opened the way for different types of migration and various interaction and collisions. As the freedom of movement increased, there was magnified focus on legislation and attitudes against people from other countries seeking the promises of the United States and for those of color who were natives, residents, or immigrants. Imposing railroads and highways on the landscape suggests a need to tame the frontier, to conquer the virginal territory, and to lay claim on the land itself. Those charged with expansion in the West were determined to see the frontier settled with the order that comes from economy and production. The increased freedom of movement of those within the United States in addition to the impact of decades of immigration from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and India would be significant to this transformation (Takaki 23).

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the spirit of manifest destiny pushed American ideals beyond the borders of the contiguous territory and into Hawaii, where the possibilities of new territories, new wealth, and a new presence in the Pacific loomed large. The nation expanded as did the national identity that was grounded in the appearance, language, culture, and attitudes of white Americans to whom American ideals of liberty and democracy applied. The American national identity followed the Blumenbach hierarchy, which organized peoples of the world in five classes according to “desirable” physical traits. In this hierarchal construct, whiteness, with its superior physical attributes, is at the top, and blackness, with its less desirable physical attributes is at the bottom. The other “races” fall in between. However, in their roles as servants and laborers, Asians were perceived by their outer selves as “othered” were often associated with African Americans; in fact, many of the negative characteristics

attributed to black people were extended to Asians to ensure their subordination. According to Gary Okihiro in *Margins and Mainstreams*,

Asian Americans have served the master class, whether as “near-black” in the past or as “near-whites” in the present or as “marginal men” in both the past and the present. Yellow is emphatically neither white nor black; but insofar as Asians and Africans share a subordinate position to the master class, yellow is a shade of black, and black, a shade of yellow (34).

Asians were met with fierce racism as they came to America primarily to work. The European immigrants who could would eventually assimilate into the majority culture, other minorities were legislated out of the mainstream, and a new question arose as to what to do with the indigenous people of Hawaii and the Asian workers who had crossed the Pacific looking for opportunities. In *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870*, Gunther Barth defines two groups of Chinese: Chinese sojourners and Chinese immigrants. The sojourners were those who traveled to the United States with plans to stay only long enough to earn and to save money before returning home to improve the lives of their families. Immigrants ventured to the United States with plans to stay permanently. By 1926, there was a whisper of the promise of equality for the many Asians who had come to America as a way to improve the lives of their families in their homelands. With this choice came a hope for a better life with plans to return home or to have their families join them. This whisper of hope also brought with it the murmur of despair, for it is exactly this hope that was exploited as the instrument used to limit Asian immigration and to separate families. Because the focus was on the economic advantage of their labor and then on the inconvenience of their presence for white America, the discussions of treatment of Asians in America often fails to address the sorrow that accompanies

leaving one's homeland to travel to unknown territory. Although the United States symbolized the "Gold Mountain" because of the search for gold found in the California hills, traveling to make one's fortune meant leaving everything familiar behind and often led to hardships previously unimagined. Hunger, loneliness, poverty, and discrimination all formed an impetus for many to fondly remember the village life of their homelands. According to one memory recounted in *Margins and Mainstreams*, "The way we lived in that small village . . . a beautiful thing, yeah." Another remembered the "so many beautiful things" associated with his life in his native village (Okihiro 98). Considering the montage of memories and history from this contemporary vantage point, the distinction between sojourner and immigrant status is difficult to ascertain. Challenges presented themselves to the newcomers at every turn and there are stories told now among families whose ancestors intended to return to their Asian homelands but could not because of exigent circumstances or did not by choice once they had experienced life in the United States; thus, in many instances, the sojourner became the immigrant.

The nexus of the Asian American experience can be found "within the European imagination and construction of Asians and Asia within their expansion eastward and westward to Asia for conquest and trade" (Okihiro 7). Artifacts found in Arabia, India, Indonesia, and China indicate that mercantile and migrant relationships existed between Africa and Asia—relationships that according to archeologists predate the arrival of Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean by at least a thousand years. These artifacts and documentation clearly indicate that Africa and Asia were in contact long before their peoples met in the United States. As Asians began to arrive in numbers in America in the nineteenth century, they found themselves continuing a relationship with the peoples of the African Diaspora that had begun centuries ago in "the creation of a global system of labor and the conjunction of Africans, Asians, and

Europeans that began long before the [much talked about] nineteenth century.” Okihiro traces the interaction back to trade in goods in the eighth through twelfth centuries when a Hindu kingdom was the dominant mercantile power in the Indian Ocean, with control of trade routes between India, China, and most likely the East African coast. Historians also trace a slave trade between Africans and Asians between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, and state that around 1119, “most of the wealthy in Canton possessed negro slaves” (Okihiro 35-37).

Invasions by African and Mongolian armies brought devastation to European territories, but they also brought new religions, cultures, and knowledge. Later the Crusades would give Europeans the reasoning necessary to “expel the infidels” from Christendom and give rise to the ideology necessary to subjugate those who believed differently and looked different and to conquer, appropriate, and exploit the lands of those found undeserving. That ideology, according to Okihiro, put forward and assured the later concepts of purity and superiority of all things European (37) and later American.

Very early in their American experience, people of African and Asian descent led parallel lives with regard to being colored in a white world. They both navigated America contributing to the growth of the nation and establishing homes and lives while considered outside the nation and its history. They identified with their adopted homeland and embraced the opportunities for their children while in conflict with the knowledge that their children would not know the lands of their ancestors. Both were brought in numbers as a source of labor and were actively recruited because of their differences from the controlling community including appearance, religious practice, and food, which would make it easier for the majority population to disenfranchise and control them. However, in their commonalities, one critical difference between the Asian experience and the African experience is the conditions under which the peoples from the

continents arrived in the United States and the Americas. While the majority of the Africans who came to this country came forced into slavery, many of the immigrants from Asian countries came voluntarily as indentured labor with plans to make their fortunes and either to settle in the United States or to return home financially better off for their families.

There is evidence to support that Asians had established communities in what would become the Southern United States at the time when the first Africans were being traded in the markets of New Amsterdam. The oldest continuous Asian American communities in the United States can be traced to the Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco from 1565 to 1815 (S. Chan 25). After Chinese and Filipino crew members and servants on the Spanish colonial ships settled in Mexico, Filipino “Manilamen” migrated north to the Louisiana territory where they founded communities as early as the 1760s, and there has been a continuous presence of these communities since that time. In 1910, 109 of the 406 Filipinos documented in the area were noted as direct descendants of these Manila men (Takaki 315).

After the settling of the Filipino community in Louisiana, the next significant settling of Asians in what would become America came in 1778 when Chinese landed on Hawaii. Capitalizing on the lush tropical islands that had been unknown to Europeans or Americans until James Cook happened upon them in 1778, European and United States’ efforts to establish businesses there were in full force by 1835 when New England businessman William Hooper traveled to Kauai to establish the first sugar plantation in Hawaii (Takaki 21). The businesses needed workers, and the first major influx of Asians who came to America specifically between the 1840s and the early twentieth century met that need. Their working and living conditions followed the model of slavery that had proved successful for businessmen in the South.

In 1639, while the Manilamen were settling in Louisiana, Japan entered into an “era of isolation” and prohibited travel of Japanese citizens to foreign lands. Japan’s policy of exclusion was uninterrupted until 1853 when American naval officer Matthew Perry sailed into Edo (later Tokyo) Bay to “open” Japan to Western—particularly American—navigation trade and diplomatic relations (Chan 9). The 1868 Meiji Restoration, which brought changes to the economy and to the modernization of Japan, signaled the beginning of Japanese immigration to the United States. The era of isolation and the absence of the Japanese in the United States until after the Civil War lead to the early focus on Chinese immigrants. Japanese labor was introduced when sixty Japanese workers were brought to California to pick fruit. At that time, a Japanese worker in the States could save the same amount of money as the salary paid to the governor of Japan. It was conventional wisdom among the Japanese that “money grew on trees in America” (Takaki 29, 45). The history of the Japanese immigrants to the United States can be divided broadly into two movements according to Yuji Ichioka: the first spanning the years from 1885 to 1907, marked most distinctively by the idea of prosperity abroad with Rizan’s poetic “huge dreams of fortune,” and a return home; and the second from 1908 to 1924, with parallels to the activities of the Chinese sojourners, when the idea of permanent residency began to become popular (Ichioka 3).

The sojourners were relegated to work camps where they often lived in “dilapidated structures [that] suggested filth and immorality as second nature,” and Gunther Barth compares the conditions of the sojourners “to those of Negro slaves” (212). According to Barth, these sojourners came into the United States into an atmosphere of hostility heightened by the belief that they planned to take what they could from the “American dream” and return to their native country. The usurpation of that which was considered the right of hardworking Americans was

the foundation of the mistreatment directed toward Asian immigrants. Chinese and Japanese immigrants are considered the pioneering Asian American groups, and, of these, the larger group is the Chinese, who are the focus of much study, speculation, and legislation because, as the first Asian immigrants to reach the United States in large numbers, they were also the first targets of suspicion (Wu 1). The treatment to which they were subjected became the standard for other immigrants from other Asian countries, and their current numbers are a direct result of labor brought to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. During the latter half of the twentieth century, the Asian American population in the United States grew from approximately one million to almost ten million people. These numbers of individuals with Asian and Pacific Rim ancestry made “Asian American” the third largest minority in the United States and created a new opportunity by which to explore and explode the black/white binary as it has formed relative to relations between white and colored Americans.

Nineteenth century activity in the United States and Britain to abolish the trade of Africans as slaves had a major influence on the availability of workers for the mines, fields, and public works in the Americas and countries under imperial powers (Okihiro 38). The importation of slaves was officially outlawed by Congress in 1807, with the availability of slave labor further curtailed in the United States and British colonies by the abolishment of the transatlantic slave trade in the British Empire in 1833. The last ship illegally importing Africans to be sold as slaves docked in Mobile, Alabama, in 1859, and by the time the Civil War began in 1861, there had been a significant increase of Asian labor. The changes in the labor supply impacted United States’ economics transnationally and racially. According to Gary Okihiro in *Margins and Mainstreams*, “whites considered Asians ‘as blacks’ or, at the very least as replacement for blacks in the post-Civil War South,” but “whites imported Chinese precisely because they were

not blacks and were thus perpetual aliens, who could never vote” (62). Additionally, according to the governor of Arkansas at the time of Reconstruction, there was some appeal to bringing in Asian labor that stemmed from “the underlying motive . . . to punish the negro from having abandoned the control of his old master, and to regulate the conditions of his employment and the scale of wages to be paid him” (Wu 60).

Just as cotton was the agricultural king in the South and dictated the demand and flow of labor in the South, sugar was king of crops in Hawaii, and accordingly, demanded the labor of many to keep it financially lucrative for the white American plantation owners. Complaints and problems with the indigenous workers on the islands of Hawaii were similar to the complaints against Native Americans by Southern planters. They were not easily disciplined and could easily return to their families and engage in other means of survival—farming and fishing in the land that they knew quite well. Additionally, the population was declining as a result of interactions with newcomers on the islands and new diseases and advancing industrialization that they brought with them. Therefore, in 1850, planters founded the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society to introduce workers from China. According to reports filed during that time, conditions for the Chinese workers were worse than those of slaves on the mainland. The conditions for the workers devolved to constant labor without regard for or attention to their complaints, and “slavery was nothing compared to it” (Takaki 21). The ideology that supported the trade of people from Africa throughout Great Britain and the Americas was easily transferred to peoples from Asia, and white planters exploited the “new slaves” for the purposes of labor and profit (Okimoto 40). These new laborers, colloquially called “coolies,” were of two types: those who came to the United States and its territories and those who were dispatched to Peru, Cuba, and Brazil, who reportedly subsisted in much worse conditions than their counterparts dispatched to

the US. The coolie trade expanded in the 1840s and 1850s. Once in the system, many workers were sold, beaten, kidnapped, and otherwise mistreated; the mortality rate was more than 12 percent (Yun 18) for those who perished on the ocean voyage from China to the destination of their work. Because of the parallels that can be made to the Middle Passage voyage of African slaves, the journey has been referred to as the Pacific Passage (Stewart 55).

The word “coolie” and its variations, including “kuli,” can be translated in many Asian languages including Urdu, Malay, Cantonese, Japanese, and Mandarin, to meanings directly related to hard labor. In the racialized history of labor, “coolie” and its variations took on pejorative connotations and refers especially to Asian labor (Yun xx). “Coolie” has become the umbrella term for particular types of Asian slave labor, indentured labor, and credit-ticket labor, where men bought passage to America on credit with their labor as collateral. Very often, however, the terms of the original contracts were not honored, blurring the lines between the categories and reifying the use of “coolie” in America to represent all Asian laborers. The Asian Indian and Chinese coolies were bartered over for sale by European and American ship captains in a process called by the Chinese “the buying and selling of pigs,” and they were held in “pigpens” reminiscent of the barracoons that had been designed for the holding and transport of African slaves. An account in Gary Okihiro’s *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* recounts the conditions: “The coolies were penned up in numbers from 10 to 12 in a wooden shed, like a slave barracoon, nearly naked, very filthy, and room only sufficient to lie; the space 120 by 24 feet with a bamboo floor near the roof; the number in all about 500” (41). The conditions described here are reminiscent of both the living quarters for African American slaves and the conditions of the transport ships in the Middle Passage.

For their similarities, coolie labor proved to be less expensive than African slaves, and as the activity and legislation against the slave trade increased, it proved useful that coolie labor could be brought from Asia in indentured servitude and then used as slave labor (Yun 17). It was reported that an American ship captain transporting some Chinese workers to Cuba claimed the Chinese “the best and cheapest labor in the world” who would make good plantation workers and unparalleled servants (Okihiro 46). Beyond, or perhaps because of, the external forces, African and Asian workers were linked as they were “essential for maintenance of white supremacy, they were both members of an oppressed class of ‘colored’ laborers, and they were both tied historically to the global network of labor migration as slaves and coolies.” Eventually, Asian workers came to be viewed as ideal because they were productive laborers whose work came cheap, who were not citizens, and who could not vote; therefore, their numbers would not influence the economics or politics of the nation (Okihiro 45). Further, they would come to be used to discipline African workers and to depress wages. The *Vicksburg Times* (Mississippi) would report, “Our colored friends who have left the farm for politics and plunder, should go down to the *Great Republic* today and look at the new laborer who is destined to crowd the negro from the American farm” (Loewen 45).

Before the Civil War, southern planters saw African slaves as a counter to the immigration of “the hordes of immigrants now flowing from Europe” into the American South. After the war, planters saw free blacks as a troublesome presence and sought to deport them outside the United States, “back” to an Africa that they had never known, and to replace them with Europeans and Asians (Okihiro 44). By 1862, an act of Congress prohibited American involvement in the coolie trade. To avoid violating the act but ensuring uninterrupted in the import of workers, there was a distinction made between coolies, involuntary, and bonded labor,

and migrant Asian workers who were free and voluntary labor (Okiihiro 46). In 1869, there was a prediction from a Georgia planter that larger numbers of Chinese would “take the place of negroes as they are said to be better laborers, more intelligent, and can be had for \$12 to \$13 per month and rations.” This point of comparison makes real the estimation of Africans and Asians not as people but as “mere fodder for the fields and factories of the master class” (Okiihiro 44).

After Reconstruction failed, white southern planters returned their attention to the African American laborer, and interest in Asian workers all but disappeared (Loewen). Both the African slave trade and the Asian coolie trade were systems of bonded labor that significantly informed the entry of Africans’ and Asians’ entry into America. These forms of migrant labor served “to sustain a global order of supremacy and subordination” (Okiihiro 48). The lines that directed Africans and Asians to America converge at this point, and the impetus for that intersection came from the economic requirement and advantage of bonded labor buttressed by the belief in the centrality of whiteness and the marginality of its negation—nonwhiteness (Okiihiro 48).

With marginality as foundational, historians have noted that the slave treatment of Chinese laborers directly related to economic necessities rather than any of the “philanthropic or perverse” intentions and rationale of white owners of African slaves. Moreover, the planters themselves noted that the treatment of the coolies was determined by the economic necessities of the work with the men who worked as critical as the materials and supplies ordered for the routine operation of the plantation (Yun 2). Planters would include the need for workers on their lists for supplies, listing Filipinos right under fertilizer and Japanese among the mules and horses. There was a systematic method of operation that was designed to alienate workers—to make them feel and appear subservient, to control them, and to ensure their disenfranchisement. Pointing to the loose tunics and pants and long pony-tailed queues of the Chinese workers, white

male workers taunted them by calling them “wahine,” the Hawaiian word for “woman.” Bosses systematically imported workers from various countries to keep the labor pool diverse to discourage collusion and to enforce discipline (Takaki 25). There was an imposed code of silence that was easier to enforce among speakers of varied languages. Because they could not speak up for themselves and there was no value associated with their voices, the code of silence effectually reduced the workers to their appearance and the resulting stereotypes became the sum of their difference. Many white farmers felt that they were forced to hire Asian laborers because they could not find white workers to do “stoop” work necessary in the fields (Takaki 28), thus Asian workers were also used to encourage competition, believing that the white workers would work harder to distance themselves from the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino workers, further entrenching their otherness and collapsing them into a mass of colored labor and further inculcating the relationship between race, class, and labor in the United States.

When gold was discovered in California and other areas of the American west, the Chinese came to “Gold Mountain” to mine for gold and to work in jobs that developed as the American west expanded, including building the railroad (Chan 3). Similar to the fliers that would come to southern United States a century later promising prosperity for African Americans in the northern states, notices from labor brokers in Chinese port cities near Guangzhou (Canton), the capital and largest city of the Guangdong province in China, stated,

Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and [they] make him welcome. There you will have great pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description . . . It is a nice country, without Mandarins or soldiers . . . Money is in great plenty and to spare in America (Takaki 34).

The truth was more evident in poems and other writings that spoke of loneliness and loss of family when Chinese men immigrated in search of Gold Mountain (Hom, qtd. in Okihiro 73). Following such promises of prosperity, many accounts report approximately 20,000 Asians came to Sutter's Mill, California, within seven years. By the mid-1860s, as the Civil War was ending, gold profits were decreasing, so the Chinese sought mining work as laborers in the quartz mines. Quartz mining required more expensive equipment, which many of the Chinese miners did not have and could not afford; therefore, their previously independent means of support shifted back to indentured servitude as they became dependent on white miners and white employers.

Malicious acts by white mine workers to interfere with the successful efforts of the Chinese miners were supported legally by the Foreign Miners' Tax of 1850. The Tax was directed at nonnative Americans in general, but protests from European immigrants led to a revision of the Foreign Miners' Tax Act, and the Tax was reissued in 1852 at a lower rate and with language specifically targeting Chinese immigrants. By the time the Foreign Miners' Tax was eventually declared unconstitutional in 1870, it is reported that the Chinese had paid approximately \$58 million, between one-quarter to one-half of California's revenue for the time period (Pfaelzer 31).

Following mining, the next major American technological and industrial breakthrough to impact the Chinese was railroad construction, and Chinese contributions to it transformed the American West. Before rail travel, California was almost isolated from the rest of the country. Visitors reached the territory after many months of travel by wagon train or stagecoach, and goods imported from the East Coast of the United States came via a long ocean voyage, traveling around South America (Chan 31). To complete the industrial vision of transatlantic travel, fifty Chinese workers were first hired in 1865 by Central Pacific to lay track heading east; not long

after, there were fifty more. The evaluation of their work performance at the time was quite favorable in that “they prove[d] nearly equal to white men in the amount of work they perform[ed], and [were] much more reliable” (Takaki 84). The nature and pace of common labor remained constant in the nineteenth century, but the place of origin of day laborers changed. Working side by side and enduring hardships imposed by nature, cruel bosses, and cultural prejudice, groups of Irish, Chinese, and other immigrant men built the great infrastructure of the American industrial revolution, including railroads (Lee 57). The growing presence of different cultures representing many nations created a climate of diversity. Race prejudice and other biases notwithstanding, multicultural contact did influence the nation, with the introduction of change agents such as words, foods, clothing, and agricultural advice and innovations. According to Brad Evans in *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920*, the resultant culture could have only happened in America. No other environment would have produced—negatively or positively—the American condition. Thus, Evans asserts, “Climate was the elemental cause, the nation was the result” (93).

According to Ronald Takaki, the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad line was a “Chinese achievement.” Not only were the Chinese diligent and consistent workers, but they also employed technical knowledge that advanced the tunnel drilling, particularly notable in the mountain areas. They created a complex tunnel system that facilitated continued work through the winter of 1866, when snowdrifts were recorded at more than 60 feet high (85). The completion of this achievement carried with it the blights of stereotypes, disenfranchisement, and ill-treatment. As railroad travel opened the California territory and more and more white workers came from the eastern States, the population boom made jobs scarce and workers plenty, and the Chinese were seen as unnecessary competition. By 1871, there were two white and one

Chinese worker for every job (Takaki 105). Once the last railroad spike was driven in Promontory Summit, Utah, signaling the completion of the railroad, Chinese workers were left to find their way back to California, and many were denied passage on the trains running on the rails they had built. They wandered back west, becoming itinerant farm workers, providing field labor for a place to sleep and a small fee (Chan 32). Some settled in the communities where they found work, creating an Asian presence across the country that has grown through generations. While recruitment fliers were traveling across the Pacific, rail travel increased the domestic circulation of media and propaganda. Some of it included the rhetoric that was in official documents and popular periodicals and pamphlets published by labor organizations in their campaigns to extend Chinese exclusion legislation as each act came up for renewal (Wong 6). As American mass media expanded from the American northeast to its southern and western regions, trade cards, illustrations, photographs, stories, songs, and plays about the newest American immigrant also traveled on the trains. Just as there were popular postcards and stereotypical images that promoted the negative images of African Americans, poems, stories, and jingles depicting Asians as immoral, ignorant, illiterate, foreign, and alien perpetuated the negative image of the Asian, particularly the Chinese, in America. These material items promoted the commodification of culture and difference, and, as the nineteenth century came to a close, languages, folk tales, customs, commodities, people, ideas, images, literature, and the movement between populations across geographically dispersed regions could be organized around race (Evans 2).

An illustration published in an 1869 *Harper's Weekly*, titled "Pacific Railroad Complete," shows a married couple, the Chinese man with the stereotypical large mustache and the long pony-tailed queue. He is wearing an overly large tunic and pants, standing with linked

arms with a white woman dressed stylishly but conservatively in a hat and bustled dress that was quite fashionable in America at the time. According to Robert G. Lee, the illustration speaks to the “the geographic consolidation of the nation,” and, standing in front of the “church of St. Confucius” the couple appears to represent the Kipling’s meeting of East and West in marriage with allusions to both the Far East to the ideals of the global West and the conservative East Coast to the exotic possibilities of the American West (83). In his comments in a pamphlet against the Chinese in 1870, Senator James Blaine seems to respond to the illustration, voicing the growing concern that the ideals from the Orient would overtake Western values, and stating his concern that the Chinese would have the United States make a choice between the civilization of Christ and the civilization of Confucius (Wong 8).

