



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

School of History, Classics, and Archaeology

W.E.B. Du Bois and the Origins of the Black
Aesthetic: Rivalry, Resistance, and Renaissance
Construction, 1905-1926

Joseph Carson Spooner

PhD in History

17 February 2013

University of Edinburgh

Declaration

I confirm that the following thesis has been composed by me, and is completely my own work. None of the information has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Joseph C. Spooner

17 February 2013

Date

Acknowledgments

This project could not have been completed without the support and faith of many wonderful teachers and friends who have shared their time and expertise selflessly throughout my life. I am fortunate to have had so many role models who have taught me the power and value of an education.

As an undergraduate, the late Michael Cooke and Carla Kaplan inspired a lifelong curiosity about race, social constructions, and the Harlem Renaissance. Maxine Jones, Fred Standley and Leo Sandon, since my days as a Masters student, have given the most helpful advice, professionally, intellectually, and personally. They have waited patiently for this project to come to fruition.

Frank Cogliano and Fabian Hilfrich have shared thoughtful insight and feedback to this project, devoted so much energy to my intellectual development, and made the PhD process as smooth and as manageable as anyone could hope for it to be. I searched for 17 years to find the ideal supervisors to complete a PhD and am thrilled to have work with and learned from them. Jill Haines and Katie Stewart offered incomparable research support and made the process of finalising the project possible.

I am also grateful to Tony Beauchamp, Betty Spooner, and Karen Wedderburn for reading versions of this thesis and offering feedback and editorial suggestions. And without question, this thesis would have never been written without the love, patience, and never-ending support and encouragement of my parents, Joe and Betty Spooner, both of whom have made innumerable sacrifices to help me become a person I hope someday will be worthy to be called their son.

Abstract

My thesis reconsiders Du Bois' role in creating a black aesthetic, challenging prevailing notions about his opposition to the New Negro Renaissance and broadening the scope of his contributions in developing an indigenous, self-determined aesthetic.

Currently, Harlem-centric historiography remains over-reliant on Du Bois' own interpretations and unconcerned about his motives for misrepresenting the catalysts and the outcomes of the aesthetic and intellectual debates that define the period. By examining aesthetic controversies outside his dominant 'failure' interpretation and beyond the narrow geographical perimeters of a romanticized Harlem, the vital contributions Du Bois made to an intellectual dialogue that inspired artists to articulate a black aesthetic can be recognized. While some scholars have acknowledged the history of the renaissance has been unfairly shrouded in failure, none have explored Du Bois' role as an aesthetic visionary, a position complicated by his categorical denunciation of the New Negro Renaissance.

My research repositions Du Bois as a major ideological force at the genesis of the Black Aesthetic, both as an advocate and antagonist of the aesthetic ideals that define the movement. By tracing his intellectual evolution throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, my thesis identifies how ideological conflicts within the NAACP and intellectual rivalries with Marcus Garvey, Charles S. Johnson, and Alain Locke impact Du Bois' vacillating beliefs, and how his writings about art and his leadership as editor of *The Crisis* define the intellectual foundation and embody the racial dilemmas through which New Negroes create a revolutionary aesthetic. Du Bois' insistence that artistic decadence and deleterious white commercial interests undermine the renaissance is reconsidered, allowing him, ironically, to be recognized as the New Negro Renaissance's most important intellectual force in defining the Black Aesthetic.

Table of Contents

Declaration	1
Acknowledgments.....	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	5
Chapter One: Editorial Crisis: Race, Rivalry, and W.E.B. Du Bois’ Struggle to Create an Authentic Negro Journal.....	49
Chapter Two: Nationalizing the Black Aesthetic, Politicizing the New Negro: The Evolution of Purpose and Persona in Du Bois’ ‘Great War’ Editorials	81
Chapter Three: Du Bois’ Aesthetic Glorification of the ‘Other 90 Percent’ and the Emergence of a New Negro Cultural Ideology	127
Chapter Four: <i>Opportunity</i> Seized, <i>Opportunity</i> Missed: Charles S. Johnson Announces the New Negro Renaissance	159
Chapter Five: Du Bois’ Anxiety of Influence: Alain Locke’s <u>The New Negro</u> as Catalyst for Alienation and Evolving Aesthetics	200
Conclusion: Du Bois’ Anxieties and the Irony of His Influence	236
Bibliography.....	260

‘Each generation should produce at least one literary history of the United States, for each generation must define the past in its own terms’.¹

In the Postscript to his autobiography, The Big Sea, Langston Hughes lamented ‘(t)hat spring [1930] for me (and, I guess, all of us) was the end of the Harlem Renaissance. We were no longer in vogue, anyway, we Negroes. Sophisticated New Yorkers turned to Noel Coward. Colored actors began to go hungry, publishers politely rejected new manuscripts, and patrons found other uses for their money. . . . The generous 1920’s were over’.² Hughes devoted the final one hundred pages of his 1940 memoir to what he labelled ‘Black Renaissance’, and while he wrote fondly about the Harlem Literati, the grand salon-inspired parties hosted by A’Lelia Walker where all classes and colours met face to face, and white New York’s sudden fascination with Negro life, Hughes unknowingly, and innocently enough, gave an identity to this period in African American history that would become pervasive throughout the remainder of the 20th century. Before Hughes, whom Amiri Baraka proclaimed ‘the most satisfying reporter of the Black Renaissance’,³ the phrase ‘Harlem Renaissance’ had never been written, and the artistic movement that ignited the rise of African American culture had only ever been qualified by a word (Negro) or phrase (New Negro) that gave the cultural phenomenon a racial, not spatial, identity.

Ironically, Hughes spent the better part of his autobiographical accounts of the ‘Black Renaissance’ conveying events and experiences that took place outside of Harlem. He acknowledged that ‘(a)t the height of the Negro Renaissance, I was a student at Lincoln University [a theological seminary 40 miles outside of Philadelphia], spending my week-ends and holidays in New York’,⁴ and much of what he recounted from his life in The Big Sea during the renaissance took place in Pennsylvania, in New Orleans, in Cuba, at Fisk University in Tennessee, and on a farm that served as Jean Toomer’s childhood home in Georgia. In part, because of Hughes’ fame as a poet, in part, because of Harlem’s ascension as the

¹ Robert E. Spiller, et al (eds). Literary History of the United States: Volume I. (New York: Macmillan, 1953), vii

² Langston Hughes. The Big Sea. (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1986), 334.

³ Ibid, iii.

⁴ Ibid., 278

cultural and race capital of the black world, the idea that a race-specific, national cultural re-emergence could be localized seemed reasonable, almost natural. Hughes, innocently enough, replaced the racial modifier (Negro, Black) in the final pages, and from that moment forward, Harlem replaced the terms used, almost without exception, by those artists and intellectuals who had led, supported, and crafted the renaissance.

The history of the Harlem Renaissance, from the autobiographies of James Weldon Johnson (1933) and Langston Hughes (1940) to George Hutchinson's landmark cultural history (1995), has been conveyed predominantly as a history of exceptional individuals inspired by exceptional circumstances in an exceptional place. A decade before Langston Hughes wrote the phrase for the first time, exerting his unintentional influence over the historiography of the Negro Renaissance for over six decades, the seeds of Harlem as the singular defining force of the cultural phenomenon had been sown, particularly by James Weldon Johnson.

James Weldon Johnson's Black Manhattan (1930) was, in large part, urban biography, capturing the previously marginalized existence of an entire race. The book portrayed Harlem as more than a community; 'a large-scale laboratory experiment in the race problem'.⁵ The external effect of this progress and opportunity was that Harlem produced forces 'that are reshaping public sentiment and opinion; forces that are going far toward smashing the stereotype that the Negro is nothing more than a beggar at the gates of the nation, waiting to be thrown the crumbs of civilization. Through his artistic efforts the Negro is smashing this immemorial stereotype faster than he has ever done through any method he has been able to use'.⁶ For Johnson, Harlem was as much an idea of racial and utopian possibility, as it was a place with a rich and vibrant history, an idea that had been consciously cultivated through the 1920s that would become, in part thanks to Johnson's extensive biography, fundamental in understanding the cultural significance of the African American experience.

⁵ Ibid., 281.

⁶ Ibid., 283.