California became a focus of settlement for the late nineteenth century. The railroad and the expansion of the western American frontier fed the American sense of adventure, supporting the romantic notions of exploring uncharted territories, conquering wild animals, and savage peoples, and testifying to the American sense of mastery and rightful dominance. Stories chronicling these adventures framed many of Jack London’s early twentieth-century work. London championed the themes of man’s relationship with and dominance over the wilderness and exploration of the primitive nature of the North American West, including Alaska and the Yukon Territory. He is perhaps one of the first fiction writers to have his work very widely read in popular magazines, partly because his themes and the technology that created and distributed low-cost magazines coincided at a convenient time for both the writer and the commercial market. London’s views, which were popular and widely read, reflected those of many in the American West. In his *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902), Frona, the white female protagonist says, “We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors . . . Will the

Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not!!” (83). In the short story “The Inevitable White Man,” anthologized in *South Sea Tales* (1911), protagonist Captain Woodward declares,

The white man’s job is to farm the world, and it’s a big enough job cut out for him . . . There’s one thing for sure, the white has to run the niggers whether he understands them or not. It’s inevitable. It’s fate (238-239).

A native of San Francisco, London provided a certain level of expertise for his readers back east. Therefore, his 1904 essay, “The Yellow Peril,” written during his time as a war correspondent in Asia during the Russo-Japanese War, influenced American consciousness regarding Asian immigrants, the Chinese in particular. When immigration expanded in the mid-nineteenth century and Asians began coming to the mainland United States via the east and west immigration stations as agricultural and industrial labor, the numbers of Asians coming into America was small compared to the numbers of Europeans, but white Americans were overwhelmed with the numbers of immigrants so dissimilar to themselves coming in to work on the new railroad, on plantations in the west and in Hawaii, and in the search for gold. The facts support that in the 1850s, the rate of Chinese immigration was second to the Irish and followed closely by German but did not come close to the total number of European immigrants to the United States (Wu 11). Although the numbers were small, the concentration of Asian immigrants in the western United States as compared to other regions made Americans nervous because of the threat of the “yellow peril.” The phrase can be traced to the late nineteenth century, where it is believed to have been first used by Kaiser Wilhelm II (Okihiro 119), but the idea that the West would be destroyed by a dangerous and exotic Eastern enemy shrouded in mystery and exoticism with dangerous ways can be traced to at least the thirteenth century when

Genghis Khan crossed Asia and conquered Eastern Europe twice, finally settling in Russian as ruler of the land that he had defeated (Wu 10). Thriving in the last half of the nineteenth century, rising unrest and instability in China and Japan lent to the anxiety that Americans associated with the Far East. This uncertainty was directly linked to the Boxer Rebellion and its challenge to Western ideals, including Christianity, and to the Filipino revolution in the wake of annexation of the Philippine Islands. As a literary theme, the fear of the threat focuses on specific issues including perceived competition to the white labor force from Asian workers, alleged moral degeneracy of Asian people, and potential miscegenation (Wu 1). Further, there was concern about the rate of Chinese immigration with claims that the increasing numbers “would swarm over the Pacific” (Wu 11).

The anxiety was fueled prior to the Chinese coming to America in numbers, by conflicting reports from missionaries, traders, and diplomats who visited China and documented difference. According to Stuart Creighton Miller in *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*, there are decades of reports of “Chinese deceit, cunning, idolatry, despotism, xenophobia, cruelty, infanticide, and intellectual and sexual perversity” (192). Stanford social scientist Mary R. Coolidge called the Chinese immigrants an “alien class” although she asserts their presence was “sufficient to change the policy of a nation and to commit the United States to a race discrimination at variance with . . . professed theories of government and so irrevocably that it has become an established tradition” (qtd in Miller 182). Images of the Chinese change for the worse as they immigrate to the United States and officially become “othered” and forced outside of “acceptable” white society. They are described as a people more dangerous, violent, and scheming than Americans, living in an environment where drugs, violence, prostitution, and murder are acceptable (Wu 3). These assumptions extend to smaller

Asian communities, encompassing the growing Japanese, Korean, and Filipino communities as well. Like the postcards and messages of the minstrel show, these negative images had a strong impact across the country, strengthening the ideas of Otherness and perpetuating negative stereotypes that interactions with real Chinese and other Asians did little to diminish because of the differences in appearance, clothing, food, and culture.

In addition to Jack London, other popular writers contributed to the early fiction about Chinese immigrants in the 1860s and 1870s, including Joaquin Miller, Ambrose Bierce, and Bret Harte, who all lived in social atmosphere hostile to Chinese immigrants. In their writings, they tended to present them stereotypically—vacillating between the conniving villain and the nonthreatening, perhaps even sympathetic, effeminate (Wu 13). Their creations relied on stereotypes of race, gender, and difference to cast dispersion on and to question the Chinese presence in America. Stereotypes are often contradictory, and among those that circulated widely at their peak between 1850 and 1940 are those that depicted Chinese Americans as easily excitable and hysterical about things often thought mundane in the Anglo world. They were portrayed as highly feminized and incapable of complex thought while at the same time depicted as diabolical schemers and plotters against the West. The tong killer was set beside the effeminate house servant, the prostitute of low morals beside the docile, innocent lotus flower. Along with these one-dimensional portrayals, the Chinese were also associated with a language, religion, and cultural history too difficult to understand. An amalgam of faces that all looked alike, they were overwhelmingly and negatively thought to be inscrutable (Wu 13). However, one of the reasons for the perception of inscrutability may be a difference in communication within the cultures. According to anthropologist Edward T. Hall in *Beyond Culture*, Asian cultures are considered “high context cultures” (91), and one characteristic of which is that many

things are left unsaid, letting the nuances within the culture create the context of understanding. Words and word choice become very important because few words can communicate a complex message very effectively to a group within the culture but less effectively to people outside that group. Conversely, in a “low context” culture, the communicator needs to be more explicit—the value of a single word is less important than a longer discourse. English and other Western languages are classified as lower context while Asian and other Eastern cultures are among the higher context cultures. (90-92). Higher context cultures have solid ties and fixed connections to tradition and history. The facial expressions, clipped answers, and enigmatic proverbs often associated with Asian high cultures have been often parodied in skits and minstrel performances, used to illustrate ignorance and naiveté simultaneously with cunning and deviousness.

Bret Harte’s poem, “Plain Language of Truthful James,” which came to be known as “Heathen Chinee,” became a summarization of anti-Chinese sentiment. The poem was published in *The Overland Monthly Magazine* in September 1870, and its popularity may have played a critical role as the impetus for song and skit writers and performers east of the Rocky Mountains to focus on the Chinese immigrant as a central figure. In *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s*, Krystyn Moon asserts that Harte’s intention in his poem was to show commonalities between the Americans and the Chinese in the Far West, who in the action of the poem, are both cheating at cards (39). Rather than a balanced treatment of the two main characters in the poem, Harte evokes two powerful, pervasive stereotypes of Chinese immigrants. Harte casts an Irishman, William Nye, in a card game with the poem’s unknown speaker, and the Chinese opponent, “Ah-Sin,” eponymous symbolism for the many vices stereotypically associated with Chinese at that time. Harte’s description is initially innocuous as he describes Ah-Sin as “Chinee”—effeminate, unintelligent, and docile.

He describes his smile as pensive, childlike, and bland, and that he was “soft as the skies.” Once his cheating is discovered, however, Harte’s word choice, including “frightful” and “hiding,” along with the description of Ah Sin’s fingernails as long and tapered, evoke images of a sinister presence and a scheming mastermind. The poem begins and ends with the verse,

That for ways that are dark
 And for tricks that are vain
 The heathen Chinese is peculiar.

The repetition of these three lines assures the reader that the Chinese people engage in dishonesty, and emphasizes that their ways in all things are unknown and strange to the average American. At the poem’s climax, Nye exclaims, “We are mined by cheap labor.” Use of the word “mined” in connection to the phrase “cheap labor” directly references the challenge that the Asian workers present to the white workingman’s ideology, which has at its core a nostalgic vision of a white republic (Lee 56). Harte does make clear that Nye himself is cheating with the speaker’s admission that his

feelings were shocked
 At the state of Nye’s sleeve
 Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers
 And the same with intent to deceive.(27-30)

However, it is overtly plain that the villain in the poem is Ah Sin. Two major ideas are conveyed in this poem: Using eugenics as a barometer of difference indicates the stereotypical natures of both the Irish and the Chinese, including a tendency to gamble. Additionally, although Nye is cheating as well, he is portrayed as the more sympathetic, perhaps even the more universal, character because he is white. Rather than comparing the cheating ways of both, the emphasis is

on the Chinese ability to deceive and his “heathen” ways and sinfulness, which lead to the ruination of white labor and the working American’s way of life (Takaki 105).

Bret Harte’s poem became the foundation for a play written by Harte and Mark Twain in 1877 for which Twain proposed, “the Chinaman is getting to be a pretty frequent figure in the United States and is going to be a great political problem and we thought it well for you to see him on stage before you had to deal with that problem” (qtd. in Bean 92). The play was staged in the spirit of minstrelsy, which was at its height in the mid 1840s as the first Asian influx to the western United States hit its peak. Once again, the performance stage provided the platform for what was often the only introduction and contact that white audiences had with the increasingly diverse American population. Although Asians were largely unknown in most of the United States in the mid 1800s, they were quickly becoming familiar in the West. Traveling performers who visited the gold miners’ camps and boomtowns saw these foreigners and capitalized on their exotic differences. They were presented as completely “alien” never able to conform and blend in as their European counterparts might. Althusserian social theorists have suggested that every social formation resides not in a single mode of economic production but in a complex overlay of several modes at once, with residual modes now subordinated to the dominant one and emergent modes potentially disruptive of it (Lott 220). With the minstrel show, the eastern and western coasts of the United States connected, and with the inclusion of the Asian characters, East met West once again. As the shows traveled to provide entertainment to the camps and new settlements of the west, the new immigrants and their strange ways made them perfect resource material to be mined for parody on the stage. Asians had “odd-sounding languages, bizarre diets, and wore pigtails” (Bean 92) thus making them interesting material for minstrel exploitation as performers exploited the differences of the other selves. As had been the case with the black

caricatures, seeing the Asian performed on stage provided a type of understanding that informed the interactions that real Asian people had with the majority culture in real life. Under a comparative gaze, the observers came to understand the significance of their own superiority in their mastery of English, American clothes, food, and appearance.

According to Eric Lott in *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*,

The minstrel show was a national presence; and its evocation of garden variety racial disdain as well as paranoid racial fantasizing, complacent white-Negroism as well as humanitarian interest, indicates its effortless ability to operate in the realms of racial subjectivity and national self-reflection at one and the same time (Lott 185).

The minstrel show was central to the creation of racial ideologies. While European immigrants were not exempt, the most popular to provide show material were those most different from the white minstrels performing.

Perhaps the central, most defining instance was the way it became a major national signifier of western migration. To understand this process requires us to know about popular investments in the land issue—the issue, in a word, of California gold. We have seen that the collapse of autonomous working-class politics in the aftermath of the 1837 panic deflected attention from class enemies, uniting white working class and emergent petite bourgeoisie around campaigns of racial religions, and ethnic opposition: antiabolitionism, temperance, nativism (Lott 202).

The stereotype of the Asian vacillated between the docile and the sinister, without recognition of the reality of the person it sought to represent. As the masking on the minstrel stage extended from blackface to yellowface, the characters were either smiling feminized lotus flowers or clawed sneering schemers. These two stereotypes are perhaps the strongest and most often seen portrayals of Chinese than any other Asian group in popular culture (E. Kim 4). Perhaps this is a direct result of the numbers of Chinese involved in the coolie trade and in the transnational railroad construction. The Chinese have been generalized to all Asians, in keeping with the Western tradition and difficulty in distinguishing between Asian nationalities. According to Elaine Kim, there is a “yellow mask” on the face of the “Asian brute,” and his sunken eyes either register no feelings and no expression or, like “dull coals,” “burn behind their slitlike eyeholes” (6). These descriptions were ripe for minstrel representations, which told a complex tale of gendered class and racial subjectivity (Lott 111). “Minstrels delighted in strange-looking and strange-sounding immigrants who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century” (Bean 92). The minstrel show had become so elevated in the American experience that during the ceremonial receptions of Perry and the establishment of the embassy in Japan, minstrelsy was a critical aspect of the cultural exchanges. The Japanese offered a Kabuki performance, and Americans offered a minstrel show (Bean 93). Occasionally using advertising that simply read, “JAPS,” minstrel caricatures of the “jap oh knees” seems to have peaked between 1865 and 1867 when a troupe of imperial Japanese acrobats toured the United States. According to Annemarie Bean, at least eight major minstrel companies performed spoofs of this new sensation (94). As with the black caricatures, the minstrels had no real interest in Asians and their real lives, feelings, or abilities. They were “strange, passing fancies” perfect for entertainment (Kim 95) and around whom parody and caricature were made.

The minstrel stage provided a type of distance; however, attention still needed to be paid to their actual interactions with white Americans whom they encountered every day. While the source of conflict between African Americans and white Americans is clear as conflict between master and slave, the source of conflict between Asians and white Americans was not so clear; therefore, legislation played a major role in informing and defining the roles and limitations of immigrants in America. Like Africans and their descendants who were marked by visible attributes, Asian immigrants could not “become” Americans as the European immigrants could. They had qualities they could not hide or change, and they brought elements of their ancient and exotic culture with them (Takaki 13). As a result, there was a cultural prejudice that could not be “leavened” because of racial bias from their appearance. They did not look “American” and came from a distant place, and therefore, they and their descendants have been treated like strangers for generations.

Asians in America were excluded from citizenship by the 1790 naturalization act that restricted the right of naturalization to an alien who was free and white. The revision of the act in 1870 included generations of former slaves, making “aliens” of African descent eligible for citizenship through naturalization. Asians, who were neither white nor black, were considered “aliens ineligible for citizenship” (Ichioka 1). Specific exclusion from the possibility of naturalization created a community that was also excluded from social and political action within the larger community where they lived and worked. European immigrants disenfranchised at the time of their immigration had the possibility of naturalization available to them, and so no matter the challenges and obstacles in their way, they had the opportunity to fight for rights promised them as citizens. They also had the opportunity to purchase land and to own businesses, opportunities for establishment and success not afforded to their counterparts of color. Lacking

agency and being excluded from the political process, Asian immigrants were seen as “political pariahs” who lacked any power of their own (Ichioka 2). From the earliest times of Chinese arrival in great numbers, there was concern about how they would ultimately assimilate into American society. Chinese were considered as inferior as black Americans but were regarded as less assimilable than black Americans because of the endurance of the advanced Chinese culture and civilization, which, unlike that of people of African descent, remained prevalent in their day to day lives (Wong and Chan 6). African identities, along with First Nation cultures had been flattened and amalgamated in the years leading up to the nineteenth century, so very few traces of ethnic or national identities survived. Conversely, Asians came to the United States with national identities intact.

The concerns about their ability to assimilate contributed to the inevitable collapsing of all Asians cultures into one homogenized, racialized, disenfranchised body. The case of George Hall, a white man whose conviction of the murder of a Chinese man was overturned in 1854, was a contributing factor as well, leading beyond the amalgamation of Asians to that of all nonwhite people. Although three Chinese witnesses testified against him, their testimony was declared inadmissible when the Supreme Court upheld a California statute that barred testimony from Indians, mulattoes, and African Americans was extended to all nonwhite peoples. The decision included the connotation of “black” as anybody who was not white.

The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 impacted the emigration of Chinese citizens to America, and in 1870, the Civil Rights Act assured Chinese the right to testify in court and forbade discriminatory penalties, while granting naturalization rights to people of African descent, but not to Chinese or other Asians. The 1870 Civil Rights Act was reversed in 1880. With the reversal, Jim Crow became law, and the United States negotiated a new treaty with China that

eventually led to the 1882 Exclusion Act, limiting Chinese immigration to teachers, students, merchants, diplomats, and tourists and excluding laborers (Wu 2). Additionally, paralleling the significance of *Dred Scott v Sanford* in African American history, *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886) follows as a reminder of the fight that Americans of Asian descent have waged for recognition of their personhood and their right to civil liberties afforded all Americans. By the time that Yick Wo brought his case before the courts, the Fourteenth Amendment had been passed, and the court found that Asian immigrants were subject to its protection. For all the effort and immediate victory of the Yick Wo decision, one decade later, *Plessy v. Ferguson* came before the courts, and separate but equal rulings were instituted for African Americans, impacting all other nonwhite individuals across the country as well.

As legislators debated the question of potential contributions from the Asian community and the impact from that community on the American way of life, one legislator put forth this opinion in 1879:

I think the Chinese are a far superior race to the negro race physiologically and mentally. That may probably not be the case with some neat mulattoes who have white blood; that is different. I think that the Chinese have a great deal more brain power than the original negro . . . for that reason the negro is very easily taught; he assimilates more readily. The Chinese are non-assimilative because their form of civilization has crystallized (qtd in Wong and Chan 6).

In this instance, the Chinese and the African are not considered for what their individual or intrinsic traits are or even in comparison to those of European descent or white Americans. Instead, they are considered and given meaning based on what they are not in contrast to each the other.

The Scott Act of 1888 clarified the racial foundation of the Chinese Exclusion Act by redefining “Chinese” to include those of Chinese descent regardless of citizenship, nation of birth, and nation of residence; therefore, if one was an American or European citizen by birth and of Chinese descent and traveling outside of the United States, he or she was not allowed to return to the United States furthering the idea of Asian Americans as “exile[s] in America” (Bulosan vii) not welcome within the nation and without a home when they traveled abroad. No other nationality had been previously defined or restricted in this manner. The Act was against those of Chinese descent only the Act became racialized out of fear based on culture and race (Wu 30). The Chinese Exclusion Act was not fully repealed until 1943, when China and the United States became allies in World War II.

The permanent Restriction Law of 1921 and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 set percentage limits on the number of immigrants allowed into the country based on the number of immigrants from that country already residing in the United States. The 3 percent limit established in 1921 was decreased to 2 percent in 1924. Influenced by eugenics theories, which focused on keeping undesirables from joining the ranks of American citizens, these Acts reified the alleged superiority of white Americans of northern and western European backgrounds by imposing quotas based upon national origins which favored those groups and by limiting the numbers of Southern and Eastern Europeans who, by late in the nineteenth century, were immigrating in large numbers, and by prohibiting the immigration of peoples who were not already largely represented in the United States, including East Asians and Asian Indians.

The immigration influx dramatically affected employment and the availability of work. In the nineteenth century, the Chinese worked in almost every labor market: agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and transportation. By 1920, they had “virtually vanished” from these areas of

employment, shifting dramatically to service industries (Takaki 239-40). The dynamic within the workforce changed as Asians were forced out of other industries and into service and domestic work. As itinerant and tenant farmers, they provided harvest labor. They served as travelling merchants, cooks for field workers, and nannies for white children. They worked in sweatshop industries making footwear, clothing, cigars, brooms, and other sundry items. As a means of survival in response to racial discrimination and exclusion in the labor market, many turned to self-employment (Takaki 13). Laundry is one of the pioneer businesses, along with restaurants and hotels, mining claims, and grocers. These special services facilitated movement eastward across the United States, and large numbers of workers owned shares in the businesses, supporting and expanding them despite restrictions imposed by ethnic enclaves (Chan 2). First documentation of self-employment begins as early as 1851 when a Chinese laundry officially opened in San Francisco. By 1860, there were 890 Chinese laundrymen in California. Ten years later that number had climbed to 3000. Pushed out of other industries, they found their niche where there was a need and a shortage because others thought the work beneath them. Confined by the work and the lowly status associated with it, the laundrymen felt defined by their labor.

One piece, two pieces, three pieces,

The clothes must be washed cleanly,

Four pieces, five pieces, six pieces,

The clothes must be ironed smoothly . . .

You say laundry is really cheap work

And only the Chinamen are will to be so low. (Takaki 242)

The Chinese laundryman was usually associated with Chinatown, although many of the laundries themselves may be situated in majority neighborhoods. The stereotype of the Chinese

laundryman created during that time persists, seen as recently as the 1970s in commercials for Calgon water softener. These commercials feature an Asian man assuring his white customers in heavily accented English that an “ancient Chinese secret” is the reason he is able to get the laundry so clean and soft.

The prejudice and hostility directed at Chinese immigrants played a large part in the formation of Chinatowns, even before 1882. Prior to the Exclusion Act of 1882, 98 percent of Chinese immigrants lived in communities of 25,000 or less. In the face of legislated discrimination, communities began to grow as Asians sought communities of support. Large Chinatowns are documented in major west coast cities such as like Seattle and San Francisco. These enclaves thrived in port cities where “an ethnic community could provide a social and cultural haven for the newly arrived” (Wu 71).

Early Chinese communities shifted from rural to urban because of the availability of work, shifting industries, and the lack of women and families. The need for interaction and community helped to push many Asians in the Pacific states into urban areas as many larger communities worked hard to remain free from Asian influence and “to exclude and eradicate all traces of Asians in America” (Okihiro 108). These anti-Asian sentiments forced immigrants and their families into enclaves that became Chinatowns, Koreatowns, Japantowns, and Little Saigons that still exist today.

The employment market was larger and more varied in larger cities, so many Asians made their way to them from smaller towns, and because of the migratory nature of work that was available to them, Asian immigrants struggled to create a “home” and the accompanying sense of place (Okihiro 108). Additionally, riots and other unrest drove the Chinese out of the rural areas and back into urban enclaves. The resulting Chinatowns can be attributed to several

factors, including the bachelor societies first established with the large numbers of male immigrants arrival. They evolved to become residential communities for singles as well as for families and businesses. Members of the larger community often frequented their shops, restaurants, and laundries, but white communities did not want Asians living among them. Therefore, they were pushed back to the overcrowded, often poorly constructed enclaves, the conditions of which reified the idea that they, especially the Chinese, were unclean, clannish, and unassimilable. In fact, much of the fiction about these enclaves presents them as “exotic, filthy, and crime ridden ghettos” (Wu 3).

Within their communities, residents had more freedom of movement and opportunities to interact socially with family and friends. Because the enclave becomes the incubator for culture, language, and custom, it can be depicted as absolutely different from “American” life (Kim 11), and it became a major attraction for tourists looking to experience and gaze upon the Asian other. For all the vilification of the immoral, dangerous lifestyle of the enclaves, there existed a strong tourist economy based on the exotic imagery associated with symbolic Chinatowns. The tourist attraction was enmeshed in the fetishisms of the exotic—their mystery and appeal was tied to their difference, and such tourist attention meant profit in trade on their Oriental-ness. They created a “fantasy land” peopled with characters like Confucius, Charlie Chan, the Dragon Lady, and Fu Manchu, complete with the illicit promise of opium dens and gambling houses around every corner (Takaki 249).