The renaissance and Harlem play brief yet prominent roles in Johnson's autobiography, Along This Way, published in 1933, particularly with providing a simple overview that described the principal actors in what became for historians and literary critics, a Harlem Renaissance drama. He cited the publication of three works, Claude McKay's collection of poems, Harlem Shadow (1922); Jean Toomer's experimental tour de force, Cane (1923), and Jessie Fauset's 1924, There Is Confusion, whose publication launched a series of literary prizes awarded by *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* magazines. Johnson continued to chronicle the writers and their publications of writers as directly as one records financial transactions in a ledger: 'In 1924 and 1925 came volumes of poetry from Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, followed by novels by Nella [Larsen] Imes and Rudolph Fisher and by books of prose and poetry by a dozen other writers;' proof that leading publishers opened their doors, important magazines opened their pages to these writers; proof that 'the Negro "literary revival" was in full swing.⁷ Johnson made brief mention of 'literary parties' he attended and hosted as a measure to explain how he developed a relationship with Carl Van Vechten, whom he defended vehemently against the attacks Van Vechten received upon publication of his controversial novel, Nigger Heaven (1926). Johnson associated the Van Vechten controversy with that surrounding McKay's Home to Harlem (1928), as both were criticized for their treatments of 'common' Negro life. The significance of Johnson's particular accounts of publications in the 1920s was that his autobiography outlined a chronology of events that became the focal point of historical and literary scholarship for almost 60 years. While scholars, particularly Nathan Irvin Huggins and David Levering Lewis who produced landmark and influential histories in the early 1970s and 1980s, expanded historical understanding in great detail and with broader perspective than Johnson could through autobiography, Johnson's chronology became the standard for analysing the meaning and significance of this period. Along with Johnson's personal account of Harlem and Hughes' poignant and wistful recollections of similar events in The Big Sea, these (auto)biographies dramatically influenced the contexts, methodologies, and investigations of

⁷ James Weldon Johnson. Along This Way. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 376.

Renaissance scholarship as well as the ultimate reassessment of its identity as a cultural movement that occurred exclusively in a romanticized Harlem.

The autobiographies of one towering intellectual who played a seminal role in the renaissance were remarkably taciturn about Harlem in the 1920s. W. E. B. Du Bois' Dusk of Dawn and The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois gave substantial attention to his personal and intellectual life; yet, neither work devoted more than two pages to accounting for the flowering of Negro arts and literature that occurred in the decade after the Great War. Subtitled 'An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept', Dusk of Dawn revealed that Du Bois 'tried to encourage other Negro writers through the columns of the *Crisis* and listed numerous Negro authors, including Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Jessie Fauset whose works appeared in the NAACP's political organ that Du Bois edited.⁸ Du Bois credited the offering of prizes for young Negro writers in 1924, as competitions that 'went happening until it grew into what has been called the renaissance of Negro literature'.⁹ He concluded that the economic depression brought an end to the renaissance as 'New Negro literature was forced to place its dependence entirely upon a white audience and that audience had its own distinct patterns and preferences for Negro writing'.¹⁰ Du Bois' autobiography offered even less detail, mentioning only that he 'wrote the concluding chapter in The New Negro edited by Alain Locke in 1925' and acknowledging that his magazine had first published '(m)ost of the young writers who began what was called the renaissance of Negro literature in the 20s. . .'.¹¹ For over two decades, Du Bois actively sought to cultivate a cultural renaissance, but his own accounts diminished the significance of his role, both in formulating the intellectual foundation for the renaissance in the years preceding it and in assuming the role of primary antagonist to New Negro writers who incorporated aesthetic values into their art and literature that Du Bois himself had once

⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois. Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept. (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Books, 1984), 270.

⁹ Ibid., 270. Du Bois does mention that their prizes were joined by a competition offered by the National Urban League's *Opportunity* magazine.

¹⁰ Ibid., 271.

¹¹ W. E. B. Du Bois. The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois. (New York: International Publishers Company, Inc., 1968), 270.

endorsed. While some recent cultural scholars such as Darwin Turner and George Hutchinson have examined Du Bois' opposition to New Negro writers in the late 1920s, few have examined Du Bois' contributions to black aesthetics comprehensively from the longer temporal view that incorporated the evolution of his ideas over two decades and from the critical vantage point of his personal motivations as well his intellectual and political aims. The story of Du Bois' role in the Harlem Renaissance controversies was far more complex than what he revealed in his autobiographies; far more than simply that of an aging, increasingly inconsequential, antagonist in a young/old and radical/conservative binary that positioned him as a conservative elitist unilaterally opposed to New Negro artists and determined to derail their cultural revolution.

Although the overreliance upon autobiography was a typical analytical problem, what was unique in this instance was both the historical vacuum left by Du Bois' autobiographies and the extent to which the Harlem-centric accounts of other renaissance luminaries, such as James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes reconfigured the chronology, context, and cultural history of New Negro Renaissance. Historians and literary scholars alike have used these 'eyewitness accounts' to reformulate the contributions of key historical figures into the time frame and situations that reaffirmed the exceptionality of Harlem as the driving force of the period. The overemphasis upon autobiography may well be a function of the lack of African American historical scholarship conducted during the 1930s and 1940s, and explain how a broad range of literary and cultural critics assessed the renaissance in real time and how black and white reviewers treated aesthetic and political questions raised by the growing interest in Negro literature.¹² In his excellent bibliographic project, John E. Barrett located almost 200 pages of criticism written during the pivotal decades of the 1920s and 1930s that came to define the Harlem Renaissance. While his collection began in 1917 and ended with an appendix of selected criticism from 1940-1944, the bulk of the project highlighted essays and reviews from 1924 to 1933. Barrett explained this concentration as a product of commercial publishing houses and their growing

¹² John E. Barrett. Harlem in Review: Critical Reactions to Black American Writers, 1917-1939. (London: Associated University Press, 1992), 11.

interest in African American literature: ‘In one sense, therefore, it was only when mainstream publishers began to market books by African-American writers that commentary on black culture became of widespread cultural significance’.¹³

Beginning in 1924, due in part to the emergence of poets Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen, newspaper review sections and magazines, both small and literary as well as mainstream, covered black literature and culture in ways they never had before. Previously, Bassett notes, critics at journals targeting white audiences rarely had cause to question their attitudes and assumptions toward black culture, nor had black writers been compelled to assess and negotiate their relationship to ‘Negro Literature’. ‘Over the next few years they would have to grapple with such issues as whether literature reflects actuality or provides cultural models, whether the writer’s responsibility is aesthetic or social, and how ethnic writers interact with divided audiences’.¹⁴

This controversy regarding the relationship between racial politics and aesthetics was arguably the intellectual heartbeat of African American literary culture in the 1920s, yet historians, until the 1990s, diminished the significance of these debates and dilemmas because the essays and literary texts were either: a) routinely ignored in favour of more sensational aspects of the period; or, b) too difficult to access and evaluate. Either way, many scholars overlooked these aesthetic debates; therefore, gaps were created in the historiography of the period.

While the aesthetic controversies over the role of literature and art were treated cursorily until the 1990s, Bassett’s analysis of source material raised important questions about the existence of an evolving creativity and exploding production of Negro literature throughout the 1930s. Many scholars relied heavily upon Hughes and Du Bois’ assessments that the end of the renaissance ended with the Stock Market crash of 1929, and the end of the steady flow of white patronage to black artists; however Bassett believed the scholarship of the 1930s revealed an important cultural shift due in large part to a dramatic shift in American politics

¹³ Ibid., 18.

¹⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

and responses to the Great Depression that autobiographical accounts of the Harlem Renaissance did not capture.

. . . (B)lack fiction became in the 1930s a rural fiction. Perhaps as a consequence, therefore, it did not participate vitally in the active political dialogues in black newspapers and journals. There were reminders in, for example, the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses* that black writers should emphasize the plight of the working class, and there was a blueprint for such a black fiction by Richard Wright in 1937; but by and large most Marxian discussion of literature in America paid scant attention to black writers and most black literary reviewers did not write from a Marxist perspective.¹⁵

The shift of literary context away from urban centres into an incongruous and often singular investigation of African American folklore and life (best exemplified by Zora Neale Hurston), combined with the emergence of Marxist criticism that de-emphasized cultural dilemmas for economic struggles, led many to conclude the renaissance was over. Even without a clear pattern of black fiction, Bassett claimed that creative and influential work had taken on new forms, since ‘much of the best work among black intellectuals in the period was in the social sciences—by persons such as E. Franklin Frazier, Carter Woodson, and Ralph Bunche, and to be sure Hurston in folklore’.¹⁶

Challenges to the Harlem-centric identification of the Negro Renaissance existed as early as the 1930s and came forcefully from one prominent writer that scholars have long associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Sterling Brown’s unequivocal rejection of the Harlem Renaissance, however, became quite public, if not immediately influential in shaping the perceptions of historians and literary scholars. Writing for a conference honouring Alain Locke and the 30th anniversary of the publication of his ground breaking anthology, The New Negro,

¹⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁶ Ibid., 29.

Brown, poet, editor and author of Negro literary anthologies, and long-time colleague of Locke's at Howard University in Washington D.C., argued for a radical re-assessment of the existence of a Harlem Renaissance, which, by 1955, had become synonymous and symbiotic with the Negro Renaissance.

'The New Negro in Literature (1925-1955)' maintained that the literary and cultural renaissance of the 1920s was, in fact, a New Negro Renaissance, not a Harlem Renaissance, simply because few of the significant participants, including himself, lived in Harlem or wrote about it. He concluded that the Harlem Renaissance was little more than the publishing industry's marketing hype, a conjured idea that gained renewed scholarly attention when publishers once again actively marketed the poets and novelists associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Writing about the early period of New Negro literature, one he defined as 'The Harlem Vogue, 1920-1930', Brown outlined the rationale for re-considering the identity and meaning of the renaissance:

I have hesitated to use the term Negro Renaissance for several reasons: one is that the five or eight years generally allotted are short for the life-span of any "renaissance". The New Negro is not to me a group of writers centred in Harlem during the second half of the twenties. Most of the writers were not Harlemites; much of the best writing was not about Harlem, which was the show-window, the cashier's till, but no more Negro America than New York is America. The New Negro movement had temporal roots in the past and spatial roots elsewhere in America, and the term has validity, it seems to me, only when considered to be a continuing tradition.¹⁷

Citing four anthologies published between 1948-1955: Frederick J. Hoffman's, The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade (1955); Edmund Wilson's, The Shores of Light (1952); John K. Hutchen's, The American Twenties; and William Hodapp's, The Pleasures of the Jazz Age (1948); Brown

¹⁷ Sterling Brown. 'The New Negro in Literature (1925-1955)'. In Mark A. Sanders (ed.), A Son's Return: Selected Essays of Sterling A. Brown. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 185.

contended that contemporary literary historians of the decade ‘are silent about the New Negro movement. The most recent coverage mentions only Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, and Waldo Frank (white authors), and summarizes the interest in the Negro as simplification, distortion, and exploitation of primitivism’.¹⁸ This scholarly silence included the aesthetic controversy that forged a would-be renaissance. Histories devoted exclusively to Negro literature were non-existent; therefore, Brown’s concern with the cursory, distorted, or, in the case of Hutchen’s, the complete absence of Negro literature in historical accounts of American culture of the 1920s, raised legitimate concerns about the methods and motives of white authors assessing the place of Negro literature and defining the scope and context of its representations.

Brown’s thesis showed balance and gained legitimacy as he probed more deeply into the historical role of the commercial publishing industry. He noted that in the 1920s, “(n)ew publishing houses—Knopf, Harcourt Brace, Viking, Liverlight and the Bonis—welcomed Negro talents, who opened doors that have stayed open’,¹⁹ and avoided drawing universal conclusions about white publishers, such as those who promoted anthologies that simplified, distorted, and/or ignored Negro literature. Brown highlighted the content of renaissance memoirs and historians’ fascination and pre-occupation with the non-aesthetic components of autobiography as the primary culprit for the misrepresentation. He noted that Alain Locke, too, expressed concern with feckless irresponsibility of a fad produced by a period of inflation and overproduction. Brown admonished ‘(t)hose who nostalgically recall the Harlem boom include in their memoirs far more of the good time parties and big contacts than of the writing’,²⁰ and chastised The Big Sea, noting the fine idealism of young writers, such as Hughes, ‘runs up hard against the reality that white critics were constantly looking over the writers’ shoulders and, even when well-meaning, often counseled amiss’.²¹ Brown recognized the challenge of reconciling aesthetic ideology with financial imperatives, such as assuaging white patrons and acquiescing to the demands of

¹⁸ Ibid., 190.

¹⁹ Ibid., 191.

²⁰ Ibid., 191.

²¹ Ibid., 191.

white editors. This paradox presented an inherent conflict and revealed the dilemmas of artists and their monetary incentives to alter representations of Negro life that would become the focal point of historical reassessments of the Harlem Renaissance in the late 20th century.

In 1955, Brown interpreted the misrepresentation of the New Negro Renaissance and its fixation with Harlem as largely the responsibility of those intimately involved with the movement and how they chose to remember it and convey it to others through their memoirs. 'For all of its [the New Negro Renaissance's] positive services in encouraging racial respect and self-reliance', Brown admitted, 'a large number of Negroes were ignorant of, indifferent or ill disposed toward the new literature of Negro life, both in the 1920s and the present'. Therefore, '(t)he current literary fashion in America is to make the thirties a whipping boy, while pampering the glamorous twenties'.²² Brown associated these glamorous twenties with what scholars and artists involved with the movement claim as the Harlem Renaissance; an identity that subverted the potential for more authentic and universal literature for the lurid, the cynical, and the primitive aspects of New Negroes living the high life in an emerging urban ghetto.

Brown's criticism raised legitimate questions about the site, scope, and additional impacts and interpretations of the Harlem Renaissance, such as the dynamic features of New Negro identity that varied significantly throughout the 1920s. Initially, the Renaissance was a youth movement, exemplified by Carl Van Doren's 1924 *Opportunity* editorial, 'A Younger Generation of Negro Writers'; the evolution continued to include definition by race—for example, Benjamin Brawley's, 'The Negro Literary Renaissance' published in *Southern Workman*, in 1927; and by the end of the decade, controversies over the race of fiction took centre stage in critical assessment of the period, best represented in the writings of James Weldon Johnson in pieces for *Harper's* ('Race Prejudice and the Negro Artist'), *American Mercury* ('The Dilemma of the Negro Author'), and *The Crisis* ('Negro Authors and White Publishers'). Brown's criticism revealed significant

²² Ibid., 191.

complications and contradictions that arose when defining the Renaissance as a static and chronologically bounded phenomenon, crushing the cultural inertia of the period, localizing key events and timelines, and confining the philosophical vibrancy of artists and writers in the early 20th century. Scholars would, by the late 1990s, eventually contest previously hallowed historical assessments, the name, the location, significant dates for the era, and whether or not it was a ‘renaissance’. These contemporary scholars struggled to recall and re-remember against the dominant memories validated by historians and literary scholars in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and rarely heeded Sterling Brown’s warnings, relying, all too often, upon sources created in the spirit and language of ‘propaganda’ to define what African American intellectuals of the 1920s believed to be the Renaissance taking place in uptown Manhattan. They over-estimated, much too naïvely, the unified idea of Harlem as a Mecca for the New Negro that inevitably created misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the artistic and cultural production; underestimating the negative impacts of localizing the movement in an urban ghetto at the expense of recognizing the aspirations and the transformative power of New Negro artists themselves, in the histories they created.

Writing for the inaugural Yale Publications Series in American Studies, Robert A. Bone, a former student and protégé of Sterling Brown, established the historical timelines and perimeters for what would soon become commonly known as the Harlem Renaissance in his book, The Negro Novel in America (1958). Although his literary history traced the evolution of African American literature from the late 19th century through World War II, Bone’s emphasis on what he referred to as “The Discovery of the Folk: 1920-1930” proved to be his most influential contribution to future study of the period. He defined three major components of the literary renaissance: 1) The background of the Negro Renaissance, including the importance of the Great Migration, the rise of an African American intelligentsia, a brief history of the New Negro Movement, the influence of cultural collaborations, and the essential principals and principles of

the Negro Renaissance; 2) six major authors Bone identified as, ‘The Harlem School’; and 3) the presence of a more conservative group of elder statesmen and intellectuals, ‘The Rear Guard’, who struggled with younger authors for control of the movement. While Bone did not directly re-affirm the phrase Hughes had provided the period almost twenty years earlier, Bone’s history acknowledged the existence of ‘The Harlem School’ as a driving force of the ‘Negro Renaissance’, created an artificial, age-related dichotomy between young writers and older mentors, and re-affirmed Johnson and Hughes’ chronology of events and cultural boundaries that historians would accept without pause for the next thirty years.