For the Chinese, Chinatown was not the amusement center that tourists enjoyed; it was where they raised their families in their own community, where there were clothes, food, religious centers, and family associations that supported them and nurtured their culture, and, where, for the most part, they were free from the antagonisms of the larger community. They

could speak freely and share advice and experiences. Chinatown was “home away from home” where the Americans became the foreigners (Takaki 253). Outside the sacred spaces, Asians were subject to mistreatment and violence. Name calling was prevalent, with racial epithets including “Jap” and “Chink” substituting for greetings and direct address. Profiling and accusations of criminal activity followed Asians of every nationality back to their homes, often pulling them out of their safe places and placing them in the midst of mob violence, wrongful accusations, false charges, and other acts of hatred and intolerance.

Chinatowns were cultural islands but by the 1930s, and the sensationalism of the tourist trade had diminished although the enclaves were still visited for “authentic Chinese” food, imports, and other services (Takaki 251). By the 1940s, almost 60 percent of the Chinese people in the continental United States resided in the Pacific states, and approximately 20 percent in the Mid-Atlantic States, with the majority of those living in cities (Takaki 239).

Racism continued to affect employment prospects particularly for many second generation Asian Americans born and educated in the United States. Having finished a particular program of study, many would find jobs going overwhelmingly to white applicants with similar skills. When they were hired, they were subjected to lower wages, longer hours, and different treatment as compare to their white counterparts. According to Ronald Takaki in *Strangers from A Different Shore*, Chinese girls could find work in stock rooms but not on the sales floor in retail stores. If they agreed to wear Chinese dresses, they might find work as cigarette girls or as “atmosphere” in the theatre lobbies when a new Charlie Chan movie was scheduled to open (267).

As in the African American community, education was seen as the road away from labor and toward employment opportunities beyond the plantations of Hawaii and the fields of

California. It was also seen as a means of leaving the laundries and food service work of their parents. At the height of the second wave of Japanese immigration, most Japanese parents (Issei) claimed America as home and saw Japan as a “fallback” for their Nisei children.

Nisei were told over and over about the importance of school and education—how knowledge in one’s mind could never be taken away and that learning could be the ladder toward success and security and equality (Takaki 217)

In the late 1930s, the Oriental Division of the United States’ Employment Service in San Francisco reported that 90 percent of its placement was in services, chiefly in the culinary trades. Five thousand Chinese people in San Francisco were not able to find work appropriate for their achieved educational level. Told by some white people in the larger community “to go back to Chinatown,” they were directed to jobs in domestic service and laundries (Takaki 267). Some women who were college educated found work as nannies, cooks, and domestic workers.

Before World War II, second generation Japanese men—Nisei—who held college degrees in engineering, pharmacy, or accounting were seldom hired in their fields. Instead they found jobs as assistants in family businesses or as clerks in local markets. Some may have found employment in the Japan-based businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area, but even in these positions were they were not fully accepted because they were Japanese American not Japanese nationals (Uchida 45). The contradiction apparent in this arrangement underscores the DuBoisian concept of dual consciousness of people of color in America. According to Yoshiko Uchida,

We Nisei were . . . rejected as inferior Americans by our own country and rejected as inferior by the country of our parents as well. We were neither totally American nor totally Japanese, but a unique fusion of the two (45).

The constructed tension in identity created a feeling of forced choice—either seek acceptance within their “own group” or struggle within the larger community for rights as citizens. Having to choose created low self-esteem and a feeling of being strangers in their own land (Takaki 268). Added to this were the additional feelings of alienation that they may have felt while balancing their American ways with those of their immigrant parents who spoke the native language and practiced the customs of their homelands.

Family connections are resilient providing a foundation for historic memory, shared experience, and perpetuation of traditions, stories, and truths about the community, so often as with African American families, there were constructed ties creating extended families. In an effort to circumvent the exclusion laws, some Chinese laborers posed as merchants because those of higher status could bring wives and families to the United States. The law held that children born in other countries, including China, were able to come to the United States because their fathers were American citizens. Others came as “paper sons”—those who purchased birth certificates of American citizens born in China and then claimed that they were American citizens under the law so that they could enter the United States (Takaki 235).

“Paper sons” were created when a resident could travel to China and return with a male child or young man whom he reported to be his son who had been born in China. This became a lucrative trade with men offering such relationships for the opportunity to immigrate to the United States. The trade in paper sons thrived in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and resulting fires, which destroyed almost all of the municipal records that tracked

citizenry and immigrant status. As a result, many Chinese men could claim citizenship without having to produce documentation, and, as citizens, they could bring their wives and other family members to the United States. Records reflect that the number of Asian women in the United States rose from one in 20 during the nineteenth century to one in four after the earthquake (Takaki 235).

Once in the States, the “father” and “son” would maintain the charade, with the son taking the father’s name, and often working in the father’s business or paying wages to the father for the opportunity to be in the family. Paper sons impacted the extended family in the Chinese community because the paper son and his family would be known officially by the name on the birth certificate that allowed entry. This certificate was often false and conflicted with the true family name that was used within the community (Takaki 237).

The claimed relations and accordant citizenship guaranteed them travel as far as Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay, the immigration entryway on the Pacific coast of the United States. It was known for crowded, unsanitary conditions, and arrivals were “locked up like criminals in compartments like the cages at the zoo (Takaki 237). As they waited on the verge of the America they had traveled so far to enter, they carved poems into the walls of the barracks. One poem recorded from the walls expressed the detainees’ fear and despair.

Barred from land, I really am to be pitied.

My heart trembles at being deported back to

China . . .

I came to seek wealth but instead reaped

poverty (qtd in Takaki 238)

Some of the poems were angry, declaring revenge against the “heartless white devils” (Takaki 238), and some demonstrate a change in the immigrant attitude towards America.

Don't say that everything within is Western styled

Even if it is built of jade, it has turned into a cage (E. Kim 259)

Approximately 50,000 Chinese had entered the United States by way of Angel Island by 1943 (Takaki 238).

In an effort to identify the immigrant's true family connections, the immigration officials created a series of tests to identify—or trap—imposters, including detailed questions about topics such as their home villages of record and the number and type of livestock owned by their families in China. These were questions the answers for which were surely beyond the knowledge of the officials, but the power to return the immigrants to China lent them a knowledgeable authority that was not questioned. In any event, the tests often adversely affected qualified applicants who hesitated or appeared unsure of their answers (Wu 77). The popularity of “paper sons” had waned by 1943 as immigration restrictions relaxed in tandem with the relationship between United States and Chinese as allies in World War II.

The result of the antagonism and legal disenfranchisement along with the need to keep societies and paper sons secret was cause for an inward withdrawal of the Chinese to the interiors of their homes and communities. This withdrawal created the impression of acceptance when the reality was a measured attempt to avoid unpleasant interactions with whites and interference from white authorities. This type of closed attitude was passed down through the generations, creating a closed community, and contributing to the creation of a divided communal self with public and private personalities. (Baker, *Blues* 59).

During the formative years of Asian migration and immigration, women were far from the major focus, and, for the most part, they were barred from entering the country, even if they were married to an American citizen. The importation and immigration of male labor created a bachelor society, with many men working to make their fortunes to return home to improve living conditions for their families. However, as more and more men immigrated to the United States, the absence of women became critical, and many sought female companionship. There were some cross-cultural marriages, which caused additional conflict between Asian and the majority community. Female citizens of all races would lose their citizenship if they married an alien ineligible for citizenship as were Asian nationals. Later, the immigration laws relaxed to allow entrance of merchants' wives, but not before the condition and side effects of chronic bachelorhood set in.

The situation for the few Asian women allowed into the country was even more constrained and difficult than it was for the men. They existed within a patriarchy where the roles assigned to them were as wife or prostitute. Men who were not married or whose wives were not available because they were still in their homeland approached many Asian wives for sex. If they refused, their children and husbands were often violently threatened. The women who came via arranged marriages often found that their husbands could be abusive and the work that they were expected to do at home and in the apple orchards and sugar cane fields was harsh. (Okiihiro 104).

The absence of women is apparent in all Asian cultural groups in 1870. Chinese women were only 7.2 percent of the Chinese in America; by 1890 they were only 3.6. Japanese women were 4 percent of the Japanese population in the mainland of the United States in 1900 and 12.6 percent in 1910. Korean women were 25 percent of the population in 1920 and 34 in 1930;

Filipino women were 6.7 percent of all Filipinos allowed into the country between 1920 and 1929, and of the 474 Asian Indians in America in 1909, not one was female (Okimoto 67).

World politics influenced the economic and political position of Asian Americans within the United States. At that time that the United States opened relations with Japan, Japan was a significant power in the Far East, and Asians of Japanese descent were more positively regarded than Asians of Chinese descent. While the treatment would travel the spectrum to extreme prejudice during World War II after the Japanese had been in the country for decades, the treatment and perception of the Japanese were initially more positive than that of their Chinese counterparts. In the early 1900s, Japan was “repeatedly singled out” as perhaps the only example of civilized non-Western society. Although definitely identified as “other,” the country and culture represented a “cultured” other (Evans 181). Theodore Roosevelt supported the interminglings of Americans with Japanese by stating that neither “nation is inferior to the other” claiming Japanese civilization to be “in some respects higher than our own” (Evans 182).

Evidence of the elevated status of Japanese culture in the American psyche is in the use of Japanese art forms and production in Western art during the late nineteenth century and the use of Japanese décor in popular culture in the early twentieth century. Such appropriation signals the extent to which commodification of the aesthetic value of the exotic as it “attaches itself to foreign people” (Evans 181). Japonisme, or the influence of Japanese influenced art on the West, is the form of cultural commodity very much defined as a modernist “chic” aesthetic that was exploited in much the same way that black life was as white patrons went up to Harlem in the Twenties.

Moreover, there seemed to be a “significant compatibility” between Western and Japanese value systems, so that many who would oppose relationships with other Asian groups

believed that when Americans and Japanese meet under “favorable conditions for acculturation, Japanese Americans, acting in line with Japanese values and personality, will behave in ways that are acceptable to middle class Americans” (Okihiro 33). Thus, they can be considered to act “white” and are more acceptable than perhaps other ethnically or racially defined groups. Their acceptance, however, would change with World War II, which is considered by many as the watershed in the history of Asians in America. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, clearly put the Japanese Empire at odds with the United States, and in the mind of America, people of Japanese descent were suspect in the aggression. The attack on Pearl Harbor “justified every word of Yellow Peril ideology ever uttered in the United States, and so the myth, instead of being discredited, remained embodied in American culture’ (Wu 207). If, as Gary Okihiro asserts, the idea of the yellow peril is bound by the time and place of the nation-state in which it arises and is thereby shaped by the particulars of that history and culture (120), the forecast for Japanese American futures was bleak and uncertain.

By 1941, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 prohibiting race, creed color, national origin discrimination in employment and hiring of labor, conditions for Asians in America and their descendants had improved. However, as recently as one month before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a report submitted to Roosevelt indicated that the Japanese in America would not be “any more disloyal than any other racial group in the US with whom we went to war” (Takaki 386). Six months later, under Executive Order 9066, the military and government officials posted notices for relocation to internment camps. Some of those relocated were from families who had been in the United States for two or three generations. Their parents were Issei (first generation); they were Nisei (second generation and born here with all rights of

citizens and the largest population affected) and some of the youngest in the relocation camps were Sensei (third generation).

Passed in February 1942, Executive Order 9066 prescribed military areas to be overseen by the Secretary of War where Japanese and Japanese Americans would be held. Executive Order 9066 ultimately led to the relocation of Japanese citizens particularly on the West coast. The Order targeted Japanese Americans for special treatment without regard to their American citizenship. Italy and Germany were aggressors in the war on the European front; however, Italian Americans and German Americans were not targeted as potential enemies and removed from the routines of their daily lives in the same way that those of Japanese descent were. Because they lived on the West coast and were thought to be a threat to national security, 120,000 people of Japanese descent were evacuated from their homes and forced into camps further inland. The formal recommendation for their removal stated, “The Japanese race is an enemy race, and . . . the racial strains are undiluted. It . . . follows that along the vital Pacific coast, over 112,000 potential enemies of Japanese extraction, are at large today” (Takaki 391). Two-thirds of the internees were American by birth, and as they were forced into a situation that caused question to their ethnicity and threatened their citizenship, “the world [as they knew it] turned dark” (Takaki 379). Neighbors and friends who had previously interacted now were cautious and cold.

Although the Japanese Americans in California, Washington, and Oregon were forcefully compelled to relocate, the lives of those in Hawaii were not dramatically interrupted, even though the site of the bombing that catalyzed the relocation was Hawaii itself. The reasons were economic and political. According to Ronald Takaki, it was because Hawaiian Japanese had

become “locals” while those on the mainland remained strangers in white America (379). For Yoshiko Uchida, who was a college student when her family was evacuated,

the fact that there was no mass eviction in Hawaii, which was closer to Japan and where the Japanese Americans constituted a third of the population, clearly invalidated the government’s claim that the evacuation was a military necessity (54).

Those in the coastal mainland states were given notice by public postings to report to specific stations to register as families for relocation. They were given identification tags with numbers instead of names, and the same type of tag was attached to person and property. They were to be sent to assembly centers and then to internment camps. They were given a date and time to report to the assembly centers and ordered to leave pets at home. The evacuees were told to bring only what they could carry in extra clothing and toiletries, bedding, and kitchen utensils. The order applied equally to all in the community—Issei, immigrants, and Nisei, those born in the United States, children, adults, and the elderly.

Because they were only allowed to bring what they could carry, the evacuees had to sell their homes and businesses, kitchen appliances, cars, tools, and other possessions. Many of the orders came with only a few days to prepare to leave, so some of the things were simply abandoned. As the Japanese worked feverishly to meet the Executive Order’s mandates and deadlines, others in the Asian community hung banners on the doors of their homes and businesses and made buttons for their family members to wear, proclaiming, “I am Chinese,” “I am Korean,” or “I am Filipino.”

The assembly centers had had previous uses as stockyards, fairgrounds, and racetracks. Entire families—some of three generations—were uprooted from homes and neighborhoods that

they had known since the former century and had called home for many years and were forced to make habitable spaces of stables and stock slots with approximately 2000 people in one huge building. Upon arrival, each person was issued a sack, which they were instructed to fill with straw. These became their beds.

After a brief stay in the assembly centers, the families were moved to ten major sites for internment: Topaz, Utah; Poston and Gila River, Arizona; Amache, Colorado; Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas; Minidoka, Idaho; Manzanar and Tule Lake, California; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming. An additional camp in Crystal City, Texas, housed a large percentage of Latin American Japanese who were sent from their homes in Peru and twelve other Latin American countries to the United States mainland for internment (Higashide 204). Most of the camps were in remote, desert areas. In all cases, the camps were extremely removed from the places that the internees had previously called home.

New residences within the camps were in barracks, often with families assigned to a smaller space within a five- to six-room barrack. The rooms were divided by blankets strung on lines, so they were open at the top and bottom. There was no privacy within the spaces the families occupied or between different families. Family life was further disrupted by mealtimes, which were held at long communal tables rather than the smaller intimate settings to which the internees may have been accustomed. At the long tables, adults sat in one area, children in another, and teens in a third.

People created a life within the camps, with schools, worship centers, baseball teams, internal security forces, fire and emergency services, and social clubs. Several hundred white Americans who worked at the camps facilitated some of these services along with hospitals and camp administration. There was government work for the internees as well. People who had

owned their own businesses, working as professionals in varied areas, were now compelled to become government workers, growing vegetables and making camouflage nets, among other tasks. (Gordon 178). There were also art classes, and much time was spent in the creative arts. Although many non-Japanese observers noted that the internees were assumed to be unassertive and complacent, historical artifacts reveal the opposite, as the internees engaged in “gaman,” which means “enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity” and has its origins in Zen Buddhism. Much of the artwork is a reflection of this.

Out of this incomprehensible situation, another defining moment arose—the development of the “No No Boy.” During the course of the war, President Franklin Roosevelt wrote, “Americanism is not . . . a matter of ancestry. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country . . . in the . . . armed forces (Takaki 397). This statement complemented the US Army’s idea to form an all-Nisei combat team. The irony of inclusion by way of segregated service had previously escaped the government as all-black units were already in existence. Early in 1943, all internees were provided loyalty questionnaires entitled, “War Relocation Authority Application for Leave Clearance.” The questionnaires had a dual purpose: first, to process people for work furloughs and secondly, to register Nisei of appropriate age for the armed forces Selective Service (Takaki 397).

Two questions in particular have become the foundation for controversy that became social stigma. Question 27 asked, “Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty whenever ordered?” Question 28 asked, “Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?” Internees of all

ages were confused about the phrase “leave clearance” in the title of the longer document, and many Nisei were conflicted by questions 27 and 28, specifically, understanding that number 28 implied that they had, at some time been loyal to the Japanese emperor, bringing their loyalty to America as citizens into question. This in combination with rebellion against the need to “forswear” an allegiance never sworn and being locked away with entire families led some Nisei young men to answer “No” to both questions, thus the moniker “No No Boys.” For them, signing “yes” would have indicated that he had previously been loyal, thus providing justification for his incarceration in the internment camp. Some took offense to the need to swear an oath to serve in the armed forces as “Americans” when that service would be in a unit segregated by race.

Approximately 5 percent of all age appropriate young men were No No boys. They were interned for longer periods of time, some until after the war’s end. Within their own communities, they were considered disloyal Americans and a collective blight on the Japanese American legacy (Yamanaka 109-110). Conversely, thousands of Nisei registered, served, and “stood tall in the defense of their country” (Takaki 385).

By many accounts, memories of the camps include endless lines for food, mail, and bathroom access; feeling an acute lack of privacy and personhood; and wondering why if they were in camp for their own protection, for the guns at the sentry stations were aimed inside the barbed wire, instead of outside it. There were other more overt acts of rebellion. Protests were written in poetry, woven into textiles, and illustrated in charcoal and watercolors. Families created their own victory gardens in the spirit of the tranquility gardens of their ancestral Japan. There were also organized rebellions, including the formation of groups, including the Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee. The Fair Play Committee staged a protest, stating that they

would not sign the loyalty oath until their rights as citizens were restored. Several of the group were prosecuted and found guilty of conspiracy to violate the Selective Service Act and sentenced to Leavenworth Federal Prison (Takaki 398-399). In a more individual act of protest, an elderly man walked toward the barbed wire fence at the camp in Topaz and did not stop when ordered by sentries to halt. The sentry on duty shot him to death (Chan 129).

Throughout the summer and fall of 1942, the War Relocation Authority worked to depopulate the camps, and qualified citizens who specific criteria that included having a place to go, reporting his or her whereabouts to the War Relocation Authority, and passing FBI and national security clearance were permitted to leave. They found new homes in the Midwest and in cities on the East coast that had previously not had a large Japanese population. For many Nisei, education was the way out of the internment camps before the war was over. Many of them were granted permission to attend colleges throughout the United States, but the volume of applications to be processed created a long wait for final approval. Sometimes the decision took years (Uchida 128).

Any hope that the Issei had held that their Nisei children would be accepted in their American homeland was disrupted by Executive Order 9066 and the resulting incarceration of families with its disruption of family life and communities, but in the aftermath, in the dense fog of displacement, Japanese Americans fought to recover some semblance of the lives that they had lost. Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in January 1945. When the internees were finally released, the damage was catastrophic. They had lost property, homes, businesses, bank accounts, and safe deposit box treasures. Family photos and memorabilia had been lost, and communities had been irreparably torn apart. Many had died during the internment from ill health and poor medical care; others suffered from chronic illness and fragile mental health.

Upon release, they were given \$25 and a train ticket. While some could return to some semblance of their former lives, many had nowhere to go and remained in the camps until they could relocate.

In 1948, President Harry Truman established the Committee on Civil Rights. In the aftermath of World War II with its nightmares of Bataan, the Holocaust, and the internment of Japanese American citizens, the United States made ready for a revision of democracy that would move beyond racial discrimination. Those changes would not eradicate discrimination in a country founded on difference, and as Asian Americans sought to establish their individual and collective identities, travelling the trajectory of stereotypes from the yellow peril to the model minority. Socio-political activity in the 1960s would empower Asian Americans to exercise agency over the masks of “yellowness” and inscrutability and to put these masks in motion and to traverse the space between interior cohesion to collective, creative action.

Chapter Five

***AIIEEEEEEE!*: Asian American Voices in the Literary Tradition**

To know forgery, one must have original.
Charlie Chan

*I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West,
out of place everywhere, at home nowhere.*
Jawaharlal Nehru

For one growing up Chinese, decorum and timing were everything.
Jamie Ford

I will talk again. Listen for me.
Maxine Hong Kingston

They can't silence me anymore! I'll tell the world what they have done to me!
Carlos Bulosan

The love affair that began between white audiences and the minstrel show extended throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth. In the mid-nineteenth century, after the arrival of the Chinese in numbers, the stereotypical darky characters shared the stage with characters based in two of the most pervasive stereotypes of Asians: The ‘bad’ Asians—sinister villains and brute hordes who cannot be controlled and must therefore be destroyed—and the ‘good’ Asians—helpless heathens, loyal sidekicks, docile servants, and seductive female sex partners who pose no apparent threat” (E. Kim 100). These characterizations would evolve in the early twentieth century to become Fu Manchu and Charlie

Chan. These stereotypes were used as propaganda during World War II to juxtapose Chinese—then the model minority—against the Japanese—the schemers who had subjugated China and were aggressors in the Pacific theater of the war. They persisted as armed conflict continued in Korea and Vietnam, with the guerilla stereotype and renegade fighter. The guerilla fighter evolved in its own stereotype as martial arts characters gained popularity in movies and other media. The guerilla would be appropriated in the 1960s and 1970s by the Black Panther Party to personify the Party’s militant stance. Variations on these stereotypes persist very strongly in American culture today, continuing to shape the larger cultures understanding and preconceptions of Asians and Asian Americans. It is possible that, as Elaine Kim asserts, “Probably more Americans know Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan than know Asian or Asian American human beings” (1982 xv).

After the serialization of stories about Fu Manchu in popular magazines, *The Mystery of Fu Manchu* (1913) was the first novel to feature the villain. The character appeared in 13 novels by English author Sax Rohmer, with the last, *The Emperor Fu Manchu*, published in 1959. In the first book, Fu Manchu is described as “the yellow peril incarnate in one man,” whose plots and evil schemes threatened white supremacy. In thirteen novels, three short stories, and one novelette, Rohmer pitted the evil genius against British Colonial agent Sir Denis Nayland Smith in a battle of wits, supernatural forces, and science, in which, declared the novels’ narrator in *The Hand of Fu-Manchu* (1917), “the swamping of the White world by Yellow hordes might well be the price of our failure” (173). Rohmer gave form and voice to the evil associated with the East—providing a human, if fictional, target for anti-Oriental sentiment. As the first Asian leader in Anglo-American literature, he was an “imminent presence within the Chinatowns of

Britain and America” (Okiihiro 143). In *The Mystery of Fu Manchu*, he appears physically unattractive, as he has “a face like Satan . . . and long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green.”