The literary renaissance that Bone argued played out among the Harlem School and the Rear Guard occurred in two distinct phases: One, which was anti-assimilationist, and a subsequent phase which was anti-bourgeois. The Rear Guard accepted, in part, the national scope of the Renaissance while clinging to their middle class values. The Harlem School, which included Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, and ‘The Satirists’ (Wallace Thurman and George Schuyler) turned to folk culture for characters and low-life milieu for their principal settings. In Bone’s view, writers such as Thurman were more interested in interpreting Negro culture than in pleading the cause of racial justice, but subsequently failed, because they were guilty of excesses that eventually undermined the Renaissance—exoticism—and became writers who devolved toward mediocrity as they were exploited by a fad. In contrast, the Rear Guard, W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, Jessie Fauset, and Nella Larsen all wished to orient Negro art toward white opinion and apprised educated whites of the existence of respectable Negroes, and called their attention to the facts of racial injustice.²³

Bone argued that the fissures among intellectuals were generational and products of class differences were the result of Freudian implications. ‘The younger writers of the 1920’s were the second generation of educated Negroes; they were the wayward sons of the rising middle class. In psychological terms, he insisted

²³ Robert A. Bone. The Negro Novel in America. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 107, 97.

they were rebelling against their fathers and their fathers' way of life'.²⁴ Bone supported this class influence by citing statistics—declaring that Renaissance novelists were 55% professionals and 45% white collar, compared to 13 and 20 per cent of previous generation of novelists—without clarifying his methodology or defining precisely which novelists were counted and which were not.

His appraisal was also significant because he contended that 'New Negro' was an inadequate term to use in order to define the literary renaissance. Due in large part to the 1925 publication of Alain Locke's anthology, The New Negro, Bone acknowledged that '(t)he title struck a responsive chord, and it soon became the accepted designation of the new literary movement. From the standpoint of literary history this was unfortunate. "New Negro" is not a descriptive term in any literary sense; basically, it indicates a rejection of racial conservatism on the part of those who employ it'.²⁵ The New Negro appeared to be a notion that Bone restricted to descriptions of political phenomena, such as the uncompromising demand for equal rights and its subsequent psychological consequences of a Freudian transformation of the African American psyche. Prevailing formalist theories in literary criticism, particularly the overwhelming emphasis of New Criticism, made Bone's point to distance literary criticism from political and historical context rational; however, the implication of Bone's challenge of the applicability of 'New Negro', combined with his reassertion of the Harlem as the epicentre of the movement proved significant as historians of the next three decades probed more deeply into the meanings and failures of the cultural renaissance of the 1920s.

Nearly a full decade later, Harold Cruse returned to the themes of Harlem and the New Negro Renaissance in establishing the origins of ideological and cultural failures of Negro integrationists in the 1960s. Literary historians of the 1920s might well view the primary question of Cruse's, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, as being eerily similar to the dilemma confronting artists during the New Negro Renaissance. '(H)ow do Negro intellectuals measure up to the

²⁴ Ibid., 56.

²⁵ Ibid., 58.

complex problem of being spokesmen on behalf of their ethnic group, the Negro masses? First . . . as creative artists, how can their creative output be assessed? Second, as Negro spokesmen, to what extent do their analyses of the Negro situation get to the bottom of things?’²⁶ The value judgement he derived from any correlation between these two levels of intellectual discourse, according to Cruse, created an inherent dilemma for those who might view themselves and their purposes as driven to achieve integration. Invariably, they were destined to run afoul of reality in the pursuit of an illusion of full integration into an intellectual class stratum of WASP cultural traditions affirmed by the Constitution’s sanctification of the Great American Ideal, an open society.²⁷ Cruse argued for black intellectual autonomy and empowerment, claiming that ‘(w)ithout a cultural identity that adequately defines *himself*, the Negro cannot even identify with the American nation as a whole. He is left in the limbo of social marginality, alienated and directionless on the landscape of America.’²⁸

As proof that black intellectuals had the ability, yet failed to achieve a self-determined cultural identity, Cruse turned to Harlem during the 1920s to provide the historical foundation for his book’s purpose: a cultural analysis of the Negro approach to group ‘politics’ that revealed the errors, weaknesses and goal-failures that needed to be cogently analysed and positively worked out.²⁹ Cruse, much like Robert Bone, saw Harlem as the unparalleled site and source for understanding black culture and literature of the 1920s. For Cruse, ‘Harlem has, in this century, become the most strategically important community of black America. Harlem is still the pivot of the black world’s quest for identity and salvation. The way Harlem goes (or does not go) so goes all black America. Harlem is the black world’s key community for historical, political, economic, cultural and/or ethnic reasons’.³⁰ The only problem with this assertion: Cruse relied almost exclusively on a single source, James Weldon Johnson’s Black Manhattan, to build his claim that Harlem represented the ineffectiveness of

²⁶ Harold Cruse. The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual. (New York: New York Review; York: Signature Books Services, 2005, 1967), 10.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

social action to address the problem of American's national morality and its predication on a materialistic ethos.

Cruse correctly identified the bifurcated purposes of the renaissance that Bone attributed to the Harlem School and the Rear Guard. The pursuit of cultural autonomy, his artistic and creative development or his nationality, or his group consciousness, or his identity in white America, necessitated the development of Negro creative writers of every type; by contrast, the pursuit of a cultural renaissance merely for cultural integration did not require any concern over who wrote plays or books about certain people who 'just happen to have a dark skin' in white America. In other words, the controversy of patronage and publication, who controlled and defined the means of production and the definitions of acceptable cultural forms, became central to Cruse's Marxist premise that the Negro renaissance was 'a misnomer, a fad, a socially assertive movement in art that disappears and leaves no imprint';³¹ most clearly, a Du Boisian interpretation of the deleterious influence of white economic power exerting control over black artists and their creative products.

His history of the Harlem Renaissance rapidly descended into an absolute and unmistakable condemnation of the movement, with a special emphasis on how artists' failures of ideology of the 1920s undermined contemporary intellectuals in the 1960s. First, he criticized James Weldon Johnson's optimistic portrayal of the Renaissance and his reluctance to come to grips with the inability and/or unwillingness of Negro bourgeois-middle-class stratum to support the movement morally, aesthetically, or financially. Cruse saw Johnson's Black Manhattan as an interesting essay on the renaissance as an important movement with a history and future, but Cruse ultimately believed his class-based portrait of the Renaissance failures was more accurate, historically: the Negro middle class was politically, socially, and economically marginal as well as unwilling and unable to play any commanding role in the politics and economics of culture and art, as either patrons or entrepreneurs. Thus the Harlem Renaissance became 'an

³¹ Ibid., 37.

insolvent movement in ways other than in the lack of a cultural philosophy . . . which amounts to the same thing'.³²

Cruse faulted other autobiographical accounts beyond Johnson's. Pointing to Langston Hughes's representation of Harlem and the movement in his autobiography, The Big Sea, Cruse rebuked his attitudes as extreme expressions of the movement's inspired aimlessness. Cruse claimed that if only Hughes had the ability to express the essence of his Harlem sketch in political, economic and cultural concepts and to outline them in the framework of a Harlem social reorganization program, then it could be said that the 1920's Harlem Renaissance was not in vain. But Langston Hughes, he admonished, 'was one of the aborted renaissance men—as incomplete an intellectual and artist as the cultural transformation that nurtured him—a man of culture without a cultural philosophy'.³³

Regarding white patronage of black writers in the 1920s, Cruse recognized nothing morally or ethically wrong in accepting this financial support at the very outset. The problem, he proffered, was that the pattern was adopted as the permanent modus operandi in interracial cultural affairs, without any critical reflections on its outcome for the future of the movement. 'Thus, the Harlem Renaissance became partially smothered in the guilty, idealistic, or egotistical interventions of cultural paternalism. But this was typical NAACP "interracialism", extended by Johnson from the politics of civil rights to the politics of culture'.³⁴ White patronage, therefore, took over black aesthetic materials, and served, not to advance writers artistically, but for the self-glorification of their patrons; in Cruse's mind, the very embodiment and tradition of white cultural paternalism. Unfortunately, and quite problematically, Cruse provided no evidence, case studies, or examples to support this thesis; as if any scheme of white patronage must, by consequence of the racial inequality inherent to the 1920s, demand black submission and acquiescence to white vanity and exploitative profiteering.

³² Ibid., 38.

³³ Ibid., 306-307.

³⁴ Ibid., 38.

Black writers wilfully and enthusiastically allowed white patrons to lay down the critical terms of the movement because they ‘were so overwhelmed at being “discovered” and courted, that they allowed a bona fide cultural movement, which issued from the social system as naturally as a gushing spring, to degenerate into a pampered and paternalised vogue’. Cruse hypothesized that the development of the Harlem Renaissance would have benefited from less ‘weak-kneed, non-political, non-committal naiveté which was characteristic of many of the Negro intellectuals and more constructive criticism and stronger positions on critical standards.’³⁵ Cruse theorized that by establishing a clearer intellectual premise during the 1920s, the renaissance would not have failed, but would have been cultivated throughout the next three decades and would have helped avoid what he called the “identity vacuum” confronting the Negro movement of the 1960s. In his view, Harlem Renaissance intellectuals should have pointed out, at least in broad terms, that the American Negro intellectual’s cultural awakening was not only a countertrend to white discontent, but a twentieth-century harbinger of the African awakening in political and cultural terms. Ultimately, the Harlem Renaissance, for Cruse, was little more than a ‘setting of extreme aimlessness, conflict and confusion’.³⁶

Cruse’s ideological account of the renaissance was unquestionably entangled with and limited by the intellectual roots of 1960s radicalism, and became a cursory history of what the Harlem Renaissance should have been in order to pave a smoother path to meet the challenges facing the black community throughout the civil rights movement and beyond. By 1971, Nathan Irvin Huggins attempted to refocus the critical lens away from Cruse’s preoccupation with history’s impact on the present and intended on following a more traditional approach to writing the most influential and definitive history of the Harlem Renaissance for the next 25 years.

In Harlem Renaissance, Huggins made clear that, unlike Harold Cruse, who interpreted the failures of Harlem Renaissance in the context of a contemporary

³⁵ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁶ Ibid., 62-63, 48.

Marxist agenda of the 1960s, Huggins implied that '(o)ur problem here, as in any history, is to see men and women of another era in their own terms and not our own'.³⁷ Huggins suggested that black intellectuals in Harlem made a conscious decision to become the instruments of history-making and race-building, part of some grand design that required a singular self-consciousness and that any historical treatment of their actions and their motives required an understanding of the unique circumstances and dilemmas of their own time. Unequivocally, Huggins aimed to establish the existence of a renaissance and validate Harlem as the source of its identity and inspirations.

Interestingly, as Huggins confessed his own scepticism about declaring the period a renaissance, he proclaimed that the Harlem men of culture in the 1920s were fully self-aware, knowing their respective roles and inquiring of themselves as to the state of the Renaissance. 'Historians', Huggins confessed, 'have liked to use that word [renaissance] to characterize some moment when "culture", once dormant, has been reawakened. But even the most conventional of them will confess the concept is a historical fiction, a contrivance of imaginations steeped in resurrections and similar rites of spring'.³⁸ Although admittedly this conscious and real-time renaissance discourse seldom occurred throughout history, Huggins implicitly accepted the movement's identity crafted by its participants as a means of searching for meaning on their terms, even though no author, artist, publisher, or editor ever articulated the notion of a 'Harlem Renaissance' during the 1920s.

Huggins appeared uncertain how to differentiate between the Harlem New Negroes imagined in the 1920s and the Harlem that represented an historical site symbolic of broader African American attempts to re-shape and re-define American culture. On the one hand, he appreciated how people, both then and since, have overestimated Harlem, a shining example to declare the past of slavery and servility dead and to proclaim the new day of the liberated and independent black man. He understood why when the black soldiers of the 369th

³⁷ Nathan Huggins. Harlem Renaissance. (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

Regiment paraded up Lenox Avenue to a jazz step—returning from a war that ended war and guaranteed to all men the right of self-determination—they found in Harlem a capital for the race, a platform from which the new black voice would be heard, and an intellectual centre for the New Negro.³⁹

The problem with his interpretation is twofold. First, 1919, in terms of artistic and cultural production, was a long way from 1925 (the appearance of Locke's anthology, The New Negro). In Huggins' view, Harlem became the centre of cultural and intellectual life because of the migration of talented individuals to the city before World War I (most artists/writers commonly recognized as part of the movement arrives well after the war), and was different from other cities because of the character of Negro protest and thought, exemplified by the NAACP, led by Johnson and Du Bois. Certainly, the NAACP was actively involved in New York during the 1920s. Johnson and Du Bois 'were attracting young Negroes to New York because they symbolized the new spirit that the post-war generation felt. They, New York, and Harlem had come to mean a future of great possibility to the Negro'.⁴⁰ Huggins maintained, correctly, that Harlem was promoted as a Mecca for future Negro excellence; however, by drawing his examples exclusively from the lives and actions of three individuals (an analysis of Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association was also included), political Harlem became the singular force that overwhelmed how Huggins defined Harlem and related its meaning to the cultural and literary significance of the national New Negro movement. Essentially, he opened the door to careful consideration of multiple understandings of Harlem, but then stopped short and reoriented the remainder of his chapter on the failures of Harlem's progressive leaders in achieving their political goals.

Throughout the remainder of his book, Huggins' analysis exposed for his reader what Harlem was NOT, with little attention given to identifying or theorizing what Harlem actually was and what it meant relative to this historical movement. His third chapter highlighted the role of Carl Van Vechten as 'midwife' to the

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21.

Renaissance and illuminated the inordinate influence and emasculating effect of white patronage, which led artists to act out roles expected of them. In his view, blacks and whites both contended to control the meaning and image of Harlem; however, Huggins acknowledged the heightened significance of white commercial publishers and their need to promote the exotic, the primitive, and the seemingly carefree Harlem. 'If black Harlem had been left alone', Huggins hypothesized, 'not been discovered by whites, the whole story might have been different. Chances are not so much prose and poetry (good as well as bad) would have been published. The sense of urgency to promote culture might have been less. And whatever artistic output (bad and good), it might have been more honest. . . . (F)or in a sense, it [black Harlem] was as much a white creation as it was black'.⁴¹ Speculation of 'what if' aside, Huggins grossly misrepresented the influence of whites as catalysts for black complicity. Either he underestimated or disregarded the roles black intellectuals and editors, particularly Charles S. Johnson whose influence he ignored completely, played in promoting the New Negro well before Carl Van Vechten either became the intermediary between Greenwich Village aesthetes, Manhattan high society, and Harlem, or advocated for writers, such as Langston Hughes and Walter White, to book publishers Alfred and Blanche Knopf and editors at *Vanity Fair*. These oversights, however, conveniently aided Huggins as he persisted in proving that Harlem was NOT an authentic representation of the New Negro, but a comprised compilation of artistic renderings of the white racial imagination.

Huggins' argument for affirming the deleterious effects of whites focused almost exclusively on Van Vechten, both in his role as liaison between blacks and publishers, and his notoriety as author of the most controversial novel of the period, Nigger Heaven (1926). Due in part to its overwhelming sales, fervent critical assessments, as well as its supposed influence upon the publication of Claude McKay's equally popular and controversial Home to Harlem (1928), Huggins contended that the publishers of Nigger Heaven and Van Vechten conspired and succeeded in their efforts to portray the Negro as an exotic

⁴¹ Ibid., 85.

primitive and define this as the central image of Harlem. His argument was based almost entirely on the utter impossibility of black autonomy and self-determination. 'Even if Harlem blacks had wanted it,' he explained, 'there was little chance that they would have been left alone to shape and define their own identity. White Americans had identities of their own to find, and black men were too essential to them to be ignored'.⁴²

Along with the publishing industry, Huggins condemned wealthy white patrons, even those who took no apparent commercial interest in Negro art. Utilizing the example of Zora Neale Hurston as a significant beneficiary of white support, Huggins presumed that relationships with benefactors must have undermined the authenticity of black art and the autonomy of the artist herself. Unfortunately, Huggins offered little detail about how her relationship with 'Godmother' (Charlotte Osgood Mason) affected or influenced Hurston's work. He deduced that she appeared unable or unwilling to trust artists, such as Hurston and Langston Hughes, who portrayed a positive representation of their relationships with white patrons, assuming that 'because of where they were, white and Negro, the Negro was naturally patronized in his art to serve a white dream and fancy'.⁴³

For Huggins, the ignorance of, the naiveté towards, or the submissiveness to American culture facilitated the misappropriation of Harlem; therein lay the heart of the failure he associated with the Harlem Renaissance. In assessing these failures, he claimed that Harlem's legacy was limited by the character of the Renaissance, imprisoned by its innocence, even as he surmised that Harlem 'continued to connote a special spirit, a new vitality, black urbanity, and black militancy' that allowed it to remain a race capital for some time. Lingering illusions aside, the failure of the New Negro, therefore, became a failure of Harlem, an American failure, with 'counterparts in countless similar frustrated promotions' that Huggins left nameless.⁴⁴ The gift left by the Renaissance, the lesson from its failures, was the recognition of paradox within ethnic provincialism. Huggins explained that in the 1920s, as well as in 1971, the race

⁴² Ibid., 89.