The conflict between Fu Manchu and his nemesis Nayland Smith is “the epic struggle between East and West, between the white race and the yellow race, and between Christian and heathen” (Cogan 40). The struggle is between races, with white symbolizing good and yellow, or nonwhite, symbolizing evil. Fu Manchu is at once exotic, menacing, diabolical, intelligent, and a threat to civilization. As the series evolves, it is revealed that Fu Manchu’s genius is the result of a Western education, where he earned several doctoral degrees. According to Elaine Kim, “Dr. Fu Manchu, the famous Asian archevillian, has mastered Western knowledge and science without comprehending Western compassion and ethics” (8). With this, even the intelligence accorded Asians is diminished. The fact that his intelligence is the product of the West seems to indicate that the East is incapable of instruction beyond martial arts and mystic spiritualism. Fu Manchu “posed a peril from within the core, within the European community that had helped to create him, educate him, and give him technology” (Okiihiro 143). At the time that Rohmer created the character, Fu Manchu was the first universally recognized “Oriental” and the most famous Chinese to appear in fiction (Cogan 60). He was an evil extreme of a two-pronged stereotype. Charlie Chan provided the balance.

Created in 1925 by author Earl Derr Biggers, Hawaiian-born detective Charlie Chan is an example of upward mobility. He has risen from houseboy to the middle class and employs patience, intelligence, and civility to solve crimes in defense of social order. “He gains membership within the American community, despite racism, through quiet, faithful servitude . . . He is led by a white man, speaks with a broken tongue, and is docile and polite to a fault” (Okiihiro143).

According to Yunte Huang, in *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History* (2010), an exploration of the Chinese Hawaiian detective upon whom Charlie Chan is based, the character Charlie Chan is a “distillation” of the collective experience of Asian Americans (xvii). Chan’s experience, though fictitious, reflects the history of Asians in America and the Chinese in particular and their experience under the white gaze. As one of the first Asian characters viewed widely in the twentieth century, Charlie Chan is at once a breakthrough as a Chinese American hero and a caricatured Asian Uncle Tom who “bow[s] with a courtesy encountered all too rarely in a work-a-day world” (Biggers 69), colors his broken English with quaint fortune-cookie themed clichés, and shares the sage and mystic wisdom of the otherworldly Confucius. First introduced by Biggers in the mystery novel *The House without a Key* (1925), Charlie Chan is a detective with the Honolulu Police. He is described as “very fat indeed,” with “the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were as chubby as a baby’s, his skin ivory-tinted, his black hair close-cropped, his amber eyes slanting” (69).

Charlie Chan’s appearance on screen in 1926 is very important as it coincided with other cultural innovations and constructs of the age of modernism. With a moving image of him, the fans of the novels could go beyond their imaginations to a “true” image of Charlie Chan, who was actually played by Japanese actors in the first two films in 1926 and 1927. Although the films carried his name, the role of Chan was minimized and neither of these films was successful. In 1931, Chan was recast with Swedish immigrant Warner Oland playing the title role in yellow-face. The third film was very successful, and Oland went on to star in 15 more Charlie Chan films, as well as to star as Fu Manchu in the first two Fu Manchu films with sound.

After Oland's death, white American actor Sidney Toler was cast as Chan for 22 films, and after his death, white American Roland Winters starred for 6 additional films.

The contradiction within the stereotypes contributes to the complications of Asian American identity constructs. Fu Manchu's masculinity is offset by symbols of femininity, including a body described as "feline" and an attire of long silk tunics. His fingers were long, tapered, and clawed. Although feminized, Charlie Chan exemplified strength of intellect rather than physical strength as his was described as chubby and soft. Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan illustrate the opposing sides of racism that Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan term "racist hate" and "racist love" in their essay, "Racist Love" (1972). Fu Manchu represents "racist hate" as one of those minorities whose character furthers a constructed stereotype of negative or threatening traits and cannot be controlled by white society. The character of Charlie Chan represents "racist love" in that he furthers the stereotype of more the docile figure who can be controlled by the white majority and who seeks to assimilate into the white culture. Chin and Chan extend Fanon's idea that the black man must be black in relation to the white man (Fanon 110) by asserting that the system of white supremacy works and racist love prevails if the types "assigned to the various races are accepted by the races themselves as reality" (65). The result is that as the black man—the person of color—exists in relation to the white man, he must also accept the white man's assignation of his role in that existence. Racist love depends on "neutralizing" the minority with its being subsumed by the majority group. When the minority group rails against the stereotype and seeks to contradict it, "racist hate" is directed toward members of the minority group, and they are vilified.

During the latter part of the twentieth century as they experienced educational and economic gains within society, the status of Asians in America was elevated and they became the

“model minority.” The model minority myth is racist love in practice and has been used as a basis for the cross cultural discrimination. Asians themselves to claim a superior status over other non-white Americans, and the other non-white communities themselves to rail against any gains that the Asian community may make toward whiteness that others may be denied. In the balance of the scales of racist love and racist hate, the model minority myth takes hold. Frank Chin has stated that aside from being “a strategy for white acceptance,” the model minority discourse is dangerous because it encourages Asian Americans to “denigrate” blacks and see them as deserving of their oppression” (Maeda 1085). The model minority myth is a complimentary façade that works to deny the existence of present-day discrimination against Asian Americans and the present-day effects of past discrimination and to legitimize the oppression of other racial minorities and poor whites (J. Kim 2391). “. . .The Asian model minority stereotype was touted in public media and by politicians as the answer to black and brown protest militancy” (Dong 230). As a construct, it is applied strategically as it benefits the supremacist agenda. In *Airing Dirty Laundry*, Ishmael Reed recounts San Francisco papers claim that when the Japanese were “feared and hated [in 1897],” black people were considered the model minority because they were “more easily managed” (8). In “The Emergence of Yellow Power” Amy Uyematsu calls for the removal of the stereotypes of passivity, accommodation, and stoicism among Asian Americans. According to Uyematsu, the Asian American societal position by 1969 was not viewed as a social problem because they had achieved middle-class incomes while presenting no real threat in numbers to the white majority. Using the model proposed by Chin and Chan, the Asian American community had achieved racist love.

The shared experience of people of African and Asian descent in America created “a kindred people” whose relationship is “forged in the fire of white supremacy and tempered in the water of resistance” (Okiihiro 60). Members of the black community recognized and acknowledged this shared experience generations ago, and, as early as 1885, W. E. B. DuBois expressed interest in the formation of the Indian National Congress, stating his focus on the AfroAsian classical knowledge and on Pan-Asian-African unity (Mullen, “Persisting” 249), believing that as people on the continents overcame and thrived, so, too would their diasporic children in the United States. Japan’s victories over China (the Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895) and Russia (the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905) put the nation in the position to be a world power, and for the first time, Japan became a threatening presence in the Western imagination (Cogan 38). The Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901) provided a basis for China to join Japan and by extension other Asian countries to represent collectively the threat of aggression embodied in the Yellow Peril.

In his 1895 address, “An Appeal to the King,” at the Cotton States Exposition held in Atlanta, scholar, educator, and former slave, J. W. E. Bowen wrote of the “problem of the Chinese” in California in juxtaposition to the Negro problem in the South (Bowen 27). Years later, in 1906, when DuBois considered the problem of the color line, he hoped that it would separate and join people of African and Asian descent (Mullen, “Persisting” 248). “The Russo-Japanese war has marked an epoch. The magic of the word ‘white’ is already broken, and the Color Line in civilization has been crossed in modern times as it was in the great past. The awakening of the brown and black races will follow in time, no unprejudiced student of history can doubt. (DuBois, “The Color Line Belts the World” 43).

Many African American literary societies that were prevalent cultural and intellectual forces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's included the "Chinese question" posed by mainstream media in their debates, revealing a burgeoning sense of being a part of a larger community of oppressed and misunderstood people (McHenry 179). One example is the prominent Boston Literary and Historical Association, which was founded in 1901 and one of the largest and African American literary societies of its time. "Boston Literary," as it was called, believed in the need for an informed democratic citizenry and endorsed the addressing of social problems through literary accomplishments (McHenry 143). Many lectures and debates focused on uplift of the black community. Alongside these debates were discussions about unity with communities of other races and other identities, and, as the numbers of Chinese grew in the United States, Boston Literary offered programs to educate the membership and others about China and the Chinese people (McHenry 179). The fascination with the Chinese and other cultures, including Jewish and Cuban, "reflects one aspect of [the] struggle to transform the pejorative concept of race into an affirming vision of cultural distinctiveness," and lectures by prominent scholars, including W. E. B. DuBois, often focused on parallels between African Americans and "darker races" throughout the world (McHenry 181, 182). In an oration given by DuBois in Boston and attended by members of Boston Literary in January 1903, DuBois declared "the unification of interests on the part of the Negro here with the darker people" was crucial to their survival. He argued that "the American Negro [stands at the lead] in the world contest on behalf of the darker races." According to DuBois, black people in America

must act as leaders in the effort to do away with the color line, to strive to the end that the dominant whites may be willing to give the dark skinned individual the

place in social, civil, religious and in political life that his individual merits entitle him to without regard to the condition of his race or class” (qtd in McHenry 183).

In his essay, “An Ostracised Race in Ferment: the Conflict of Negro Parties and Negro Leaders over Methods of Dealing with Their Own Problem” (1908), white journalist Ray Stannard Baker expressed concern about “colour” lines and the questionable impact of drawing lines of difference.

When the line began to be drawn, it was drawn not alone against the unworthy Negro, but against the Negro. It was not so much drawn by the highly intelligent white man as by the white man. And the white man alone has not drawn it, but the Negroes themselves are drawing it—and more and more every day. So we draw the line in this country against the Chinese, the Japanese . . . They are here; they must be noted and dealt with (70-71).

As a result of increasing awareness in the black community of Asians and Asian Americans, intersecting identifications and relationships between them rose at various moments during the twentieth century. In 1914 W. E. B. DuBois wrote in his essay “The World Problem of the Color Line” for the Manchester, New Hampshire, *Manchester Leader*,

If . . . men would look carefully among them. . . they would see that the Problem of the Color Line in America instead of being the closing chapter of past history is the opening page of a new era. All over the world the diversified races are coming into close and closer contact as never before. We are nearer China today than we were to San Francisco yesterday” (qtd in Mullen and Watson viii).

In the 1919 essay, “Returning Soldiers,” W. E. B. DuBois called for a “Great World Congress” where “black and white and yellow sit and speak and act” (88).

At times, African Americans drew inspiration from Asian resistance to imperialism (Maeda 1085). In 1920, Geroid Robinson wrote in his essay, “The New Negro,” “The very moment all the negroes of this and other countries start to stand together, that very time will see the white man standing in fear of the negro race, even as he stands in fear of the yellow race of Japan to-day” (100).

The faith that W. E. B. DuBois has in the darker races to contribute richly and collectively to Western culture, is beautifully articulated in *The World and Africa*.

The stars of dark Andromeda belong up there in the great heaven that hangs above this tortured world. Despite the crude and cruel motives behind her shame and exposure, her degradation and enchaining, the fire and freedom of black Africa, with the uncurbed might of her consort Asia, are indispensable to the fertilizing of the universal soil of mankind, which Europe alone never would nor could give this aching world (260).

The connection that African Americans felt with Asia continued into the 1930s when, in 1933, Langston Hughes traveled to Asia, spending time in China. Illustrating perhaps the kinship that he felt with another oppressed people, he wrote the poem, “Roar China” in 1937 in support of China’s resistance to Japan’s imperialism. According to Vijay Prashad in *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting* (2001), the connection that Hughes felt with China is the result of “afro-planetary vision” (53), which finds connections based on experience—not on biology—that causes *color* consciousness. This consciousness arises not because of a shared color in particular, but because of sharing colored space in a world that favors whiteness. In a speech to the International Writers Association for the Defense of Culture in Paris in 1938, Langston Hughes gave voice to this vision, stating, “Because our world is . . . today, so related and inter-related, a

creative writer has no right to neglect to understand clearly the social and economic forces that control our world” (qtd in Edwards, “Langston Hughes” 692). As America emerged as the most powerful nation in the world after World War II, Americans expressed concern about how that power extended over non-white people within and beyond its borders. In a letter to Claude Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press, in July 1946, Zora Neale Hurston stated her anger with the United States government actions and disappointment that African Americans did not protest the treatment of Japanese. “Is it that we are so devoted to good ‘Massa’ that we feel that we ought not to even protest such crimes?” (Kaplan 438).

As the Korean conflict ended, tensions in Vietnam increased, and the Cold War loomed, an increasing sense of global citizenship took hold, and more and more people of various cultures took active interest in colored communities across the world. The Bandung Conference in Indonesia in 1955 further confirmed alliance among African and Asian countries. The conference was a major meeting of twenty-nine African and Asian countries as they sought support for national independence movements (Mullen, “Persisting” 251). Support for the efforts extended to African Americans and Asian Americans, and notably, Richard Wright attended the conference with funding from the Congress for Cultural Freedom. His presence is critical as it speaks to a kinship among peoples of color who might not share nationality but who were connected by diasporic—if unspecified—roots.

Between World War I and World War II, the most important changes within the Asian immigrant community were within the family—a “sizable American born generation appeared” (Chan 103). The parents were seeking to make homes in a land that constantly sought to make them outsiders, while they were questioning their own loyalties to their ancestral homelands (Chan 103). For many Issei, life in the United States in the decades before World War II was a

“dark desperate struggle for survival in a country where they could neither become citizens or own land” (Uchida 10). The internment camp experience reified feelings of isolation from mainstream America and served to affix the mask that signaled closed ranks to the outside community. As migration happened in the United States, and African Americans migrated to more industrial areas, Asian Americans and African American interaction increased. They crossed paths daily, particularly in West Coast cities such as Seattle, Oakland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. After World War II, black families moved into areas vacated by Japanese internment, thus increasing the mix and expanding the space for the cultural exchange (Maeda 1086).

As socio-political activity increased in the demand for basic civil rights in the African American community, minority groups were pitted against each other. “At the height of the civil rights movement, the Chinese were held up as an example for blacks and other “troublesome” minority groups to follow. As the Chinese [were] succeeding “on their own” (E. Kim 110), the model minority myth became a tool in the systematic division of racial cultures. Forced into enclave communities of limited political, social, or economic power, many Asian Americans “avoided militant agitation for rights. Some groups even petitioned the courts for legal status as “whites” to avoid systemic oppression experienced by people of color. They were unsuccessful (Ogbar 30). Juxtaposed to any success enjoyed as the assimilated “model minority,” Asian American consciousness developed when, for the first time, the majority of Asian Americans were born in the United States. According to Gordon Lee in “Forgotten Revolution,” in *Hyphen*,

The more we examined our collective histories, the more we began to find a rich and complex past. And we became outraged at the depths of the economic, racial, and gender exploitation that had forced our families into roles as subservient

cooks, servants or coolies, garment workers and prostitutes, and which also improperly labeled us as the “model minority” comprised of “successful” businessmen, merchants or professionals.

The most significant change for Asian Americans occurred when the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 eliminated highly restrictive "national origins" quotas. The new legislation brought significant numbers of immigrants from every nation in Asia. The demographics of the immigrant population became more diverse and created varied migration patterns once the immigrants arrive in the United States. These changes also had an effect on the developing Asian American consciousness—an explicitly political consciousness influenced by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the era, and concretized by the aggression in Vietnam (Wing 14).

Richard Wright’s *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (1954), is a chronicle of time spent in Africa and an effort to illustrate “the force of Black nationalism” in Ghana as it developed as an independent nation (qtd. in Faris 189). It may be the first contemporary use of the phrase “Black Power” in a socio-political context of rights’ struggles in the mid-twentieth century. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael—later known as Kwame Ture—president of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), first used the phrase Black Power as a call to recognize the force of nationhood within the African American community.

Throughout the 1960s, the lynchings and unfair treatment of African Americans led some to be disillusioned by the non-violence espoused by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other movement leaders. Reminiscent of the conflict between the old and new guards of the Harlem Renaissance, the younger student organizations were impatient for change and sought radical,

revolutionary change and began to distance themselves from the older leadership. In the mid 1960s, the focus of the movement shifted from integration to an agenda with a more aggressive move toward self-determination, equality, and the denouncing of white supremacy. Quickly adopted in the North, Black Power was associated with a militant advocacy of armed self-defense, separation from “racist American domination,” and pride in and assertion of the goodness and beauty of Blackness. While Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) did not author the slogan “Black Power,” the call for “black power” at rallies and the focus on it as the manifesto for SNCC is “a milestone inaugurating a new political and cultural era across the country” (Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement* 343)

Amy Uyematsu connected the Black and Yellow Power Movements together and then with other groups’ struggles for civil rights by acknowledging the Power Movement as “part of the Third World Struggle to liberate all colored people.” Her declaration that a “yellow movement has been set into motion by the black power movement” was a call to action heard in the echo of the cry of “Black is Beautiful” among black Americans. Uyematsu asserts, “the ‘black power’ movement caused many Asian American to question themselves” and anticipated that the movement would evolve to “disillusionment and alienation from white America [with] independence, race pride and self-respect.”

As a move away from the exotic Oriental other and to claim place in the nation, the term “Asian American” was informally used by activists in the early 1960s. Formal usage of “Asian American” is attributed to student activist Yuji Ichioka who is said to have popularized the term. In the essay, “Forgotten Revolution,” former activist and a member of Asian Media Collection Gordon Lee recounts that Ichioka, a graduate student at University of California at Berkeley, coined the term “Asian American” in an effort to name the new identity that grew out of a

community's common experiences in America. As a founder of the University of California Los Angeles Asian Studies Center in 1969, Ichioka taught the first Asian American Studies class in 1969 and wrote *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese immigrant, 1885-1924*, published in 1988. In the inaugural issue of *Hyphen* magazine in June 2003, dedicated to Asian American activism, Gordon Lee writes, "Around 1968 — a symbolic date for the beginning of the Asian American Movement — many of us decided to start calling ourselves "Asian American" because our worlds had been turned upside down. We had been deeply affected by the civil rights, black liberation, and anti-war struggles in the United States, as well as the struggles against colonialism and imperialism in Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines." A challenge of the Asian American civil rights movement from the outset was that Asian Americans identified by ethnic group rather than as a racial group. According to Gordon Lee, the Vietnam War changed that by galvanizing all Asian Americans in a community of solidarity in opposition to social, political, and economic injustice against all people of Asian descent.

One of the reasons that Asian Americans had been perhaps overlooked in the civil rights struggle is that most people assumed that Asian Americans were beneficiaries of the positive attributes of both American and Asian cultures. Frank Chin and other activists argued against this application of the idea of dual consciousness, which assumed that Asian Americans have a "split personality" that prevents their assimilation into American society (Wei 47). Instead of an abstraction of identity that supposed a foot in each culture, the Asian American activists acknowledged a distinct Asian American identity that spoke directly of the experiences of Asians in America that had developed over generations. In examination of the adoption of "Asian American," Peter Feng notes that the term "groups Asians together . . . in the service of a racial

rather than a racist logic unlike the term ‘Oriental.’ To identify as an Asian American is a political label, while to identify as a Chinese American or Japanese American is to accept a cultural label” (90).

Much of the work of the Power Movement was to reclaim the historic memories that were obscured by stereotypes and misrepresentations for Americans of color and to reconstruct culture that would carry them forward into a new age. In a context similar to that from which developed the “New Negro,” choosing to be Asian American was about deciding to be Asian and not white (Lee). “Asian American” became a radical political identity associated with the Yellow Power movement. According to Daniel Maeda, the Asian American movement included a variety of organizations and competing ideologies, but there were two fundamental premises. The first was based on identity derived from a common racial oppression shared by Asians of all ethnicities in the United States. Secondly, it was generally agreed upon that a multiethnic, racially based coalition would provide an effective basis for confronting racism (Maeda 1081). As Gordon Lee recalls, “It took about seven to eight years for most people in the community to adopt usage [of Asian American]. Eventually the term ‘Oriental’ was no longer acceptable, and by 1970, there were more than 70 campus and newly organized community groups with ‘Asian American’ in their name” (Lee “Forgotten”).

In an empowered appropriation of minstrel tropes, Asian Americans asserted their own racial identity by performing blackness [and then] went on to forge a distinct identity of their own (Maeda 1081). Instances can be seen in The Red Guard, a militant organization formed in late 1960s in San Francisco’s Chinatown that emulated the style and organizational structure of the Black Panthers (Maeda 1081). The construction of Asian American identity through performing blackness demonstrates the interdependence of racial formations strictly among

people of color (Maeda 1081) and are examples of cross-identification between Asians and blacks. According to Frank Chin, the sixties and the civil-rights movement made Asian Americans “aware that we had no presence, no image in American culture as men, as people . . . So a bunch of us began to appropriate blackness” (qtd in Maeda 1086). The appropriation was a complex subversion of the effeminate Asian male stereotype and the overtly masculine, aggressive black man.

Other instances can be found in literature of the time that appropriated language and situational responses from the black community. Frank Chin’s *Chickencoop Chinaman* explores the relationship between Asian American identity and blackness by featuring Chinese American and Japanese American protagonists who “associated with, claim sympathy for, and exhibit speech and dress patterns most commonly associated with African Americans” (Maeda 1079). Specifically, Tam Lun, the Chinese American protagonist, adopts the speech and swagger of his African American male hero. In contrast to this masculine performer, Asian American militants referred to those Asians and Asian Americans who passively accepted “racist love” and who reinforced the white power system and stereotypes as “Uncle Charlies,” derived from the fictitious Charlie Chan and reminiscent of the “Uncle Toms” of African American culture (Ogbar 31). Later, Frank Chin compared the Red Guard to yellow minstrels in their performance of blackness in mimicry of the Black Panther Party (Maeda 1093). However, rather than minstrelsy as a way to separate from or to diminish the object of imitation, Asian Americans imitated in an effort to connect in order to share the stage. Moreover, “these performances [did not pursue whiteness] and were intended to locate Asian Americans as a racialized group alongside blacks” (Maeda 1094). Conversely, Asia also figured prominently in the black imagination during the 1960s and 1970s. Black Panther political education prominently included

Communist leader Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, commonly known as "The Little Red Book" (Maeda 1086). As African Americans admired elements of Asian radicalism found in Mao's philosophies, Asian Americans were influenced by the writings of Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, W. E. B. DuBois, Cheikh Anta Diop, and Langston Hughes (Okihiro 60).

Richard Aoki's involvement as a founding member of the Black Panther Party stands as a personification of cross-identification. Aoki's family settled in West Oakland, California, after World War II, and he became childhood friends with Huey P. Newton, who would become leader of the Black Panther Party. In West Oakland, Aoki learned to appreciate African American culture and learn the history of Blacks in America (Dong 228). He contributed to the establishment the Third World Liberation Front on the campus of San Francisco State University, and as a leader in the student strike for Ethnic Studies. In July 1968, Aoki attended graduate school at University of California Berkeley and became a founding member of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), the first of the many organizations of Asian Americans who designated themselves "Asian" (Dong 229). The AAPA brought together disparate ethnic groups of Asian students who previously had been divided into separate ethnic organizations such as the Chinese American Citizens Alliance or the Japanese American Citizens League. In the collaborative spirit of the Power Movement, the AAPA developed from Aoki's close ties with the Black Panther Party and worked closely with the Red Guard (Ogbar 30).