⁴³ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 303.

consciousness necessary for black (and white) identity led inevitably to a provincialism that ‘forever limits the possibility of achieving good art; but without it the perplexities of identity are exacerbated by confusion of legitimate heritage’.⁴⁵ The American failure of the Harlem Renaissance was: New Negroes could not re-imagine Harlem because they could not escape the cultural hegemony fuelled by racial distinctions that perpetrate political, social, and economic inequality; New Negro artists failed because they were drawn, inevitably back into racial identities that were defined by said culture which disconnected them from their true heritage, and consequently, authentic artistic representations; Harlem failed because New Negroes lived there and believed, too optimistically, that they could overcome these forces to achieve equality and cultural validation.

No criticism of Huggins carried more severity or credibility than that by Sterling Brown. Although he never wrote a formal review or commentary of Harlem Renaissance, a 1974 interview with Charles Rowell reiterated his position on the problems with Huggins’s critical approach, particularly the terms and methods he used to establish historical boundaries for the movement. In response to Rowell’s inquiry about the WPA Federal Writers Project in the 1930s, Brown launched into his denunciation of Huggins’s work that expanded upon Brown’s own assessment first made in 1955:

Well, one of the ridiculous things in [Nathan Irvin] Huggins’ book and in a whole lot of this nonsense about the so-called Harlem Renaissance is that it ended with the Panic of 1929. It’s ridiculous because so many of the best things came out in 1930 and 1931. Arna’s [Bontemps *sic*] best novel, *Black Thunder*, came out in 1936. Actually, there weren’t any Negroes jumping out of windows because of the Panic in 1929. The publishers might have tightened up on publishing, but writing about Negroes did not stop. There was not any sudden change, because Negro

⁴⁵ Ibid., 308.

writers actually made more money during the Depression than they had made before. Because they got on WPA, they got a regular check.⁴⁶

When Rowell questioned Brown about being more positive toward the WPA Writer's Project than New Negro Movement, Brown exclaimed he was positive about both and made an important distinction that articulated a serious historiographical dilemma that has perplexed scholars for decades: 'I'm opposed to what they call a renaissance from 1925-1929; you can't have any renaissance in that kind of period. I'm opposed to the glorification of Harlem, because the writers didn't come from Harlem. The only Harlemitite writing was Countee Cullen, and he disliked Harlem'.⁴⁷ Huggins' book drew concrete perimeters around those who participated in the Renaissance, how they were associated with Harlem, and when these events took place in relation to place and involvement. Harlem, in Huggins' view, emerged from mass black emigration from the South before and after World War I (discussed in a single page), the New York arrival of James Weldon Johnson, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. Du Bois in the 1910s (treated in the subsequent 37 pages) and fuelled by an emerging black militancy, embodied by a post-war spirit of self-determination and symbolized by the march of unnamed soldiers (the 369th Infantry) parading up Lenox, which he explained in four lines.

By restricting the Harlem movement to four years (1925-1929), Brown bracketed Huggins' interpretation of the renaissance exclusively around the rise and fall of artistic production, beginning with the publication of The New Negro and ending with the diminishing influence of whites who sponsored New Negro arts, funded Harlem cabaret and theatre, and fuelled New York's fascination with a detrimental idea of African American life. Brown insisted to Rowell: 'I'm not negative toward the New Negro Renaissance. I am negative toward the misnamed Harlem Renaissance. In New York the influence of Carl Van Vechten was a bad thing. Most of what was done was partying. I think they just wanted

⁴⁶ Charles H. Rowell. "'LET ME BE WITH OLE JAZZBO": An Interview with Sterling A. Brown'. *Callaloo* 14 (1991): 807.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 809.

to be shown off to these white folks. You had a whole lot of writers you never heard of, and some of the best writers are not mentioned in Huggins' book'.⁴⁸

Brown also criticized Huggins for Harlemizing all of New York City, citing that important Negro magazines, such as *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*, were not published in Harlem, and publishing houses that welcomed Negro writers operated in Manhattan, a world away from the intersection of 125th Street and Lenox Avenue. He also noted that Huggins' discussion of New Negro intellectuals was limited to a handful of poets and novelist, while he ignored Charles S. Johnson, Phillip Randolph, and Chandler Owens. For Brown, Huggins' historical record made a serious error in assessing its identity and chronology: 'The whole business of Harlem has been blown out of focus. The New Negro Renaissance was an excellent thing. I just want it named "New Negro Renaissance", and I don't want it limited to those [1925-1929] years.'⁴⁹

Echoing concerns that he first articulated in 1955, Brown once again directly challenged the chronology, place, and scope of what historians and memoirists have now defined as a renaissance occurring during a defined period in a precise place. Langston Hughes offered up the terminology in 1940; Nathan Irvin Huggins justified its legitimacy and its inevitable failure, and in 1971, substantiated a legacy for the Harlem Renaissance that would relegate the New Negro Renaissance into 1920s Harlem and serve as the foundation for historical and literary scholarship for the next twenty years. Beyond Sterling Brown's obvious dismay that an alternative view of a history he witnessed had become canonized, the greater complication of Huggins' success was how his views influenced much of the scholarship produced in the 1970s and 1980s to situate the renaissance singularly in Harlem and negotiate critical analysis of the period predominately to confront, assess, and accept its failure.

If Huggins' argument for failure relied fundamentally upon the idea that significant art arose in America from individual expression rather than from communities of artists, he drew two important conclusions about the failures of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 810.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 810.

the Harlem Renaissance that were historically invalid and will be challenged by this thesis: One, Huggins presumed no Harlem Renaissance artist(s) attempted to create individual and authentic forms of expression that were not eventually co-opted by white American culture; this was certainly not the case with writers like Hurston and Sterling Brown, whose writings were borne from traditional African American folk culture. Two, communities of artists did exist during this period, beyond the well-documented leaders, such as Du Bois and Charles S. Johnson, particularly avant-garde writers, like Wallace Thurman, who sought to create independent publications and express new ideas, despite the challenges that came from polemicists who believed art should only be used to advance the entire race. Historians and literary scholars began to address these shortcomings of Huggins' account, to move beyond what appeared implicit in his failure thesis, that the literary movement had to be artificial because the writers were sponsored by white patrons with white ideas of how blacks should write, promoted like commodities to the general public, and, therefore, did not speak to the needs of most black people and did not achieve its purported goal of using art to elevate the race. Huggins's history validated a unified movement that failed and offered a somewhat sympathetic view of its shortcomings by claiming that, because of the state of the American racial condition, they never had a chance to succeed.

Eleven years passed before David Levering Lewis, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner for his two volume biography of W.E.B. Du Bois, wrote the second book-length history of the Harlem Renaissance When Harlem Was In Vogue (1982), one that re-affirmed the legacy of failure Huggins established a decade earlier. Like Huggins, he paid homage to Hughes', The Big Sea by modifying a chapter title ('When the Negro was in Vogue') to title his work. Unlike Huggins, Lewis utilized expansive and wide-ranging archival resources previously ignored by scholars to explore the compromised ambitions and delusional strivings of Harlem intellectuals. Narratively driven and eloquently written, Lewis accepted Huggins' primary racial and cultural dynamic and plunged deeper into a close and detailed inspection that proffered African Americans who turned to art

because they had no identification with the aesthetics of white America. Art, in the 1920s, remained the only area where the colour-line appeared to be undrawn. Excluded from politics and education, from profitable and challenging professions, and brutalized by all economic arrangements, African Americans adopted the arts as a domain of hope and an arena of possible progress. The problem, as Lewis identified it, was that these intellectuals did not understand that the cultural forces that defined and dictated meaning, relevance, and significance in art and literature were no different than politics or economics. Cultural exclusion was just as powerful and deeply personal, if not obvious to identify and understand, and again, Lewis presented his rationale squarely behind the naiveté of doe-eyed optimists: They simply did not know any better.

Methodologically, When Harlem Was in Vogue was revolutionary. Lewis' use of archival materials, black newspapers and magazines contemporary to the renaissance, and his detailed analysis of primary sources offered a radical departure from the comparatively cursory resources used by previous historians and scholars. His principal research sources shifted from autobiographies and the eyewitness accounts that fuelled the interpretations and theories of earlier historians (Cruse/Huggins) to overwhelming reliance on archival research; however, Lewis, who later wrote a two volume biography of Du Bois, adopted views of the Harlem Renaissance that were sympathetic to Du Bois' contention that the movement failed, in large part, due to corruptive white influences.

If Lewis avoided the pitfalls of his historical predecessors and their use of limited resources, his book followed an eerily similar path as Huggins and to a lesser extent Cruse and Bone in its reliance historical exceptionalism. Even among the abundance of archival resources at Lewis' disposal, his preferred approach was to examine the meaning and failures of the Harlem Renaissance in a singular place as lived by a small number of men. Harlem was not Huggins' 'Capital of the Black Work', but was, for Lewis, a 'City of Refuge' where faithful progressive political leaders naïvely overestimated 'the power of morality and the essential rightness of the American system' that cannot undermine racism through 'simple

reforms and efforts at right thinking'.⁵⁰ Writers were 'Stars' (Chapter 3)— Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen; transcendent talents with a supreme mentor (Alain Locke) who dominated the Harlem scene and offered the greatest hope for fulfilling the vision of Charles S. Johnson. While other writers appeared marginally in the chapter (Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, for example), Lewis mistakenly centred the chapter around writers, who by 1924, when the chapter concluded, were not living in Harlem (Hughes, McKay), had begun to remove himself from public life altogether (Toomer), and had, at best, an ambivalent relationship with the black community (Cullen).

More importantly, however, the diligence of Lewis' research began to unravel as he grew ever more interested in quirky personality traits, odd occurrences, and gossip. Take for example his treatment of the first *Opportunity* dinner held on 21 March 1924, which Lewis declared to be 'the official commencement of the Harlem Renaissance and the launching point of the New Negro in arts and literature. Originally conceived to celebrate the publication of Jessie Fauset's There is Confusion, Lewis conveyed the splendour of this event to signify Charles S. Johnson's contributions to conceive and orchestrate the Harlem Renaissance.

While written evidence of Charles S. Johnson's influence upon the Harlem Renaissance was curiously spotty in Lewis' otherwise meticulously researched history, he remained resolute in his claims about Johnson, with regards to his style ('more the pose of modesty than modesty itself'), his ego ('reflected in the British elegance of his suits and the businessman's gait') and his passion for dominion ('expressed itself through secrecy and patient manipulation'). Johnson, in Lewis' estimation, was the proverbial man behind the curtain, manipulating people and circumstances 'to redeem, through art, the standing of his people'.⁵¹

Building upon the moment gained from the *Opportunity* dinner and the special issue of *Survey Graphic*, Johnson recruited writers throughout the United

⁵⁰ David Levering Lewis. When Harlem Was In Vogue. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 50.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

States—Arna Bontemps and Wallace Thurman from California and Zora Neale Hurston from Florida—to come to New York. And while Lewis acknowledged that Locke and Johnson made a perfect team because ‘both wanted the same art for the same purposes—highly polished stuff, preferably about polished people, but certainly untainted by racial stereotypes or embarrassing vulgarity’, the rising popularity of the Negro that they diligently promoted, was, for Lewis, tainted, precisely because Locke and Johnson negotiated successful collaborations with the white literary establishment.⁵² This argument was essentially an affirmation of Du Bois’ view on corruptive inter-racial partnerships that Locke and Johnson cultivated; a view this thesis will dispute.

In much the same manner as Huggins, Lewis’ assessment viewed the emerging white presence in the Harlem Renaissance, at least in the early years, with trepidation, one that ‘hovered over the New Negro world of art and literature like a benevolent censor, politely but persuasively setting the outer limits of its creative boundaries’.⁵³ Lewis credited Negro leaders with ability to manipulate the varied motives of white patrons and their allies and recognized that Johnson and Du Bois, in their respective roles as editors of *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, along with white benefactors were largely responsible for giving special form and purpose to intellectual and social life in Harlem. The notion that artists and writers were trying too hard to be accepted and too unwilling to look within their own traditions to develop artistic goals and standards while political leaders carried too much of the burden of race advancement on their shoulders, too busy justifying black cultural legitimacy within white society to be able to devote their energies to breaking out of it looms throughout Lewis’ narrative. The second *Opportunity* dinner in May, 1925 was held in midtown Manhattan with 316 attendees. The March special issue of *Survey Graphic*, titled ‘Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro’ doubled the magazine’s average circulation (42,000). For Lewis, ‘1925 is Year I of Harlem Renaissance’, the beginning of a phenomenon destined to failure.

⁵² Ibid., 95.

⁵³ Ibid., 98.

Lewis' use of primary research, the 46 interviews he conducted that offer an oral history, his comprehensive examination and analysis of newspapers, political and mainstream periodicals, and, to a lesser extent, the literary works themselves, set an example that many cultural and literary historians followed after 1981 to unearth a more complex understanding of a multi-dimensional event.

Unfortunately, while his methods were ground-breaking, his interpretations of the Harlem Renaissance as a failure were not. Huggins already declared the movement artificial because it was sponsored by white patrons who promoted their artists and cultural artefacts like commodities. Huggins already claimed that the movement did not speak to ordinary New Negroes and did not achieve its goal of elevating the race through cultural acceptance. Ironically, perhaps fittingly, Lewis' focus remained too much on the creators of the Renaissance, rather than their creations; more on narrating a history as opposed to penetrating analysis; his failures were, in some regards, the same failures he assigned categorically to the Harlem Renaissance.

The political, economic, and cultural context in which a history is written, invariably guides the interpretation of previous events with an eye to assessing and understanding the significance of the past upon present. By the 1960s, the upheaval associated with the Civil Rights Movement, the economic demise of urban America and rise of racial violence triggered a deep pessimism regarding the future and the history of race relations in the United States. In lieu of continuing what they condemned as failed efforts to integrate black art,⁵⁴ proponents of the Black Arts Movement championed an independent black identity and art form. Larry Neal, in his aesthetic manifesto, 'The Black Arts

⁵⁴ Recently, scholars have acknowledged that the Harlem Renaissance undoubtedly made significant contributions to the development of an African American aesthetic. These views contradict leaders of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s who criticized the efforts of black intellectuals in the 1920s for what they perceived as a failure to improve the everyday social and economic conditions of black America. Their insistence that the renaissance had failed certainly affirmed theories proposed by Nathan Huggins and David Levering Lewis in their seminal histories. See Brian Yost. 'The Changing Same The Evolution of Racial Self-Definition and Commercialization'. *Callaloo* 31 (Fall 2008): 1314.