The Power Movement was heavily populated by students, and the Third World Liberation Front and as it included organizations representing Asian Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latino Americans, inspired thousands of students of color and many white students as well. The newspaper, *The Asian Student* published at University of

California Berkeley, stated, “Our black brothers and sisters were the first to cry out in protest in the civil rights movement and were the first to make militant radical demands for the transformation of society. Out of this grew the Asian Student Movement” (qtd. in Ogbar). College students stirred creative and intellectual activity as they focused efforts on establishing ethnic studies at local universities. Cultural borders were expanded and multicultural connections were made by consistent contact in student strikes, protest letters, and faculty involvement. The result was the creation of ethnic studies curricula that would change the direction of American culture. As the political and social spirit of the Black Power Movement inspired the rise of Black Arts, so would Yellow Power encourage a creative surge in Asian American Arts and literature.

According to James Smethurst in his essay “Poetry and Sympathy: New York, the Left, and the Rise of the Black Arts,” the Harlem Renaissance “prepar[ed] the field” for the Black Arts movement (275). In the 1950s, the political and cultural African American subculture still existed in Harlem, and fostered activity such as the publication of new journals by editors including W. E. B. DuBois, that included poetry from voices from the Harlem Renaissance along with younger writers, including Nikki Giovanni, Haki Madhubuti, and Audre Lorde (Smethurst 261, 268). Many of the artists and intellectuals were figures in the Civil Rights Movement so the intersection of art and power was a natural evolution.

Like the Harlem Renaissance, one of the “main tenet[s]” of Black Power and Black Arts was the necessity for Black people “to define the world in their own terms” (Neal 184). However, while a conflict of the Harlem Renaissance was between those who would have art as propaganda and those who argued for art for arts’ sake, critic and Black Power activist Maulana Karenga proclaimed all art as reflections of the value system from which it is derived. Thus

Black Art in its creation always has a political purpose (Asante 132). The Black Arts Movement was clearly connected to the politics of the time as they relate to the African American community's focus on self-determination and nationhood. According to Charles Fuller, "Both [Black Arts and Black Power] concepts are nationalistic. One is concerned with the relationship between art and politics, the other with the art of politics."

Beginning around in 1965 and dissolving in 1975 and 1976, the Black Arts Movement has roots in the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, and African American artists within the movement sought to create politically engaged work that explored the African American cultural and historical experience. The emigration of artists from Harlem, Greenwich Village, and other sites in New York to the Midwest, South, and West Coast had a significant impact on the way the Black Arts and Black Power movements developed across the country (Smethurst 274). Many African American poets made their way west, settling in San Francisco, California, and the surrounding Bay Area. There they came in contact with others, including Asian Americans engaged in cultural and political activity (Smethurst 285)

By the 1960s and 1970s, the Black Arts movement was in full swing and influencing the creative productivity and ideology of other cultures. As the "aesthetic and spiritual sister" to Black Power, Black Arts purports that there are in fact and in spirit two Americas—one black, one white (Neal 184), and that Black art should be created in Black America for Black Americans. Echoing W. E. B. DuBois's claim to have no use for art that is not propaganda, Maulana Karenga called artists to creative arms, declaring, "Our creative motif must be revolution; all art that does not discuss or contribute to revolutionary change is invalid" (Asante 132). Karenga called for "black art . . . for the people, by the people, and from the people. That

is to say, it must be functional, collective, and committing” (Asante 132). Having confronted his own lack of exposure to Asian American writing as an obstacle to his own work, Asian American writer Shawn Wong agrees: “Asian American art isn’t about business. It’s about educating artists” (262). Thus art must be clear in the purpose and function that it serves.

According to Charles Fuller, “Black writing is socio-creative art.” Black Art is self-expression, “born directly from the collective social situation in which the Afro-American found himself in this nation, and this nation only.” However it is not about writing in response to the white community, it is about writing from within the black experience where, for those in that experience, “there is more in Hughes, Wright, Dunbar, and Jones for us than in Hemingway, Joyce, Proust, Mann or the countless other white writers” (Fuller).

Larry Neal credits the use of the first positive non-specific use of the phrase “black arts” to LeRoi Jones in his poem, “We Own the Night.”

We are unfair
 And unfair
 We are black magicians
 Black arts we make
 in black labs of the heart

The fair are fair
 and deathly white

The day will not save them
 And we own the night

The poem has within it a foreshadowing of change, where the black “magicians” are the writers of the darker races who have been relegated to the margins. This poem suggests that as the night comes, signaling the ending of one day and the beginning of another, the black magicians will take control of their arts with the intention to create new forms and to invert the meanings of the

old ones. The magic is known to and recognized only by the community that creates it, and the “fair”—a play on the white as fair/black as un-fair binary—will not survive in the new day as they had in the old.

The mission of the Black Arts movement was “to create new forms and new values, sing new songs (or purify old ones) . . . create a new history, new symbols, myths, and legends (and purify old ones by fire)” (Neal 185). In an effort to preserve the history and culture of black people in America, Neal calls for artists to be “culture stabilizers” (185). As the traditional storybooks do not represent reality for the majority of African Americans and in fact continue the tradition of white supremacy, poet Don L. Lee calls for the destruction of the childhood stock characters of “Dick and Jane,” whom he calls perpetrators of evil, and for the study and promotion of the writings of W. E. B. Dubois, Nat Turner, and other revolutionary thinkers of the community (qtd. in Neal 185). “Our lives and our art are the same struggle,” to continue to try to make them something else is “to commit a kind of literary suicide” (Fuller).

Asian Americans found themselves facing similar challenges in the obscurity and availability of authentic images of themselves in literature. The major difference, however, is that while the writings of African Americans were challenged in the mainstream, writings from Asian Americans were virtually nonexistent. As Frank Chin stated in 1974, “In our 150 years, nine Chinaman generations, four Japanese American generations, three Filipino, two Korean, not one of us had an urge to say what’s what and who’s who about ourselves” (254). As the movement for Asian American identity grew, the knowledge of literature created within the community expanded.

According to ya Salaam, “A major reason for the widespread dissemination and adoption of Black Arts was the development of nationally distributed magazines that printed manifestos

and critiques in addition to offering publishing opportunities for a proliferation of young writers of all cultures. As social movements impact the public, the Asian America Movement also had a number of newspapers and journals that allowed Asian American students and others to contribute to the community voice and to the progressiveness that the movement represented. Many of those publications were created with students as founders, editors, and contributors. Lack of funding and availability of resources often kept the periodicals local to college campuses, but occasionally, they would circulate through the cities and into smaller areas, where they were often the only link to civil rights and Asian American activist activity (Wei 102). Three of the most influential Asian American periodicals were *Gird*, *Bridge* magazine, and *Amerasia Journal*. All of them trace their origins to the Asian American Movement, were influenced by it, and made contributions to it. All founded by students, they were read by the first generation to perceive themselves as Asian Americans (Wei 102).

Considered the journalistic arm of the Power Movement in the Asian American community (Wei 113), *Gidra* was founded at the University of California Los Angeles in 1969 by five students. *Gidra* ran from 1969 until April 1974 and was called the “Voice of the Asian American Movement” (Kawashima). Admittedly, *Gidra* was not “about art, it wasn’t about self-expression, it wasn’t even about breaking stereotypes to the majority society.” Instead, the periodical allowed its authors a space to explore political and cultural issues in an imperialistic context. Three of the five founders were Japanese, so *Gidra*’s foundational point of exploration was the Japanese American internment experience. With a circulation of approximately 4000 and a five-year run, *Gidra* was the longest running Asian American Movement paper; it was the first radical Asian American newspaper and was one of the movement’s most influential periodicals (Watkins 13). In its longevity and circulation, *Gidra* functioned as a means of

multiple expression, which according to Karenga, is “to make revolution, using its own medium.”

While some activist philosophies suggested that self-determination would be best achieved by creating separate physical spaces for ethnic groups, others supported the creation of separate cultural spaces that would appreciate multiethnic groups (Watkins 11). Ishmael Reed asserts that collective consciousness can be created through creative exchanges between individuals and groups which will revitalize not only their individual experiences but their culture as well (*Laundry* 5). According to Reed in a 1995 interview,

There would be no multiculturalism movement without Black Arts. Latinos, Asian Americans, and others all say they began writing as result of the example of the 1960s. Blacks gave the example that you don't have to assimilate. You could do your own thing, get into your own background, your own history, your own tradition and your own culture. I think the challenge is for cultural sovereignty and Black Arts struck a blow for that. (qtd. in ya Salaam)

The Before Columbus Foundation, founded in 1976 by a group of writers, editors, educators, and small press publishers, provided that cultural space as it promoted and disseminated contemporary American multicultural literature through its American Book Awards, literary panels and seminars, and the quarterly *Before Columbus Review*, America's only multicultural book review (Reed xi). It was named “Before Columbus” to acknowledge the existence of an American literature before the arrival of Europeans (Reed xxi). Before Columbus believed in the intersection of art and politics and did not “believe that literature is like a laboratory frog to be dissected so that its parts may be coldly examined. We believe that literature has a higher purpose. . . .American literature is an ocean.” (xxvii)

The “ocean” was a metaphor for the depth and breadth of American literature, but it also evoked the oceans of the Middle and Pacific Passages that figure largely in the histories of African Americans and Asian Americans. Before Columbus Foundation co-founder Ishmael Reed stated the group’s vision as one with

room for the Asian, the African, as well as the Western [European] . . . We have the opportunity to create a better world than the one envisioned by those who lived to see the close of the nineteenth century. But if we want to see that kind of world come about, we have to work for it (qtd. in Leong xi).

The literature that had been published and promoted was largely, up to this point, that which continued age-old stereotypes or furthered the acceptance of white, Western values as the only standard for “American” literature.

Examination of the histories of racialized groups magnifies the ways in which the black/white paradigm organizes groups’ social, legal, and racial identities and relationships in the United States. Although critics of the paradigm may condemn this method of organization, it is important to account for the fact that the paradigm may be a part of many people’s self-understanding and experiences—[and the way their literature is received] (J. Kim 2397). If the “marginal element” continues to be central to cultural concerns, contemporary criticism, will continue to push the “ethnic writer” from the “mainstream.” The result will be the continued patronizing of ethnic literature instead of valuing its ability to bring new “life” to America’s tired literary traditions” (Partridge 103). Allowing literature to thrive as a tool of recognition, resistance, and transformation is the best use of what has been used, at its worst, as propaganda. At its best, writing is useful in our appreciation of self to others, “be it in a refugee camp, a war-torn country, or en route to a destination yet unnamed” (Leong xi).

Postmodernists ignore the fact that ethnic groups have their own unique structure as well as a different relationship to the dominant culture because of histories that include slavery, segregation, and colonialism. Certain forms of postmodernism assign all cultural spheres the same value and ignore historical inequities and conflicts (Anderson 385) The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Therefore, the strict lines of postmodernism are not a sufficient lens through which to explore multicultural literary production. The addition of critical multiculturalism allows the exploration of tensions and conflicts rather than celebrating the plurality of cultures (Palumbu-Liu "Introduction 5)

Jan Mohamed argues that the consequences of adopting a marginal subjectivity are more dire for African American writers and, I would argue, for Asian American writers because the American process of constituting racial identity has become proficient at separating cultural meaning from political purchase. As with earlier 'renaissance' moments, the Black and Yellow Power moment saw widespread political and social changes that were taken up in the literature and, like those earlier moments, continue to impact us. (15).

It is important to distinguish the Asian American literary movement as a significant moment in the larger Asian American literary tradition. That tradition can be traced back through many generations to include volumes of letters from Asian immigrants to their families back in their home countries, the poetry etched in the walls of Angel Island, the stories of the bachelor societies of Chinatowns throughout the United States, and the memoirs of internment.

In the time period when the first immigrants arrived, the traditions from which they came reserved letters for the formally educated who wrote poetry and essays in classical form (E. Kim, Elaine 24). Autobiography and fiction were not a part of the literary tradition in China, for a

scholar to write a book about himself would have been seen as egotistical, and, although the peasant class of whom the immigrants came were adept in storytelling, singing, and dramatic dancing, written fiction was thought to be “frivolous” (E. Kim 24). When the Western convention of autobiography was explored within the Asian community in America, it was used to explain the complexities of Asian culture to the Western reader (Huntley 47). Harold Bloom notes the earliest known published writing *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887) by Lee Yan Phou, which was the first of a series of autobiographies solicited for publication by the D. Lothrop Publishing Company. Several others followed with details about childhoods in Asian homelands, native customs, pastimes, foods, and religious practices (E. Kim 25). The last in the series, *When I Was a Boy in Korea* by New Il-Han appeared in 1928.

As in most cultures, the literate were the privileged. Thus, the early Asian American literature did not represent the masses of the community. The few merchants, students, and ambassadors who were exempted from exclusion laws comprise what Elaine Kim calls a disproportionately large part of the Asian American voice (24). Much of their writing was designed to quiet fears and disseminate positive ideas about the unfamiliar East, and because the writings were usually about the most privileged of Asian society, the depictions of life were very limited. Memoirs continued to increase in popularity between the World Wars. One of the most popular memoirists was Lin Yutang. His writing spanned almost forty years and he claimed that his purpose was to explain China and the Chinese to Western readers (Huntley 47). His essays are “most notable for their gentle self-deprecating humor”—at the expense of the author and his fellow Chinese—“and for their genially superficial treatment of cultural issues and questions.” (Huntley 47). His memoir *My Country and My People* (1935) went through four printing editions.

According to E. D. Huntley in “Amy Tan and Asian American Literature,” the appeal for the majority of readers from the 1930s to the 1960s is its validation of a “popular myth” the stereotype of the “gently bred” Chinese as “naïve, unworldly people who desired nothing more than to focus their energies and time on artistic and literary activities, and who submitted docilely to colonial rule because they lacked the motivation to govern themselves” (47). Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, printed in 1945 and again in 1950 is also a popular memoir from that time. Wong’s book describes “an ethnic world in which existing stereotypes are confirmed and sanitized” (Huntley 48). Considered valuable to the history of Asian writing, these types of memoirs focus mainly on those immigrants whose antecedents had belonged to the privileged classes, and the prose and images appeared dated to the twentieth-century reader. The worlds they describe are filled with “tea-sipping, poetry-writing” aristocrats in beautiful alien settings that exist only in a world that has receded into memory and lacks relevance in contemporary times. However, they are considered valuable as landmark works in the development of a literary tradition by Asian Americans because the authors wrote about the Chinese in America as they saw and understood them (Huntley 48).

Within the Asian American community, however, other stories were told—stories about the experiences of the people and stories created to provide explanation for the things that they saw and lived. These along with stories brought from ancestral lands and passed through the generations affirmed family and identity and dispelled feelings of isolation, loneliness, and alienation. These stories, according to Frank Chin, are essential to an education that would “create informed, morally conscious citizens”; he claims Chinese legends and stories are a “valuable tool” for reminding Chinese Americans of their heritage and a “necessity” for bringing understanding to white Americans about the history and culture of others (Richardson 57).

Many cultural and literary projects that preceded the Asian American movement. One of note is Milton Murayama's *All I Asking for Is My Body*. This self-published work focused on a Japanese American plantation worker's family. The first chapter was printed in *Arizona Quarterly* in 1959. Groundbreaking at the time of initial publication because it used pidgin dialect, the full novel was published in 1975 and reprinted to wide acclaim in 1988 (Ho 253). Other works from Filipino, Japanese, Chinese writers and appeared in anthologies such as *Liawanag* (1976); the journal *Aion* (1970); *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (1971), which included essays and visual art; and its sequel *Counterpoint* (1976) (Ho, "Bamboo" 253). Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961) is notable for its treatment of the effects of racism and the patriarchal structure in Asian American communities (Huntley 49). Set two years after the War Bride Act of 1945, which allowed immigration of Chinese women, the plot focuses on the male-dominated, bachelor society created by the exclusion of women immigrants and the conflict between generations as they negotiate the intersection of Asian and Asian American lifestyles and expectations. John Okada's *No No Boy* (1957) presents the generational conflict between the Issei and Nisei as well as the conflict between Japanese Americans and the majority white culture as the novel examines the complexities of choice and loyalty for Nisei interned during World War II. Recovered from obscurity by the *AIIEEEEE!* editors in 1971, Okada's work provides expression for the damage within a family and a community trying to fit into the image of Americans. Because of his prolific writing before and during World War II and his honest depiction of life among Filipino migrant workers, crystallized in *America Is in the Heart* (1946), Carlos Bulosan became one of the best known Filipino writers in the Western world (Kim 45).

The new Asian American writers of the 1970s considered themselves to be members of a distinct new culture. Frank Chin explained the driving force behind his writing as "sensitivity

derived from the peculiar experience of a Chinese born in this country some thirty years ago, with all the stigmas attached to his race, but felt by himself alone as a human being” (qtd in Huntley 49). As the Asian type had been cast as alien, exotic, and marginal through the incorporations of stereotypes into poetry, fiction, and drama, the artists of the Yellow Power movement sought to produce a body of work that reflected a new “Asian American voice” that refused to mythologize ethnic origins or perpetuate new stereotypes (Huntley 49).

Combined Asian Resources Project (CARP) was central to activity of the 1970s. CARP members Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Nathan Lee, Benjamin R. Tong, and Shawn Hsu Wong actively sought publishing venues and performance spaces for the works of Asian American writers, found support for out of print works by earliest Asian American writers reissue, and sponsored literary conferences that focused on literary texts by Asian Americans (Huntley 50). As a result of this enthusiastic attention to the Asian American literary tradition, several anthologies were published in the 1970s: three of the most acknowledged are *Asian American Authors* (1972), edited by Kai-us Hsu and Helen Palubinskas; *Asian American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (1974), edited by David Hsui-fu Wang; and *IIIIIIIIII! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1976) (Huntley 50). These anthologies made Asian writing more accessible to larger numbers of readers and provided evidence of the presence of real, human Asians in America and Asian Americans. The anthologies of the 1970s brought Asian American literary texts together to form a new category of literature.

Even in the wake of prolific discovery and production of Asian American writing and art, publishing marginal writing was considered by some to carry a degree of risk and complication. For example, in 1976, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* was published. It won the National Book Critics Circle Award for best nonfiction and “paved the way for young writers of

the next decade to prove conclusively” the power and resonance of the Asian American voice (50). Knopf marketed *The Woman Warrior* as nonfiction, perhaps emphasizing it as a type of guide by which to tour Chinese culture because the publisher was concerned about its ability to stand as a novel (Partridge, “Politics” 104). Kingston herself has confirmed that *The Woman Warrior* is a work of fiction and is autobiographical only in the way that life itself is a fusion of history, myth, dreams, and desire (qtd. in Partridge 100). That this confirmation is necessary is evidence that Asian American literature and its writers have been mainly defined in relation to their “Asianness” and its relation to Orientalism (Leong vii).

Influenced by the Harlem Renaissance poets, Langston Hughes in particular, along with the Beat poets as major influences in his life and work, along with the rhythms and ingenuity of jazz, Ishmael Reed was a major figure in the artistic collaboration in San Francisco and the Bay Area in the 1960s and 1970s linking African American and Asian American writers. Because of the broad popularity of “Third World” unity during that time, there was popular identification between yellow and black peoples. Inspired by the notion of a “Black aesthetic,” Asian Pacific American artists and musicians began exploring an “Asian American aesthetic” that would include connection and interaction with ancestral Asian forms and traditions and experimentation with amalgamations of western, Asian, and popular influences. These collaborations vitally impacted creative output of the times. Beyond the Jackie Chan-Chris Tucker partnerships in popular film, Ho asserts that during the 1960s and 1970s, the “black-yellow connections and unity were much more real, substantial, meaningful, and politically anti-imperialist.” According to Ishmael Reed in *Airing Dirty Laundry*, in addition to their art, they found kinship in shared nationality.

We knew our heritages, and weren't having identity problems. We communicated because we were Americans, which meant that we know about comic books, movies, World War II, Milton Berle, Redd Foxx, Yiddish theater, John F. Kennedy, Muhammad Ali, Toscanini, John Coltrane, Black Power, KKK, ice cream, Mickey Mouse, etc. (255).

According to Chin and Wong, Afro-Americans have been “quicker to understand and appreciate the value of Asian American writing than whites,” partly because they are not hampered by some racist stereotypes” (qtd. in E. Kim 174). As the poets/writers collective interacted, they shared ideas and the “afro-planetary” vision that Prashad accorded to Langston Hughes’ actions in Asian in the 1930s. This vision produced a shared consciousness, and out of this shared consciousness arose a ground fertile for planting the seeds of artistic and literary collaboration.

By the mid-70s black writers such as Al Young and Ishmael Reed were beginning to envision literature as multi-ethnic instead of mono-ethnic (Harris 72). They realized their vision in the *Yardbird Reader*, a journal that published the work of minority writers and artists, was created in response to treatment from white publishers. The publication was named in honor of the creativity and improvisational artistry of Charlie “Yardbird” Parker. Echoing sentiments expressed about white patronage during the Harlem Renaissance, Ishmael Reed describes the impetus for the creation of *Yardbird*:

It was decided that [Afro-American artists] were treated as commodities [by publishers and editors]; mute Dictaphones recording someone’s often ludicrous political and social notions—slaves, standing on an auction block as our proportions and talents are discussed (qtd. in McClelland).

The Yardbird Reader assumed that American literature should reflect the culture experience of a multiplicity of groups. Its premise was that each ethnic group had something distinctive to contribute to American literature (Harris 72). With direction from editors Ishmael Reed and writer Al Young, *The Yardbird Reader* published writers who had not been published before and offered alternatives to mainstream writing. According to James Smethurst, it “cleared the way for Asian American literature as a cultural category, anticipating, inspiring, and even making available writing for the seminal 1974 *AIIEEEEE!*” (287).

Between 1972 and 1976 five editions of *Yardbird* appeared, and some of the works that would appear in *AIIEEEEE!* had been featured in *Yardbird 2*. Frank Chin and Shawn Wong were then asked to edit *Yardbird 3* in 1974, which according to Reed was “the first publication to recognize an Asian American tradition which wasn’t limited to exotica or mimicry” (*Airing* 254). The last issue was *Yardbird 5* after which the enterprise was ended as a result of legal and financial issues. The publication emphasized alternative, ethnic literary traditions as relatively coherent wholes rather than . . . publishing individual authors of color” (Smethurst 287). The writers united in kinship over not being part of the mainstream, of being a part of communities that were defined in the larger society by their racial otherness and their belief that art and literature could reflect the significance of their American experience. The participants in *Yardbird* and *Before Columbus* “reconceived canon formation, challenging what might be thought of as external (outside the United States) and internal (within the United States) boundaries rather than simply adding a few writers ‘of color’ and/or a few women to ‘mainstream’ syllabi (Smethurst, *Black Arts* 287).

According to Ho, the Asian Arts movement was not as affiliated politically to the Asian Movement as the Black Arts movement was to the Black Liberation Movement (Tribute).

However, it was equally politically charged. Inspired by the radicalism of the Black Arts Movement, in the early 1970s, four young Californians who had been writers and college literature teachers presented a manifesto for a new direction in Asian American culture. Taking Kwan Kung, Chinese god of art and war, as a symbol of their effort, Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Hsu Wong edited an anthology of Asian American literature titled *AIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* that, they asserted, expressed the genuine spirit of Asian American history and culture and not the old stereotypes that had held sway for so long (Ho 173).

Referred to as the “Four Horsemen of Asian American Literature,” (Reed, “The Yellow and the Black” 218), Chin, Chan, Inada, and Wong set the stage for revolution in Asian American literature, editing what would become a seminal work in Asian American literature. The “Four Horsemen” were drawn together by their searches for “literary ancestors.” As they were associated with universities, either teaching or studying, their first inquiry was to their professors. Wong recounts that he wanted to major in Asian American literature, but “there were no teachers, no assignments, no credits, no classes” (“Shattering”). Professors directed him to study the Tang Dynasty poets from seventh century China. He found no connection to his lived experience, so he searched locally and found Frank Chin (Partridge, *AIIEEEEE!* 93), who having published the short story “Food for All His Dead” in 1962, was the first published Asian American author Wong encountered. Many of the works that had been published previously by Asian Americans had been out of publication for some time and were lost to the public. Wong, along with Chin and Chan began searching for Asian literature in used bookstores in the Bay Area, and that is where they “found” Okada’s *No No Boy*. Another book they discovered was the poetry collection *Down at the Santa Fe Depot* (1970). The book cover featured a photograph

of contributors; Inada was the sole Asian. Chin, Chan, and Wong contacted him to join them in their project (“Lawson Inada”). As the group collected and read through the literature they found, they also critiqued the works and the situation of Asian American literature, establishing some criteria for Asian American art.

One significant parameter for the editors was the American identity. In correspondence to Frank Ching, editor of *Bridge* magazine, in October 1972, Chin alludes to the dual-consciousness that W. E. B. DuBois spoke of when he says, “The only cultural identity allowed the Chinese American has been a foreign Chinese one,” which Chin says has been “used to exclude [Chinese Americans] from American culture and is imposed as a substitute for participation in American culture.” For this reason, even anthologies of ethnic American writing confuse Chinese from China with American born Chinese (qtd. in E. Kim 175). As Chinese and Chinese Americans are linked by skin color in a white supremacist society, Chin emphasizes the difference between recent immigrants and second, third, fourth generation Chinese Americans. “We are not interchangeable. Our sensibilities are not the same” (qtd. in E. Kim 176)

Authenticity is also critical in the evaluation of Asian American works. Frank Chin was largely critical of Maxine Hong Kingston’s acclaimed *The Woman Warrior* with commentary that her characters “embodied a particularly inaccurate, inauthentic sensibility.” Chin accuses Kingston of “fak[ing] the best known works from the most universally known body of Asian American lore in history” (J. Huang). The “fake” includes writing from a place of racism, not racial pride. For Kingston in particular, Chin states that the autobiographical mode is derivative of Christian brainwashing, with Chinese culture put in a place of evil against which the characters in the text are powerless to resist. According to Elaine Kim, Chin, Chan, and Wong “condemn” *Flower Drum Song* as insulting to and distortive of Chinese American life for the

purpose of being acceptable or entertaining to non-Chinese (108).

AIIEEEEE! : An Anthology of Asian American Writers is “the groundbreaking anthology of Asian American writing . . . which is widely regarded as establishing the initial Asian American literary canon” (D. Kim 567), and when it was published in 1974, it “bore witness to the new order of things” (A. Robert Lee 139), and from the very first pages, the new order was evident. Chan, Chin, Inada, and Wong, codified the tradition with their work. Okada’s *No No Boy* and Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea* were “rescued from obscurity in the 1970s by the *AIIEEEEE!* editors and remain staple texts of Asian American literary studies (D. Kim 568).

The editors claimed that there were not a significant number of published Asian American writers because publishers deliberately rejected writing that did not confirm to racist stereotypes. Americans’ stereotypes of “Orientals” were sacrosanct, and no one, especially a “Chink” or a “Jap” was going to tell them that that America, not Asia, was their home, that English was their language, and that the stereotype of the Oriental good or bad, was offensive (Chin, et. al., xxii).

Very often, descendants resemble their ancestors in ways not immediately classified or categorized by science. The *AIIEEEEE!* editors echoed the call of their *Fire!!* predecessors as they strove to speak when they had been silenced. They include a manifesto within the pages of the “Preface.” The manifesto echoes Langston Hughes’s essay, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” which served a similar purpose for the artists of *Fire!!*. The opening lines, “The Asian-American writers here are elegant or repulsive, angry and bitter, militantly anti-white or not, not out of any sense of perversity or revenge but of honesty” respond to the first declaration from the younger artists of the Harlem Renaissance: “We younger Negro artists who create now

intend to express to individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame.” The Preface to *AIIEEEEE!* continues

America’s dishonesty—its racist white supremacy passed off as love and acceptance—has kept seven generations of Asian-American voices off the air, off the streets, and praised us for being Asiatically no-show. A lot is lost forever. But from the few decades of writing we have recovered from seven generations, it is clear that we have a lot of elegant, angry, and bitter life to show. We know how to show it. We are showing off. If the reader is shocked, it is due to his own ignorance of Asian-America. We are not new here. Aiiieeeee! (xvi)

Clearly a statement of purpose, the Asian American writers speak of their own self-determination in the future of Asian American literature. They not only assert themselves and their identity and claim their space in the creative realm as the Negro artists did, they also seek to reclaim the work and identities of seven generations of Asian American voices. For many years after they began to arrive in America, Asian laborers, like their African counterparts, were not allowed to talk in their native languages, and after verbal restrictions were lifted, there were harsh punishments for learning to read and write in English. Therefore, stories remained untold, and some were lost. In the beauty and bitterness of this literary heritage they recognize that it is much there of which to be proud. The editors also follow a DuBoisian theory in the recognition and reclamation of language and letters and their relevance to humanity: “On the simplest level, a man in any culture speaks for himself. Without a language of his own, he is not a man” (xlvi).

Published in 1974, *AIIEEEEE!* is dedicated to the memory of John Okada and Louis Chu, two Asian American writers who inspire and represent missing literary history for the editors. The book was meant to be provocative, with the cover of the hardcover first edition dominated

by a drawing of an Asian male face, colored yellow, with his mouth open as if screaming. The bold black lettering proclaiming the title appears above the visage of the yellow man. The face appears only on the first edition; later editions featured artistic arrangement of the title and subtitle only. The back cover of the first edition features a black and white photograph of the editors and an unidentified little girl. The editors are attired in the plaid shirts, jeans, denim jackets, and boots that are commonplace in the American West and captured in various poses in front of a storefront, with a “Coca-Cola” sign prominently displayed.

The text is divided into two sections: the first contains a 16-page preface and a 63-page introduction, and the second is the anthology itself. The Introduction, “Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice,” is also in two sections, “An Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature” and “An Introduction to Filipino-American Literature.” In the preface the editors state, “Asian-Americans are not one people but several—Chinese-Americans, Japanese-Americans, and Filipino-Americans” (vii). The focus on the three largest populations and the omission of other groups who were in America at the time, including Korean and Vietnamese, speaks to the multi-layered presence of Asians in America and the magnitude of the task before the editors themselves as they sort through the 140 years of Asian American history that they identify. They place the genesis of the history of Asian Americans at 1834, and it is here that they begin their discussion of Asian American literature. They provide a brief outline of history, making clear that the complex history of Filipinos and the United States differs from that of Chinese and Japanese in America. However, they maintain that Asian Americans are “bound by a common culture that was born and bred strictly within U. S. national borders” (Maeda 1082).

In the introductory matter for the literature, attention is given to works that may be influential but are not included within the pages of the anthology. Nineteenth-century Sui Sin

Far, of Chinese and English parents, is credited to be the first to speak with an Asian American sensibility—one that is neither Asian nor white American (xxi). There is discussion about the responsibility of the Asian American writer to claim an audience and, by doing so, making a decision about who [he] is (xlv). The stated purpose is to bring the voices of Asian Americans together in memory of John Okada and Louis Chu, who died in obscurity and for other Asian American writers who worked alone with a sense of rejection and isolation (xlviii). The editors of AIIIEEEEE! defined Chinese American writing according to the cultural sensibility represented by individual writers. In their anthology, they emphasized that this sensibility could only be developed by being American-born of Asian parents, but they made exceptions for those who immigrated in early childhood. This requirement allowed the omission of several significant contributions to Asian American literature.

The “Introduction to Filipino-American Literature” in the first edition (1974) is written by Filipino writers, Oscar Peñaranda, Serafin Syquia, and Sam Tagatac. Both the first and second editions include a short story by Peñaranda and a prose poem by Tagatac; however, the introduction from the Filipino writers appears only in the first edition. The “Introduction to Filipino-American Literature” in the second edition (1984) is written by S. E. Solberg, an expert on Korean—not Filipino literature. Solberg’s introduction is informative and his knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject matter is evident; however, the Filipino writers bring a more personal and immediate expressiveness to their Introduction in the first edition.

We will make the strongest case for the urgency and necessity of the following works, a case that no other Asian-American can have: that is, the total absence of published Filipino-American writers in the United States today. We were asked to write a literary background of Filipino-American works . . . Here is our stand.

We cannot write any literary background because there isn't any. No history. No published literature. No nothing. (xlix)

While recognizing Carlos Bulosan and Bienvenido Santos, both published Filipino authors at the time, and their significance in the Asian American literary tradition, the writers make the critical distinction that there was nothing published by Filipino American—one who was born and raised in the United States. Thus, the “Introduction” explores expressions of feelings of fragmentation that Filipinos and Filipino Americans experience within the United States (lix). The distinctive identity of the Filipino as an American national is critical to an understanding of Filipino identity. The Filipino is at once American and foreign, in a situation where calling oneself a Filipino American, while problematic in its signification, may well be redundant.

Writing from within the Filipino experience, Peñaranda, Syquia, and Tagatac include references to Filipino writers that are not included in Solberg's second-edition introduction, as well as the full text poem “Starfighter” by Tagatac, which expresses Filipino disillusion with the American Dream. The wonders of Western expansion illustrated through the “taming” of the wild west and space and sea exploration is met with resignation and disappointment. The final lines of the poem read

I know better
 i know better i
 see the horses of
 your plains
 no more (lxii).

The literature within “Fifty Years of Our Whole Voice” reflect Chinese American, Japanese American, and Filipino writing, with six Chinese authors, including three of the editors;

three Filipino, including Bulosan; and five Japanese authors, including Okada. Inada's poetry is included in the "Introduction to Chinese- and Japanese-American Literature. The editors praise his work previously published in *Down at the Santa Fe Depot* and Inada as having written about "hatreds and fears no Asian-American ever wrote of before." Inada is "a monster poet from the multiracial ghetto of West Fresno, California . . . with "a Japanese-American, Sansei voice, afraid of nothing" (xliv). His poems "Chinks" and "Japs" are included in the Introduction as examples of his mastery and as confrontations to the stereotypes of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans and the conflicts between and within the communities. In "Chinks," Inada expresses anger at the Chinese American abandonment of the Japanese American community during World War II.

When the War came
they said, "We Chinese!"

Grandma would say:
"Marry a Mexican,
a Nigger, just don't
marry no Chinese."(xliv-xlv)

The poem "Japs" is a criticism of the model minority that "hates [it]self on the sly." Assimilation is derided as Japanese Americans are observed "play[ing] Dr. Charley's games" (xlvi).

Although the titles of the poems are pejorative nicknames, both poems end with the formal names for the cultural groups, indicating a tension between the perceived and the actual reality for the people within the groups.

The collective impression made by the front matter is that the works in *AIIEEEEE!/: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* are peopled with Asian American characters who are agents and subjects of their own stories and who exist beyond the gaze of those preconceived, misapprehended, and pervasive images that exist in the white mind. The placement of the excerpt

from Bulosan's novel, *America is in the Heart*, is strategically as the first work in the anthology as the novel is one of the better-known works at the time that the anthology was published. Additionally and in a dramatic introductory flourish, the excerpt ends with the protagonist's shout, "They can't silence me any more! I'll tell the world what they have done to me!"(10) These words seem to emphasize the editors' prefatory declaration and set the stage for the voices in the subsequent pages. There are short stories, novel excerpts, and plays that explore identity and display the writers' styles while demonstrating the diversity within Asian American literature.

There are images of family and celebration and descriptions of internment and alienation, and the emotion and anger that comes from the imposed silences speaks more loudly than some of the more explicit writings. One example is from the interior thoughts of the protagonist in *No No Boy*. He silently asks his mother, "How is one to talk to a woman, a mother who is also a stranger because the son does not know who or what she is? Tell me mother, who are you? What is it to be Japanese?" (131). The final story in the anthology is from Wakako Yamauchi's "And the Soul Shall Dance," a short story written in 1974 that was adapted into a play of the same name in 1976. The story explores alienation, arranged marriage, and displacement. Arranged against the economic disadvantage of itinerant farming, the story illustrates the effects of existence under restrictions of race and gender on the family structure and on one character in particular, Mrs. Oka. As an adult, the narrator realizes that the Mrs. Oka of her childhood tried to escape her oppressive, frequently violent life, with sake and a song with the lyrics, "And the soul shall dance" (200). The song speaks to the freedom of the soul that a self in Mrs. Oka's circumstances will never know.

Although the reviews of the anthology were few as compared to the backlash that met the contributors to *Fire!!*, the impact that the anthology was appreciated immediately, and overall, the anthology was well-received with positive reviews from mass media. Specifically, in the *New York Times* review, “An Anthology of Asian-American Writers,” reviewer Jan Carew posits, “The collection presents a representative cross-section of current Asian-American writing and artfully portrays the human strengths and weaknesses, common to all of us, that have often been obscured by myths of the exotic Oriental.” In Carew’s opinion, “the stories [in the anthology] are . . . slyly ironic, strewn with new insights buried in the flesh of the narrative; they illuminate areas of darkness in the hidden experiences of a people who had been little more than exotic figments of someone else’s imagination.” Carew further states, “The book brings to life . . . Asian American characters who break away from the stereotype of silent impassivity to which they had been assigned for so many generations.”

A review in *Philippine Studies* acknowledged the anthology’s sociopolitical purpose in its newness and difference and likens it to the culture of the American black ghetto as it reflects culture strongly influenced by the pressure of white racism (Evangelista 469). Susan Evangelista acknowledges that the Chinese American and Japanese American writing is powerful and proves that the Asian American culture is “unique,” but states “No Asian Chinese or Japanese would believe that this writing came from his people. The white American has to strain his powers of imagination to see this coming from his country” (470). Evangelista also notes that the Filipino American experience is yet still different in two major aspects: First, because of the complicated history between the United States and the Philippines as a territory, and secondly because there is much less Filipino American literature to be collected for the anthology (471).

Others, however, were not pleased with the content of the anthology and the views of its editors. At one time, because of their dogmatic theoretical stance that appeared misogynistic, the editors were accused of being the “Chinese-American literary mafia” (Kingston, “Hers”). Yet, one truism about the anthology is that its publication positively impacted the status of the ethnic author within the literature of the United States. *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (1974) “set the table for publication of more Asian American works and for the invitation of earlier lost works to the banquet” (Partridge, “Politics”105).

Chin and Wong wrote, “The blacks were the first to take us seriously and sustained the spirit of many Asian American writers. . .[I]t wasn’t surprising to us that Howard University Press understood us and set out to publish our book [*AIIEEEEE!*] with their first list. They like our English we spoke and didn’t accuse us of unwholesome literary devices” (Chin and Wong vii). Founded in 1867, Howard University is a leader in African American education and one of the best known Historically Black College and Universities. According to the Howard University history, the Press was organized in 1972. By 1974, the Howard University Press had published its first six books, *AIIEEEEE!* among them. Howard University Press issued the reprint in 1983, as well as *The Big AIIEEEEE!* in 1991. *The Big AIIEEEEE!* is more specifically subtitled “An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature,” and continues the editors’ exploration of Asian American voices. *The Big AIIEEEEE!* expands the focus to include Chinese and Japanese immigrant writing, which they had been definitive about not including in *AIIEEEEE!* Published in 1991 after the opportunities for Asian American writers had expanded, the second anthology was met with mixed reviews, receiving criticism for not including the then popular Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, and overlooking literature that did not complement the editors’ political philosophy.

After *The Big AIIIEEEEE!*, the editors did not work as the “Four Horsemen” again; however, all of them continued their work in literature. Frank Chin, the most prolific of the group, continued his work in literary criticism and has to date published three novels, two plays, and several books of essays and short stories. The most outspoken contemporary Asian American literary critic, Chin has himself been criticized for his vehement responses to the writing of Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, resulting in continued charges of misogyny.

Shawn Wong, the youngest of the group, still a student while working on *AIIIEEEEE!*, published two novels: *Homebase* (1979) and *American Knees* (1996), which was the basis of the 2010 film *Americanese*. He is a professor at the University of Washington and has edited four additional multicultural anthologies. Jeffery Paul Chan was on the faculty at San Francisco State University when the group initially connected. He published the novel *Eat Everything before You Die: A Chinaman in the Counterculture* in 2004. His short story collection *A Night on Lead Mountain*, published in 1974 in partial fulfillment for the requirements for his master’s degree, added to the number of published Asian American authors and had a critical impact on the production and availability of Asian American literature in the 1970s. Lawson Fusao Inada retired as a professor from Southern Oregon University in 2006, the same year that he was named Poet Laureate for the State of Oregon. Strongly influenced by the rhythms of jazz, Inada’s poetry explores the themes of identity, dislocation, and longing for home and is influenced by his time spent in Japanese internment camps during World War II. The work of these four writers and the anthologies that they edited are now staples on course syllabi throughout the country.

The legacy of the Four Horsemen continues the tradition of talking texts across generations. Specifically, *The Collective* (2012) by Don Lee includes references to the Asian

American literary movement and the Harlem Renaissance. At the center of the novel is the friendship shared by three college friends. The novel explores the role and responsibility of the artist in twenty-first century America and echoes some of the same issues that were at the forefront of the power and literary movements of the 1970s, including generational conflicts and racism. The group identity is a response to their white peers' tagging them the "Three Musketeers." The members of the Collective reject the reference to an European ideal, and form the "Asian American Artists Collective" or the "3AC." The members of the 3AC write their manifesto, including the declaration that that the organization "devoted to the creation, collaboration, and dissemination of art by Asian Americans" (223). The 3AC is dedicated to creating a community to gather and exchange ideas and experiences and declared a commitment to social change. Resembling the 1970s CARP model at the same time that they proclaim themselves [to be their] own "Harlem Renaissance, their mission was "to instigate a grassroots movement, Yellow Power redux, through . . . [to] celebrate . . . heritage . . . and foster unity, and . . . shape [their] generation's literary and artistic attitudes" (Lee 146-147).

For its positive and controversial reception, *IIIIIIIIII! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers* was a significant catalyst for the Asian American literary movement. Even in the case of omissions, the anthology is critical to the conversation that started with the artists in Harlem fifty years before. As with the Harlem Renaissance, the legacy of the Asian American literary movement is that the creative activity and literary production by Asian Americans is as significant as the works that resulted. The collaboration of the 1960s and 1970s continued to build upon the artistic foundation that was laid in Harlem and reifies the significance and relevance of multiethnic literatures in the larger community of letters.

Chapter Six

“On the Corner of Bitter and Sweet”:

Diverse American Literatures in the Twenty-first Century

Let the good work go on.
Pauline Hopkins

He who would enter the twenty-first century, must come by way of me.
James Baldwin

*And none of his children would wear burnt cork as minstrel, or dream of it.
They would keep their own faces.*
Tamarive Due

He'd do what he always did, find the sweet among the bitter.
Jamie Ford

*For what I have done with my life is the darkest version of what he only dreamed of,
to enter a place and tender the native language with body and tongue
and have no one turn and point to the door.*
Chang Rae Lee

The old myths . . . would not disappear just because the law said they should.
Lilli S. Hornig

In 1926, *The Crisis* published W. E. B. DuBois's remarks from the celebration of the awarding of the Twelfth Spingarn Medal. In his commentary on Negro art, DuBois states,

I do not doubt that the ultimate art coming from black folk is going to be just as beautiful, and beautiful largely in the same ways, as the art that comes from white folk, or yellow, or red; but the point today is that until the art of the black folk

compels recognition they will not be rated as human. And when through art they compel recognition then let the world discover if it will that their art is as new as it is old and as old as new. (DuBois, "Criteria of Negro Art" 260)

DuBois speaks clearly of the intersections of art created by people of color in America, as well as the ability of art to speak across the ages. In his attention to the creation of art as a reflection of beauty, the humanity of those who create it, and art's positive impact on securing human rights, DuBois's theories are revolutionary. According to scholar Betsy Erkkila, DuBois writes resistance literature, designed to bear witness to the struggles of millions in the interest of bringing about material transformation in the historical conditions of black peoples' lives (574). The consistent motif in DuBois's theories is the color line—the construct of race that divides people of color from the white power structures and, at the same time, serves as a tie that binds people of color together in their experiences in an imperialistic society. The persistent message is that elevation and recognition as members of the larger community can be achieved through art and letters. DuBois believed that art has a political purpose, and while the younger artists who created *Fire!! Devoted to Younger Artists* during his lifetime philosophically disagreed with him and believed that the creation of art for art's sake was revolutionary action itself, the impulse to use art and literature as tools of revolution was handed down over the ensuing fifty years and is apparent in the work of the editors of *IIIIIIIIII! An Anthology of Asian-American Literature*. These connections between diverse cultures fifty years apart are critical in the development and recognition of multiethnic literatures in the American literary canon. Furthermore, DuBois's insight about color and collaboration continue to resonate in the twenty-first century as popular culture reshapes feelings of race and culture in what is now recognized as a developing global society.

The term “globalization” has been used frequently in recent years as it suggests an interconnectivity between nations and people that results in worldwide diverse community. As it implies that each country, each culture, and each person contributes in a singular, significant way to the survival of the whole, globalization suggests a move away from the divergence inherent in diaspora. Globalization describes a situation of the present, whereas the term diaspora seems to articulate a relationship to a past (Edwards 689). Globalization implies a raised consciousness and a single mode of exchange, while diaspora honors origin. In his essay, “Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora,” Brent Edwards asserts, “there is a complex historical overlay of a variety of kinds of population movement, narrated and valued in different ways and to different ends” (691). Diaspora implies an encounter among similar people in a shared elsewhere (704). This shared elsewhere becomes the space for creativity and production that African Americans and Asian Americans found in America. In the public and private spaces where their lives, labor, and literacy were restricted, Africans and Asians in America confronted the originary reality of their diasporic backgrounds, complete with racial conflict within the majority community, and created a new identity. The desire to express that identity and to claim place in the nation’s history has been the catalyst for socio-political and literary tensions that form the nation’s history and literature.

In his essay, “What is an Author?” (1969), theorist Michel Foucault asks, “What difference does it make who is speaking?” In examination of the work by ethnic American writers, the difference between writer and audience is critical to the artists’ purpose. It is critical to the appreciation of the works by the *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* editors in that they seek to step away from the idea of one *authoritative* voice for their communities or for their experience. They signify on structure and form to allow the voices to be heard through the language rather

than to follow the modes of production created and perpetuated by the white establishment and filter those voices through an authority. They created an “ethnographic imagination” and “experimented with new ways of perceiving, representing, and producing structures of affiliation and difference” (Evans 8). Historically, because they have been denied agency in any sphere, minorities and women in Anglo-European countries have not been concerned with individualism, subjectivity, identity, or authorship in the arts. On the contrary, they have struggled against a lack of self-identity, intelligence, and being in the representations of privileged white men. For these who have been traditionally deprived of voice, presence, and self-representation in the cultural productions of white men, the Foucaultian idea of “rediscovering the author” has quite a different meaning, and the identity of the author takes on greater significance. “Anonymity is intolerable” because it would be yet another situation where those who are othered disappear or are forced to conform to the dictates of the majority culture. This meaning is quite different than it would be to white men who have had centuries of access to print, publication, and the privileges of authorship (Erkkila 572).

According to James Baldwin in *Notes on a Native Son*,

One writes out of one thing only—one’s own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give. This is the only real concern of the artist, to recreate out of the disorder of life that order which is art” (7).

The art is the expression of the creator’s relationship to the lived experience it represents. To that end, the artist has a responsibility to truth and authenticity in its telling. Specifically, the art should be an expression of the struggle and triumph; it should always demonstrate the will to truth. Artists have as their focus the politics and consequences of struggles against racial

oppression as it overwhelmingly influences the day-to-day activities in private homes and private lives. In his “Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa,” author Njabulo Ndebele states, “The ordinary day-to-day lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the very *content* of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions” (156).

In *The West and the Rest of Us*, Chinweizu suggests the issue is not race, but supremacy (395). The machinery of that supremacy propels racial constructs to the forefront of public attention. The constructs of race are woven into the fabric of the United States, with the binary of white/non-white at the core of legislation and history. Literature must cross a plurality of diverse social elements in its ability to speak to our cultural and national identities as Americans. If the lessons of the Harlem Renaissance, the Asian American literary movement, and those that they inspired are to endure, America must move beyond racism to race consciousness. Such consciousness understands the concept of race and the historical constructions of blackness that serve as the foundation of the white/non-white binary that includes all other peoples of color. Race consciousness also, perhaps counterintuitively, accepts negative stereotypes as positive attributes. Authentic race consciousness requires a positive perception of blackness that challenges the history of oppression and rejection that is associated with being black (Gines 64). By extension of the white/black binary, authentic race consciousness fosters an understanding of the history of other communities of color and an appreciation for their contributions to the national identity. The shared elsewhere becomes home. As it transcends shades of nonwhiteness, authentic race consciousness allows understanding from the inside out, rather than allowing this consciousness “to be determined from the outside and then internalized” (Gines 65). The days of masking have passed; people will “keep their own faces” (Due 27).

Racial constructs are enduring, but it is through race consciousness and the understanding that results that it is possible to imagine a future of universal “friendship and brotherhood” (Edwards 705) where everyone will have a voice. The voices will marry in unified effort, much like that of a symphony of musical instruments when they play their individual parts designed to complement each other. The Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars Statement of Purpose, adopted in 1969, appears in every issue of *The Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* until the last in 2000: “We realize that to be students of other peoples, we must first understand our relations to them.” Until that time of consciousness and understanding, the struggle with racial identification and cultural recognition continues.

One of the efforts that America has taken toward more specificity as its populations become more diverse is the use of the hyphen—itsself indefinite and problematic in its sweeping inclusions and glaring omissions—but socially and politically useful in identifying races and their associations with white America. The ethnic subject is a divided subject, and the hyphen preserves the notion of a duality, of a binary opposition, a pattern of limited thinking, and a need to qualify nationality. To use the term “hyphenate identity” is to acknowledge the existing binary—the dual consciousness—which supposes “a bridgeable space between terms” (Feng 93). For the majority society, the first word is the most important as the signifier of a person’s identity. King-Kok Cheung suggests that the hyphen creates a type of balance for the words on each side, “as if linking two nouns,” two things, each with isolated, individual meaning. Without the hyphen, the first word becomes an adjective describing a type of American, thus expanding the meaning of the noun and creating an entirely different meaning (Cheung 17). The presence or absence of the hyphen underscores the need to stabilize momentarily a position from which to speak and to destabilize that position immediately (Feng 94). The space, or interval, between is

significant. For some, it represents an absence of some element of pure identity; for others, it represents the whole of experience and history that makes the American identity distinctive.

African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance were seeking identity as human beings, still moving away from the most pejorative racial names to developing their own badge of identity. They sought a name that spoke of pride for their community, as well as provided a link to their stolen history, but also made clear that they were definitely American. For the Asian American artists, of which Frank Chin was the most outspoken, the hyphen—or the interval between Chinese and American was integral to his identity as an American. In correspondence to Frank Ching, Chin stated, “There is no cultural, psychological bridge between me and the Chinese immigrants. There are social, racist pressures that connect us. These connections must be broken” (qtd. in E. Kim 175). As place contributes to identity, being American carries with its own set of variables, and including Chinese or Asian as part of that identity encompasses those aspects of experience that identify Chin as not white, an identification feature that is significant as well. For those to whom the hyphen has been assigned, what is most important is the experience that is perhaps in the interval. According to Maxine Hong Kingston’s character Wittman Ah Sing in *Tripmaster Monkey*,

And “Chinese American” is inaccurate—as if we could have two countries . . .

Not okay yet. “Chinese hyphen American” sounds exactly the same as “Chinese no hyphen American.” No revolution takes place in the mouth or in the ear.

(Kingston 327)

The hyphen can be read or written, but it cannot be heard or spoken. The gap where the hyphen might be may be extended metaphorically to the gap between theorizing and living and, with or without the hyphen, is only meaningful when it calls attention to its own discursive construction

and thus destabilizes itself (Feng 95). The complexities of the hyphen become more so given the diversity of Asian Americans, who represent a wide range of Asian ethnicities and cultures and are several generations removed from Asia, and of African Americans, for many of whom their African origins are forever lost. These complexities multiply as what lies to the left of the hyphen interval continues to be necessary as a critical qualifier of Americanness.

In the 1990s, Arthur Schlessinger “declared war” against multiculturalism with the idea that ethnic ideology nourishes a “culture of victimization” and inculcates the “illusion” that membership in one organization or another ethnic group is the basic American experience. According to him, the allegiance to ethnicity threatens the brittle bonds of national identity (Takaki, *Strangers* xii). To the contrary, what the hyphen seems to indicate, as Albert Murray claims in 1970 in *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture* that “ethnic differences are the very essence of cultural diversity and national creativity” (3). According to Murray, [America is] a nation of multicolored people, even in its most rigidly segregated precincts (3). The emphasis should then be on the interval, not on the qualified implication of “not quite American” or on “some *other* type of American.” That space also indicates that there are those who are missing from the early studies and raises the question of what voices might be raised in the silence. With the emphasis so squarely on race for the groups in the times examined here, other group identifiers, such as gender and sexual orientation, became secondary, even tertiary, in the discussion of identity. As the identity discussion expands, an American literature that holistically represents “our whole voice” becomes a more immediate possibility.

In response to W. E. B. DuBois’s theories of the color line and its problematic influence on the twentieth century, author Vijay Prashad asserts, “The problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of the colorblind” (21). This statement suggests that society is moving away from

related racial constructs and imposed perceptions and limitations. However, in the quest to be “above race,” we are in danger of engaging in what Prashad calls “genteel racism” (22)—an era where race is claimed to be a non-factor in politics, economics, or literature. Acting as if society is colorblind does not eradicate the complexities of race. Instead, it perpetuates the inequalities of race and racism and distances itself from the role that society has played in constructing and institutionalizing racism by ignoring or euphemizing them, rather than directly addressing them. Myths similar to “the model minority” will prevail; illusions that one minority is better than another, and ignoring and exoticizing others’ voices will continue. These myths will not yield to law (Hornig 36); they are well embedded in our social structure. For a society to create racial constructs, allow them to thrive for hundreds of years, and then pretend they do not exist continues to create tension and conflict within that society. Such tensions allow white supremacy to rise and continue as if there is no longer a lived and historical race difference. According to Foucault,

To say that one discursive formation is substituted for another is not to say that a whole world of absolutely new objects, enunciations, concepts, and theoretical choices emerges fully armed and fully organized in a text that will place that world once and for all; it is to say that a general transformation of relations has occurred, but that it does not necessarily alter all the elements; it is to say that statements are governed by new rules of formation, it is not to say that all objects or concepts, all enunciations or all theoretical choices disappear . . . we must not forget that a rule of formation is neither the determination of an object, nor the characterization of a type of enunciation, nor the form or content of a concept, but the principle of their multiplicity and dispersion (173).

Although we struggle against racializing and racism, racial constructs have led to the formation of cultural value, cultural norms, cultural richness, and historic memory among diverse peoples and among Americans as a whole. The *Fire!!* artists and the editors of *AIIEEEEE!* sought to preserve these on their terms in their words with regard to their own experiences and made it possible for their literary and cultural descendants to do so as well.

Because they confronted the racial constructs in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, Wallace Thurman and some of his young Harlem Renaissance colleagues continued a journey toward expression and facilitated progress toward a much more complex understanding of the issues we still face today as Americans and as global citizens. Thurman's project of racial transcendence was impossible in his time, as evidenced by the financial failures of his literary endeavors (Singh 20). However, his efforts contributed to the "express[ion of] dark-skinned selves without fear or shame" (Hughes, "Mountain" 694). According to David Levering Lewis in *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (1997), "the Renaissance left much to build upon and was to prove in time to have laid foundations for a revalidation of African-American cultural energies" (xxv). These foundations are evident in the Black Arts Movement and the impact it had on Frank Chin as he inspired his young Asian American colleagues to discover and write about their identity and nationality and the importance of the intersection of the two. Emboldened by "Yellow Power," they proclaim, "We are not new here," and reclaim seven generations of experience of Americans of Asian ancestry (xvi). The efforts of these literary predecessors create a legacy for which those who now seek to create must be responsible and accountable. Their work and their spirits stand at the gates, and those who would "enter the twenty-first century, must come by way of [them]" (Baldwin, qtd. in Baker 61) and be anointed by their struggles to do so.

Literature in America continues to evolve. Beginning in the latter half of the 1990s, younger and ethnic American artists began experiencing exposure and success in record numbers in journalism, academic research, music, and literature. As a result, there is a proliferation of a variety of new voices that are “transgressing the boundaries in place” (Gates, “Harlem” 5). While perhaps not considered a “renaissance,” there is a new type of signifying taking place, a new “smashing of idols [and] the turning inside-out of symbols.” There is a “sense of power which proceeds from mythic consciousness based on a people’s positive view of themselves and their destiny” (Gerald 85). Marked by an openness that was not apparent in other periods, it is possible then that postmodernism in American can be extended just as DuBois’s color line has been (Gates, “Harlem” 8). As postmodernism exists alongside modernism, contemporary artists continue the tradition of critiquing and signifying on existing forms. “All that has been received, if only yesterday . . . must be suspected” (Feng 92).

As we embrace a global literature, *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!* almost seem quaint and outdated relics. However, the revolutionary spirits that catalyzed their editors are even more necessary now. Though contemporary reading lists reflect interest in other peoples and other lands and experiences in those lands and in America, there is work to be done to ensure that these works are not considered as mere depictions of exotic others. Global literature sells, but what of the voices within and behind the stories? Circulation of these voices can itself be a sign of global “culture,” and the contact with and appreciation of the circulation may become a sign of culture and consciousness. When objects and art are commodified in this way—as things symbolic of the cultural, attention is on the collection and multiplicity of the diverse things and not on the particular people or place from which they derived (Evans 7).

The re-visioning and revolutionary literature from the 1920s and the 1960s discussed here found fertile ground with younger artists and in academia, where “the changed character of the university is a . . . striking example of the circumstances in which the adversary culture of art and thought now exists” (Trilling xv). It was on college campuses that the ethnic American studies programs developed, often out of conflict and at the urging of the “adversary cultures,” and through which literature, art, and history of ethnic Americans was first discovered and discussed. Erkkila suggests that American cultural studies is a radically comparative field, with a diversity of cultures, languages, practices, and theories that encounter and interact. She suggests a move away from the traditional comparative literature format that puts American literature in relation to European or Old World literature and culture and toward the recognition and “reconceptualization” of American literature and culture as comparative, hybrid, and transnational in origins, constitution, and dynamics (589). As Michael Chapman states in “Postcolonialism: A Literary Turn,” “The objective is to stimulate our students, and ourselves to see afresh, and comparatively, across worlds. In this a literary turn may achieve an ethical dimension” (18). It is in this ethical dimension that the possibility of authentic consciousness lies.

Jamie Ford’s novel *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* (2009) explores choices and obligations during World War II when a friendship grows between a Japanese American girl and a Chinese American boy. Their relationship is challenged by familial expectations and the tumult of war and displacement. The promise of their friendship and love is tested by racial intolerance and the distrust that pervades World War II and the Japanese American internment experience. A story of hope and patience and conflict, *The Hotel at the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* speaks to the place where American literature precariously finds itself in the twenty-first

century: poised at a crossroads of divisiveness and exclusion, and globalization, consciousness, and national collaboration. The history of this country is a painful one, but from these painful experiences, American literature tells peoples' stories of struggle, survival, and triumph from beneath DuBois's veil and from behind the masks of stereotype. Literature and those who create it, teach it, read it, and promote it are compelled to find the sweet among the bitter, as Ford's title suggests, championing the rich differences that make each American and our cultures distinct and able to contribute to the greater whole—to make meaning out of the individual parts, to talk to each other across generations through texts and meaning that has impacted before, to signify on the mainstream, to shake it up and make it truly American. As we approach that corner, we must make a decision about the direction of American literature. Choosing to incorporate the bitter of individual experience so that the result is a rich collective literature will be critical to our ability to put the masks that shield our true selves in motion and to move American literature away from enclaves, ghettoization, and stereotypes. Our choices will determine a move toward an American literature section in bookstores that includes more than one type of American voice, and a move toward a literature that includes images of diverse Americans as self-determined subjects. Unfortunately, the literature of the white majority does not tell us authentic stories about minorities—about Africans and their descendants, Asians and theirs. Instead, the majority literature, the traditional canon, provides minority stories in relation to the “Anglos' opinions of themselves” (E. Kim 20). According to Nikhil Singh, stories and staging have provided the means for the public to negotiate “disorienting shifts between the foreign and the domestic and to reconcile discrepancies between boundless, world straddling ambition and insular, parochial attachments to home and nation” (430). It is time that storytelling is true and spectacle is authentic. Echoing John Okada, Ronald Takaki affirms, “In the telling and retelling of our

stories, we create our community of memory. This huge collection [of memory] invites all of us to become listeners and to claim America” (7).

Collaboration of the type claimed by W. E. B. DuBois, Aaron Douglas, Ishmael Reed, and Frank Chin is critical to the future of the nation’s literature. Furthermore, understanding the significance of the conditions that lead to artistic and literary production illuminates the works and their creators by revealing connections, tensions, and diversions for analysis and understanding of the works and their cultural and historical contexts. Studying literature and art not in isolation but in relation to other works, even those from other cultures, will illuminate understanding of history and the people it affects and will enhance collective contribution and appreciation of the literature that expresses national identity and the American place in the global community.

Each chapter of this dissertation has been introduced by quotations related to the times or themes under discussion in that particular chapter. The quotations that begin each chapter—from different sources, different cultures, and different voices spanning 200 years from Olaudah Equiano (1794) to Jamie Ford (2009)—demonstrate the “speakerly” connection of the authors and locations of the quotations to the artists, writers, and works explored in these pages. Olaudah Equiano suggests that books speak to other books and to readers of his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Written by Himself*, one of the earliest published writings by a person of color in America. The former slave recounts his pre-literate curiosity about books. “I have often taken up a book, and have talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been very much concerned when I found it remained silent” (30). When he learned to read, the texts began speaking to him, and with the story of his life, he speaks back. His determination to make texts talk manifests itself in

his command of and agency over letters as he moved beyond illiteracy to literature.

Many generations later, texts continue to speak across generations and cultures and in voices strident enough to empower artists and writers and to influence the direction of American literature. In “You are only as writerly as the last thing you've written,” published in the James Madison University magazine, *Montpelier*, poet Nikky Finney seems to respond to W. E. B. DuBois when she asserts that the collaborative spirit is what keeps poetry alive and in the hearts of America—not just in communities of color but in its “righteous form.” In her comments, Finney recognizes the historical significance of the time periods of production for both *Fire!!* and *AIIEEEEE!*

[Writers] used to do more [collaboration] when it was obvious and palpable and clear that there was more at stake. In the '20s with the Harlem Renaissance, there was the whole notion of the black aesthetic, the rise of the Negro intellectual and the Negro artist; and the flames of that rising [were] in the cities. Then again during the Black Arts Movement, there was this whole new kind of assertion . . . we were staking out territory. . . We have to bring the elders before us; we have to invite the younger generation coming up; we have to talk to each other.

Speaking into the spaces of our common histories lends to a celebration of diversity that is recently being recognized. As the canon expands and academia promotes the conscious understanding of ethnic histories in North America and the totality of American literature, and “we can also form mutually supportive coalitions with other ethnic or racial groups caught in the same whirlwind of change and resistance” (Singh 223). These coalitions bring the works and writers into a more enthusiastic exchange, with texts speaking to each other across cultures, genres, and generations. The words of the editors of *AIIEEEEE!* resonate in the twenty-first

century: “We know each other now. It should never have been otherwise” (xiviii). With this knowledge, it becomes an imperative that the study that begins here expands to include other cultures and their literary traditions to ensure that the holistic literary production identified more than a century ago as “good work” by novelist and journalist Pauline Hopkins will go on (400).

Works Cited

- “Africans in America.” *Public Broadcasting Service*. n.d. Web. 6 August 2008.
- Anderson, Crystal S. “Racial Discourse and Black-Japanese Dynamics in Ishmael Reed’s *Japanese by Spring*”. *MELUS* 29. 3/4 (2004): 379-396. Print.
- Asante, Molefi Kete. *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009. Print.
- Bahri, Deepika. “Fanon Page.” Emory University. n.d. Web. 20 April 2004.
- Baker, Houston A. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*. University of Chicago Press, 1984. Print.
- . *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. University of Chicago Press, 1987. Print.
- Baker, Ray Stannard. “An Ostracised Race in Ferment: the Conflict of Negro Parties and Negro Leaders over Methods of Dealing with Their Own Problem.” *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 69-79. Print.
- Baldwin, James. *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984. Print.
- Banta, Martha. “The Three New Yorks: Topographical Narratives and Cultural Texts.” *American Literary History* 7.1 (1995): 28-54. Print.
- Barth, Gunther. *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. “Myth Today.” *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1998. 109-118. Print.
- Bascom, Lionel C., ed., *A Renaissance in Harlem*. New York: Harper Collins, 1999. Print.

- Battle, Thomas C. and Donna Wells, ed., and Moorland Spingarn Research Center. *Legacy: Treasures of Black History*. Des Moines, Iowa: National Geographic, 2006. Print.
- Bean, Annemarie, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, ed. *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*. Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1996. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in Mechanical Reproduction." *Marxists*. n.d. Web. 5 August 2008.
- Bennett, Gwendolyn. "Wedding Day." *Fire!! Devoted to Negro Artists*. 1.1 (1926): 25-28. Print.
- Bennett, Lerone. *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988. Print.
- Benston, Kimberly. "I Yam What I Yam: The Topos of Un(naming)in Afro-American Literature." *Black Literature and Literary Theory*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Routledge, 1990. 151-174. Print.
- Biggers, Earl Derr. *The House without a Key: A Charlie Chan Mystery*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2008. Print.
- Boelhower, William. *Through a Glass Darkly: Ethnic Semiosis in American Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Print.
- Bowen, J. W. E. "An Appeal to the King." *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton U Press, 2007. 26-32. Print.
- Brawley, Benjamin. "The Negro Literary Renaissance." *Southern Workman*. 56. 1927. Print.

- Brown, Francis and Joseph Slabey Rousek. *One America: The History, Contributions, and Present Problems of Our Racial and National Minorities*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1945. Print.
- Brown, Henry. "Plessy v Ferguson (1896)." *Landmark Cases of the U. S. Supreme Court*. n.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2008.
- Bulosan, Carlos. *America Is in the Heart*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973. Print.
- , "From *America Is in the Heart*." *AIIEEEEE!/: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. ed. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. 1974. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. 4-10. Print.
- Byerman, Keith. "W. E. B. DuBois and the Construction of Whiteness." *The Souls of Black Folk: One Hundred Years Later*. Ed. Dolan Hubbard. Columbia: University of Missouri, 2007. 161-173. Print.
- Cameron, Catherine. "Avant-Gardism as a Mode of Cultural Change." *Cultural Anthropology*. 5.2 (1990): 217-230. Print.
- Carew, Jan. "An Anthology of Asian-American Writers." *New York Times*. 22 September 1974. Web.
- Carroll, Anne Elizabeth. *Word, Image and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. Print.
- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000. Print.
- Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print.
- Chapman, Michael. "Postcolonialism: A Literary Turn." *English in Africa* 33.2 (2006): 7-20. Print.

- Cheung, King-Kok. *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogewa*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993. Print.
- Chin, Frank. Afterword. *No-No Boy*. By John Okada. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976. Print.
- Chin, Frank, and Jeffery Paul Chan. "Racist Love." *Seeing Through Shuck*. Ed. Richard Kostelanetz. New York: Ballentine Books, 1972. 65-79. Print.
- Chin, Frank, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, ed. *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. 1974. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. Print.
- Chin, Frank, and Shawn Hsu Wong. "Introduction to Yardbird Reader #3." *Yardbird Reader vol. 3*. Ed. Frank Chin and Shawn Hsu Wong. Berkeley, California: Yardbird Publishing Company, 1974. vi-viii. Print.
- Chinweizu. *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers, and the African Elite*. New York: Random House, 1975. Print.
- Chu, Louis. *Eat a Bowl of Tea: A Novel of Chinatown*. Seacaucus, New Jersey, Lyle Stuart, Inc., 2002. Print.
- Clingman, Stephen. *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. Print.
- Cogan, Thomas J. "Western Images of Asia: Fu Manchu and the Yellow Peril." *Waseda Studies in Social Sciences*. 3.2 (2002): 37-64. Print.
- Colvin, Sarah. "Introduction." *German Life and Letters*. 57.1 (2004): 1-7. Print.
- Cowan, Tom and Jack Maguire. *Timelines of African American History: 500 Years of Black Achievement*. New York: Perigee Books, 1994. Print.

Cuney, Waring. "The Death Bed." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*.

1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 19. Print.

Davis John P. "Ruth Trent Cries." *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 7.1 (1929): 19-20.

Print.

Dawson, Ashley. "'To remember too much is indeed a form of madness': Caryl Phillips's *The Nature of Blood* and the Modalities of European Racism." *Postcolonial Studies* 7.1

(2004): 83-101. Print.

De Jongh, James. *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Speech and Phenomena: and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*.

Northwestern University Press; 1st. ed. Evanston, Illinois, 1973. Print.

Dong, Harvey. "Richard Aoki (1938-2008): Toughest Oriental to Come Out of West Oakland."

Amerasia Journal. 35.2 (2009): 223-232. Print.

Douglas, Aaron. *Rhapsodies in Black*. Rhino, 2000. CD and book set. Print.

Douglas, Ann. *Terrible Manhattan: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*. New York: Noonday Press, 1995. Print.

DuBois, W. E. B. "Africa." *The Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New

York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

----- *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880*. New York: The Free Press, 1998. Print.

----- "The Color Line Belts the World." *W. E. B. DuBois: A Reader*. Ed. David Levering

Lewis. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995. 42-43. Print.

- "Criteria of Negro Art." *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 257-260. Print.
- "Editing *The Crisis*." *The Crisis Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the N. A. A. C. P.'s Crisis Magazine*. Ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson. New York: The Modern Library, 1999. xxvii-xxxii. Print.
- "The Negro Mind Reaches Out." *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Alain Locke. New York: Touchstone, 1997. 385-414. Print.
- *On Sociology and the Black Community*. Ed. Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.
- "Returning Soldiers." *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton U Press, 2007. 85-91. Print.
- *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. New York: Pocket Books, 2005. Print.
- "The Souls of White Folk." *The Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- *W. E. B. DuBois: A Reader*. Ed. David Levering Lewis. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995. Print.
- *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*. New York: International Publishers, 1978. Print.
- Due, Tanarive. *Joplin's Ghost*. New York: Atria Books, 2005. Print.
- Dunbar, Paul Laurence. "We Wear the Mask." *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*. Ed. W. D. Howells. New York: Dodd, 1967. Print.

- Duvall, John. "Regionalism in American Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*. Ed. Walter Kalaidjian. W. Nyack, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 242-260. Print.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. "Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora." *American Literary History*. 19.3 (2007): 689-711. Print.
- English, Daylanne K. *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. Print.
- Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Written by Himself*. 1794. New York: Cosimo, 2007. Print.
- Erkkila, Betsy. "Ethnicity, Literary Theory, and Grounds of Resistance." *American Quarterly* 47.4 (1995): 563-594.
- Evangelista, Susan. "AIIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers (Rev. of AIIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers)." *Philippine Studies*. 24.3 (1976): 469-472. Print.
- Evans, Brad. *Before Cultures: The Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature, 1865-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.
- Fabre, Genevieve, and Michel Feith. *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967. Print.
- Finney, Nikky. Interview by Kendra Hamilton. "'You are only as writerly as the last thing you've written': An interview with Poet Nikky Finney on convening, silence, empathy and being human." *Montpelier*. Winter 2004 Web. 6 September 2013.

- Fisher, Rudolph. "The Caucasian Storms Harlem." *Voice from the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Nathan Irvin Huggins. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 74-81. Print.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Crack-Up*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1993. Print.
- Ford, Jamie. *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2009. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*. New York: Vintage, 1982. Print.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. "Introduction: Local Whitenesses, Localizing Whiteness." *Displacing Whiteness*. Ed. Ruth Frankenberg. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. 1-33. Print.
- , *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Print.
- Fuller, Charles H., Jr. "Black Writing is Socio-Creative Art." *Historical Documents of the Black Arts Movement*. Web. 2 May 2011.
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr. *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.
- , "Harlem on Our Minds." *Critical Inquiry*. 24.1 (1997): 1-12. Print.
- , *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Print.
- Gerald, Carolyn. "The Black Writer and His Role." *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000. Print.

- Gerend, Sara Elizabeth. *Spectral Modernity: Ghosts of Empire in the Early Twentieth Century*. Dissertation. University of California Santa Barbara, 2004. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2004. AAT 3145725. Print.
- Gines, Kathryn. "Fanon and Sartre 50 Years Later: To Retain or Reject the Concept of Race." *Sartre Studies International*. 9.2 (2003): 55-67. Print.
- Goldsmith, Meredith. *White Skin, White Mask: Passing, Posing, and Performing in The Great Gatsby*. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 49.3 (2003): 443-468. Print.
- Gordimer, Nadine. *The Essential Gesture*. London: Cape, 1988. Print.
- Gordon, Linda and Gary Okihiro. *Impounded :Dorothea Lange and the censored images of Japanese American internment*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. Print.
- Gross, Michael. "The American Dream." *New York Magazine*. 25 (1992): 70-72. Print.
- Gubar, Susan. *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Hale, Grace Elizabeth. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998. Print.
- Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989. Print.
- Harris, William J. (1981). "The Yardbird Reader and the Multi-Ethnic Spirit." *MELUS*. 8 (2), 72-75. Print.
- Harte, Bret. "Plain Language of Truthful James." *Mark Twain in His Times*. n.d. Web. 30 April 2012.
- Hartigan, John Jr. "Locating White Detroit." *Displacing Whiteness*. Ed. Ruth Frankenberg. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. 180-213. Print.

- Hemenway, Robert. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1980. Print.
- Higashide, Seiichi. "Adios to Tears." *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*, Ed. Lawson Fusao Inada. Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 2000. 204-219. Print.
- Ho, Fred. "Fred Ho's Tribute to the Black Arts Movement: Personal and Political Impact and Analysis" *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 1.3 (2006): n. pag. Web. 2 May 2011.
- Hom, Marlon Kau. "Untitled." *Margins and Mainstreams*. Gary Okihiro. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994. 73. Print.
- Honey, Maureen. "Survival and Song: Women Poets of the Harlem Renaissance." *Women's Studies*. 16 (1989): 293-315. Print.
- hooks, bell. "Whiteness in the Black Imagination." *Displacing Whiteness*. Ed. Ruth Frankenberg. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. 165-179. Print.
- Hopkins, Pauline. "Editorial and Publishers Announcements." *The Colored Magazine*. 6. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969. 400. Web. 1 September 2008.
- Hornig, Lilli S. "HERStory." *Grants Magazine*. 1 (1978): 36-42. Print.
- Huang, Judy. "Asian-American Literary 'Authenticity': Frank Chin's 1991 Criticism of Maxine Hong Kingston in 1975." www.dartmouth.edu. n.d. Web. 6 August 2013.
- Huang, Yunte. *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010. Print.
- Hufnus, Brek. "Gestalt Theory." *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*. n.d. Web. 24 April 2008.
- Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. Print.

Hughes, Langston. *The Big Sea, an Autobiography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993. Print.

----- "Elevator Boy." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 20. Print.

----- "I, Too." *Collected Poems*. Ed. Arnold Rampersad. New York, Vintage Books, 1995.

----- "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation*. 23 June 1926: 692-694. Web. 2 March 2007.

----- "Railroad Avenue." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 21. Print.

Huntley, E. D. "Amy Tan and Asian American Literature." *Bloom's Critical Views: Asian American Writers*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009. 43-61. Print.

Hurston, Zora Neale. "Crazy for This Democracy." "*I love myself when I am laughing . . .*" *A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. Ed. Alice Walker. Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1979. Print.

----- "How It Feels to be Colored Me." "*I love myself when I am laughing . . .*:" *A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*. Ed. Alice Walker. Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1979. 152-155. Print.

Hutchinson, George. *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.

Ichioka, Yuji. *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrant, 1885-1924*. New York: The Free Press, 1988. Print.

- Inada, Lawson Fusao. "Chinks." *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. 1974. ed. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. Ixii. Print.
- "Japs." *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. 1974. eds. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. Ixii. Print.
- Johnson, Abby Arthur. "Literary Midwife: Jessie Redmon Fauset and the Harlem Renaissance." *Phylon* 39.2 (1978): 143-153. Print.
- Johnson, Abby Arthur and Ronald Mayberry Johnson. *Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of Afro-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979. Print.
- Johnson, Charles, Patricia Smith, and the WGBH Series Research Team. *Africans in America: America's Journey through Slavery*. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1998. Print.
- Johnson, Helene. "A Southern Road." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 17. Print.
- Johnson, James Weldon. *Black Manhattan*. 1930. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1991. Print.
- Jones, LeRoi. "We Own the Night." *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. Ed. William J. Harris. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000. Print.
- Kalaidjian, Walter. *American Culture between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique*. New York: Columbia University, 1993. Print.
- Kaplan, Carla. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters*. New York: Anchor, 2003. Print.
- Kawashima, Yoshima. "GIDRA: The Voice of the Asian American Movement." *Discover Nikkei*. 12 January 2012. Web. 16 June 2012.

- Kerber, Linda. "Toward a History of Statelessness in America." *American Quarterly*. 57.3 (2005) 727-749. Print.
- Kim, Elaine H. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982. Print.
- Kim, Janice Young. "Are Asians black? The Asian-American Civil Rights Agenda and the Contemporary Significance of the Black/White Paradigm." *Yale Law Journal* 108.8. (1999): 2385-2412. Print.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China Men*. New York: Random House, 1980.
- "Hers." *The New York Times*. 20 July 1978. Web.
- *Tripmaster Monkey*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The Ballad of East and West." *Bartleby: Great Books Online*. n.d. Web. 2 August 2008.
- Kirschke, Amy H. *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race, and the Harlem Renaissance*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995. Print.
- "Oh Africa! The Influence of African Art during the Harlem Renaissance." In *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*. Ed. Genevieve Fabrè and Michel Feith. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. 73-82. Print.
- Knopf, Marcy. *The Sleeper Wakes: Harlem Renaissance Stories by Women*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993. Print.
- Kramer, Victor A., ed. *The Harlem Renaissance Examined*. New York: AMS Press, 1987. Print.
- "Lawson Inada." *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. n.d. 7 August 2013. Web.
- Lee, A. Robert. *Multicultural American Literature: Comparative Black, Native, Latino/a and*

- Asian American Fictions*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2003. Print.
- Lee, Chang Rae. *Native Speaker*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Lee, Don. *The Collective*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012. Print.
- Lee, Gordon. "The Forgotten Revolution." *Hyphen* 1.1 (2003): n. p. Web. 13 February 2013.
- Lee, Robert G. *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1999. Print.
- Leong, Russell C. "AXISing Asian American Literature: In the Age of War and Empire" *Amerasia Journal*. 32.3 (2006): v-xi. Print.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind. (La Pensée Sauvage)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: African American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
- Lewis, David Levering. *W. E. B. DuBois, 1919-1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000. Print.
- , *When Harlem was in Vogue*. New York: Penguin, 1997. Print.
- Locke, Alain. "The Gist of It." *Survey Graphic*. 6.6 (1925): 627. Print.
- , "Harlem." *Survey Graphic*. 6.6 (1925): 629-630. Print.
- , *The New Negro*. New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925. Print.
- , "Youth Speaks." *Survey Graphic*. 6.6 (1925): 659-660. Print.
- Loewen, James W. *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971. Print.
- London, Jack. *A Daughter of the Snows*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1902. Print.

- . "The Inevitable White Man." *South Sea Tales*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911. 235-255. Print.
- . "The Yellow Peril." (1904) *The Jack London Online Collection*. n.d. Web. 5 May 2012.
- Lopez, Alfred J. *Posts and Pasts: A Theory of Postcolonialism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. Print.
- Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.
- Mack, Maynard. Ed. *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces: Expanded Edition in One Volume*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. Print.
- Maeda, Daryl. "Black Panthers, Red Guards, and Chinamen: Constructing Asian American Identity through Performing Blackness, 1969-1972." *American Quarterly*. 57.4 (2005) 1079-1103. Print.
- Martin, Tony. *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts, and the Harlem Renaissance*. Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1983. Print.
- Mazurek, Raymond. "Gordimer's *Something Out There* and Ndebele's *Fools and Other Stories*: The Politics of Literary Form." *Studies in Short Fiction*. 26.1 (1989) 71-79. Print.
- McClelland, Don. "The Guest Word: Four Yardbirds." *New York Times*. 1 February 1976. Web. 3 September 2013.
- McDougald, Elise Johnson. "The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation," *Survey* 53 (1925): 689-691. Print.
- McHenry, Elizabeth. *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. Print.

- Miller, Stuart Creighton. *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. Print.
- Moon, Krystyn. *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *The Black List: Intimate Portraits of Black America. Vol. 1*. HBO. 2008. Film.
- "On the Backs of Blacks." *Time* 2 December 1993. Web. 2 February 2009.
- *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992. Print.
- *What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. Print.
- Moses, Wilson J. "The Lost World of the Negro: 1885-1919: Black Literary and Intellectual Life before the 'Renaissance.'" *Black American Literature Forum* 21.1-2 (1987): 61-84. Print.
- Mullen, Bill V. "Persisting Solidarities: Tracing the AfroAsian Thread in U. S. Literature and Culture." *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*. Ed. Raphael-Hernandez, Heike and Shannon Steen. New York: New York University Press, 2006. 245-259. Print.
- Mullen, Bill V. and Cathryn Watson. *W. E. B. DuBois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005. Print.
- Murray, Albert. *The Omni-Americans: Black Experience and American Culture*. 1970. New York: Da Capo Press, 1990. Print.

- Nadell, Martha Jane. *Enter the New Negroes: Images of Race in American Culture*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004. Print.
- Ndebele, Njabulo. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*. University of Kwazulu: Natal Press, 2006. Print.
- Neal, Larry. "The Black Arts Movement." *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Angelyn Mitchell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994. 184-198. Print.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *An Autobiography*. New York: Penguin, 2004. Print.
- "New Perspectives on the West: Events in the West, 1850-1860." *Public Broadcasting Service*. n.d. Web. 1 April 2012.
- "Newton's Third Law of Motion." *Physics Classroom*, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.
- Nugent, Richard Bruce. "Lighting Fire." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. Print.
- Ogbar, Jeffrey. "Yellow Power: The Formation of Asian-American Nationalism in the Age of Black Power, 1966-1975." *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*. 3.3 (2001): 29-38. Print.
- Okada, John. *No-No Boy*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976. Print.
- , From *No-No Boy*. *AIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. 1974. Ed. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong., Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. 130-140. Print.
- Okiihiro, Gary. *Margins and Mainstreams*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994. Print.

- Osofsky, Gilbert. "Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered." *American Quarterly* 17.2 (1965): 229-238. Print.
- Ottley, Roi, and William Weatherby, ed. *The Negro in New York: An Informal Social History*. New York: The New York Public Library, 1967. Print.
- Ozdek, Almila. *The Heteroglossic Narratives of National History: Mythified Histories and the Postcolonial Condition*. Dissertation. George Washington University, 2008. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2008. AAT 3297147. Print.
- Partridge, Jeffrey F. L. "AIIIIIIII! and the Asian American Literary Movement: A Conversation with Shawn Wong." *MELUS* 29.3 (2004): 91-102. Print.
- . "The Politics of Ethnic Authorship: Li-Young Lee, Emerson, and Whitman at the Banquet Table." *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. 37.1 (2004): 103-110. Print.
- Pfaelzer, Jean. *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans*. New York: Random House, 2007. Print.
- Pound, Ezra. "Near Perigord." *Bartleby: Great Books Online*. n.d. 22 August 2013.
- Prashad, Vijay. "Genteel Racism." *Amerasia Journal*. 26.3(2000-2001): 21-33. Print.
- Price, Yvonne Elizabeth. *What Beauty is their Own: Fire!!'s Significance in the Harlem Renaissance*. Dissertation. Stanford University, 2003. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2003. AAT 3104124.
- Quarles, Benjamin. *The Negro in the Making of America*. New York: Collier Books, 1964. Print.
- Rampersad, Arnold. "The Book that Launched the Harlem Renaissance." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. 38 (2002/2003): 87-91. Print.

- . *The Life of Langston Hughes: 1902-1941*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.
- Randall, Dudley. "Booker T. and W. E. B." *Dudley Randall, Broadside Press, and the Black Arts Movement in Detroit, 1960-1995*. Ed. Julius E. Thompson. Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., Inc., 1999. Print.
- Raphael-Hernandez, Heike, and Shannon Steen, ed. *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. Print.
- Reed, Ishmael. *Airing Dirty Laundry*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1993.
- . "The Yellow and the Black." *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections between African Americans and Asian Americans*. Ed. Fred Ho and Bill Mullen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- Richardson, Susan. "The Lessons of 'Donald Duk.'" *MELUS*. 24.4 (1999): 57-76. Print.
- Rizan. "Untitled." *Japanese American History: An A-Z Reference from 1898 to Present*. New York: Facts on File, 1993. Print.
- Robinson, Geroid. "The New Negro." *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Gene Andrew Jarrett. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 97-101. Print.
- Rochberg, George. "The Avant-Garde and the Aesthetics of Survival." *New Literary History*. 3.1 (1971): 71-92. Print.
- Roediger, David. *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to be White*. New York: Schocken Books, 1998. Print.

Schatteman, Renée. "Disrupting the Master Narrative: An Interview with Caryl Phillips."

Commonwealth. 23.2 (2001): 93-106. Print.

Scheiner, Seth M. *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920*. New

York: New York University Press, 1965. Print.

Schneider, Mark Robert. *African Americans in the Jazz Age: A Decade of Struggle and*

Promise. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006. Print.

Schmidt, Tyler T. "'In the Glad Flesh of My Fear': Corporeal Inscriptions in Richard Bruce

Nugent's "Geisha Man." *African American Review* 40.1 (2006): 161-173. Print.

Schoener, Allon. *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900-1968*. New

York: New Press, 2007. Print.

Schuyler, George. "The Negro Art Hokum." *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*. Ed.

Winston Napier. New York: New York University Press, 2000. 24-26. Print.

Scruggs, Charles. "'All Dressed up but No Place to Go': The Black Writer and His Audience

during the Harlem Renaissance." *American Literature*. 48.4 (1977): 543-563. Print.

"Shattering the Silence: Shawn Wong." *Public Broadcasting Service*. n.d. Web. 6 March 2012.

Silvera, Edward. "Jungle Taste." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*.

1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 18. Print.

Singh, Amritjit. "The Possibilities of a Radical Consciousness: African Americans and New

Immigrants." *MultiAmerica: Essays on Cultural Wars and Cultural Peace*. Ed. Ishmael

Reed. New York: Viking, 1997. 218-237. Print.

Singh, Amritjit, and Daniel Scott, ed. *The Collected Writings of Wallace Thurman: A Harlem*

Renaissance Reader. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003. Print.

Singh, Nikhil Pah. "The Spectacle of Empire." *American Quarterly*. 56.2 (2004): 429-437. Print.

Smethurst, James. *The Black Arts Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. Print.

----- "Poetry and Sympathy: New York, the Left, and the Rise of the Black Arts." *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth-Century Literature of the United States*. Ed. Bill Mullen and James Edward Smethurst. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006. 259-269. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271-273. Print.

Stewart, Watt. *Chinese Bondage in Peru: A History of the Chinese Coolie in Peru, 1849-1874*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970. Print.

Story, Ralph D. "Patronage and the Harlem Renaissance: You Get What You Pay for." *CLA Journal* 32.3 (1989) 284-295. Print.

Sue, Donald Wing. "Whiteness and Ethnocentric Monoculturalism: Making the 'Invisible' Visible." *American Psychologist*. 59.8 (2004) 761-769. Print.

Susman, Warren. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. Print.

Tagatac, Sam. "Starfighter." *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. Ed. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1974. lxii. Print.

Takaki, Ronald. *A History of Asian Americans: Strangers from a Different Shore*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998. Print.

----- *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998. Print.

- Thurman, Wallace. "Cordelia the Crude." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 5-6. Print.
- , ed. *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. Print.
- , "Fire Burns." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. 1925. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. 47-48. Print.
- , "Negro Artists and the Negro." *The New Republic*. 52 (1927): 37-39. *Perspectives in American Literature*. Web. 19 November 2013.
- Tolson, Melvin B. *The Harlem Group of Negro Writers*. Ed. Edward J. Mullen. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001. Print.
- Toomer, Jean. "The Maturing Years." *The Wayward and the Seeking*. Ed. Darwin T. Turner. Washington, D. C., Howard University Press, 1980. 84-98. Print.
- Trilling, Lionel. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Harcourt, 1978. Print.
- Trimm, Ryan S. "The Times of Whiteness: OR, Race between the Postmodern and the Postcolonial." *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*. Ed. Alfred Lopez. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. 231-254. Print.
- Uchida, Yoshiko. *Desert Exile: the Uprooting of a Japanese American Family*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982. Print.
- Uyematsu, Amy. "The Emergence of Yellow Power in America." 1969. *Gidra*. n.d. Web.
- van Notten, Eleonore. *Wallace Thurman's Harlem Renaissance*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. Print.
- van Vechten, Carl. *Nigger Heaven*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000. Print.

- Vogel, Shane. *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. Print.
- Watkins, Rychetta N. *Black and Yellow Power: The Intersections of Identity Politics and Literary Study*. Dissertation. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2005. AAT 3182420.
- Watson, Steven. *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African American Culture 1920-1930*. New York: Pantheon, 1995. Print.
- Wei, William. *The Asian American Movement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1993.
- Wellman, David. "Minstrel Shows, Affirmative Action Talk, and Angry White Men: Marking Racial Otherness in the 1990s." *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Ruth Frankenberg. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. 311-331. Print.
- Willis, Deborah. "Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Disclosure of Colonialism." *Studies in English Literature*. 29:2 (1989): 277-289. Print.
- Wilson, Sondra Kathryn. "Introduction." *Black Manhattan*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1991. Print.
- "Introduction." *The Crisis Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the N. A. A. C. P.'s Crisis Magazine*. Ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson. New York: Random House, 1999. xix-xxvi. Print.
- "Introduction." *The Messenger Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the Messenger Magazine*. Ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson. New York: Random House, 2000. xix-xxiii. Print.

- , "Introduction." *The Opportunity Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the Urban League's Opportunity Magazine*. Ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson. New York: Random House, 1999. xv-xxi. Print.
- Wirth, Thomas H. "Fire!! In Retrospect." "Lighting Fire." *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. New York: The Fire Press, 1985. Print.
- Wong, K. Scott, and Sucheng Chan ed. *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. Print.
- Wright, Richard. *American Hunger: The Compelling Continuation of Wright's Great Autobiographical Work, Black Boy*. New York: Harper Collins, 1977. Print.
- Wu, William. *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982. Print.
- ya Salaam, Kaluma. "Historical Overviews of the Black Arts Movement." *Modern American Poetry*. n.d. Web. 25 June 2012.
- Yamanaka, K. Morgan. "Japanese American Life in the Twentieth Century: A Personal Journey." *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts*. Ed. George J. Leonard, et. al. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999. 85-112. Print.
- Yamauchi, Wakako. "And the Soul Shall Dance." *AIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. 1974. Ed. Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1983. 193-200. Print.
- Yun, Lisa. *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008. Print.