Movement', established these aims as a conscious departure from what he and others interpreted as the philosophies underlying the Harlem Renaissance:

The Black Arts Movement represents the flowering of a cultural nationalism that has been suppressed since the 1920s. I mean the "Harlem Renaissance"—which was essentially a failure. It did not address itself to the mythology and the lifestyles of the Black community. It failed to take roots, to link itself concretely to the struggles of that community, to become its voice and spirit. Implicit in the Black Arts Movement is the idea that Black people, however dispersed, constitute a *nation* within the belly of white America.⁵⁵

Neal and others pursuing a Black Aesthetic in the 1960s assigned failure to the Harlem Renaissance in order to establish the originality, primacy, and authenticity of a Black Arts Movement which spoke directly to Black people. No appeals to the aesthetic tastes synonymous with white, Western culture; no strategies to integrate black representations with the white canon. Neal presumed that those Harlem Renaissance intellectuals who pursued goals of integration as paths to political progress and cultural acceptance merely announced the implicit inferiority of their own tradition, and consequently, the superiority of a new ideology.⁵⁶

In some fashion, the leaders of the Black Arts movement, who pursued an untarnished Black Aesthetic and claimed that they were the first generation of writers and critics to embrace a true vernacular culture, fell victim to what Adolph L. Reed, Jr. calls 'the misapplication of "politics" in histories of African-

⁵⁵ Larry Neal. '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: Duke University Press, 1994), 197. By the 1930s, many artists and intellectuals associated with the Harlem Renaissance had embraced the promise of Marxism, purportedly more sympathetic with the plight of black America, while others contended with the economic demise of a roaring and idyllic Harlem whose image and identity imploded on Black Tuesday. Many eye-witness accounts and scholarship about Harlem and the Renaissance produced in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, remained optimistic, nostalgic, and hopeful; however, the aesthetic and political principles of many, including Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, among others, were more closely aligned with the ideologies of the Black Arts Movement than critics of the failed movement, like Baraka and Neale, would have admitted

⁵⁶ Yost, 'The Changing Same', 1318.

American culture’ that ‘blur the distinction between cultural history and the history of social and political thought, such that the former has tended to substitute for the latter’.⁵⁷ Black Arts scholars who dismissed Harlem literature, unconditionally, as their true antecedents, like-minded artists also in search of authentic African American aesthetic—missed the fact that ‘they {the Black Arts movement} simply represented the triumph of a consensus that had been developing throughout the century’ and that a Black Aesthetic theory must be formed and envisioned in some historical context.⁵⁸ Only when Houston Baker, Jr. published his paradigm-shifting Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance could a scholar reconcile the pursuit of a Black Aesthetic with its past, and establish a constructive relationship with historical antecedents that developed cultural and national premises which authenticated a style of black expression, performative skill, and deconstruction of racial oppression, all fundamental themes of the Black Arts movement, and re-established the history of Harlem in the 1920s as something other than a failure.⁵⁹

From the first pages of his preface, Baker challenged the literary critics and historians who frequently faulted the Harlem Renaissance for its ‘failure to produce *vital, original, effective*, or “modern” art in the manner, presumably, of British, Anglo-American, and Irish creative endeavors’.⁶⁰ Citing the self-consciously scholarly effort oriented to win approval from those who monopolized definitions of scholarship, Baker cited “Careerism”, which preserved ‘the critical vocabulary and the assumptions of a dominating culture in his or her analyses of his or her own “dominated” culture’, for the analytical and methodological flaws of Renaissance history and criticism.⁶¹ Baker, like Larry Neal, recounted the failure theses of both Huggins (provincial, accepted the province of “race” as a domain in which to forge a New Negro identity and failed to claim ‘their patria, their nativity as American citizens’) and Lewis (‘failed

⁵⁷ Adolph L. Reed, Jr. W. E. B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 130.

⁵⁸ David Lionel Smith. ‘The Black Arts Movement and Its Critics’. *American Literary History* 3 (Spring, 1991): 107.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁶⁰ Houston A. Baker, Jr. Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), xiii.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

because Afro-Americans turned to art during the twenties precisely because there was no conceivable chance of their assuming patria-or anything else in white America'), only to turn away from their premises altogether, claiming "(m)ovements" were not made and parcelled out in neat chronological packages; there was no "Harlem Renaissance" (and certainly not a "voguish" one comprised of disparate artists lumped under a single heading" until *after* the event'.⁶² Baker not only proclaimed that declaring the renaissance a failure denied any beneficial effects for newly explored areas of Afro-American discourse, he also argued that compliance in Harlem's failure is the equivalent of historians who sought causal explanations for the failures of the Civil Rights Movement.⁶³ These failure discourses, what Baker referred to as '(t)he scholarly double bind that forces Afro-Americanists to begin with given assessments of black intellectual history and thus laboriously work their way to dire conclusions is, quite simply, an unfortunate result of disciplinary control and power politics', are paradoxical; therefore, methodological revision is essential to recapturing the essential understanding of black intellectual history.⁶⁴

As this related to reinterpreting the Harlem Renaissance, two changes were necessary. First, Baker proposed a new timeline for the movement, beginning with Booker T. Washington's 'Atlanta Compromise' speech on September 18, 1895 and concluding (Baker also considered that the movement may never have ended) with the publication of The New Negro in 1925. Baker also hypothesized that African American modernism must ask and address different questions and concerns; provide new definitions of what Lionel Trilling would call the 'shockingly personal' inquiry of modernism. His 'discursive constellation' included Afro-American literature, music, art, graphic design, and intellectual history, unbounded by 'a traditionally defined belles letters, or, to Literature with a capital and capitalist "L"'.⁶⁵ His original instruments of analysis, what he referred to as 'the mastery of form' and 'the deformation of mastery' rendered his

⁶² Ibid., xvii; Nathan Huggins, Harlem Renaissance, 309; Baker, Jr., Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance, 11.

⁶³ Baker, Jr., Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance, 12.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

criticism with the ability to produce ‘more accurate and culturally enriching interpretations of the *sound* and *soundings* of Afro-American modernism than do traditional methods’ a strategy to ensure ‘cognitive exploration and affective transformations leading to the growth *and survival* of a nation’.⁶⁶

Attributing African American narrative with all aesthetic characteristics (biological masks designed to enhance inclusive fitness), Baker argued that the history of discourse and the African American experience was defined by a dichotomy historians have not addressed when examining the texts, philosophies, and statements of key figures—the presentation of what one needs to see/hear (mastery of form) with concealed, disguised adversarial guerrilla action (deformation of mastery). Nothing, in Baker’s view, was ONLY as it appeared to be, a duality inherent in behaviour, action, experience, and narrative, that when applied historically and literarily, re-wrote the African American identity in an inherent and indigenous language.

From this critical vantage point, Baker reconsidered Washington’s speech and Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folks* as cornerstones that ‘provide strategies that re-sound in the Afro-American 1920s as a generation of black spokespersons working within the field of expressive possibilities . . . created by the fluid and always interdependent relationship between mastery and deformation’.⁶⁷ While historians had previously limited Renaissance actions, locally, in Harlem and misheard artistic soundings as appeasement for white audiences only interested in the primitive aspects of African American life and art, Baker suggested that Du Bois and Washington ‘provide tactics, strategies, and sounds that mark a field of possibilities for an emergent Afro-American *national* enterprise . . . fittingly characterized as the establishment of a mode of *sounding* reality that is identifiably and self-consciously black and empowering’, and embodied the roles of spokespersons ‘not only to filter the absurd noises of minstrelsy but also, and at the same instant, to recall sounds of African origin in an age characterized by

⁶⁶ Ibid., xvi, 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 68

divided aims, betrayed hopes, and open brutalities' all which required 'a shrewd combination of formal mastery and deformation creativity'.⁶⁸

Baker's mode of sounding reality allowed the history of Harlem and the Renaissance to transform into one which was represented positively, more hopefully in Locke's, The New Negro: 'a nation comprised of self-consciously aspiring individuals who view their efforts as coextensive with global strivings for self-determination and national cultural expression'.⁶⁹ Baker suggested that The New Negro was 'perhaps our first *national* book, offering not only a description of streams of tendency in our collective lives but also an actual construction within its pages of the sounds, songs, images, and signs of a nation', one in which Western standards in art were nothing more 'than adequate goals' for high Afro-American cultural achievement.⁷⁰ The history of the Harlem Renaissance was recast within the borders of Locke's anthology, 'offering not only a description of streams of tendency in our collective lives but also an actual construction within its pages of the sounds, songs, images, and signs of a nation'; a textual microcosm for the Negro struggle for self-determination.⁷¹

Baker undercut the criticism that artists failed to create authenticity because they sold out to white standards, explaining that if the younger generation could 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'.⁷² The Harlem Renaissance had long been criticized for its advocacy of this standard, criticism which Baker called ignorant of the 'full discursive field marking Afro-American national possibilities'; criticism which minimized the significance and strategic presence of formal mastery in history; criticism which 'begins with the notion that recognizably *standard* form automatically disqualifies a work as an authentic and valuable Afro-American national production. Analysis is in fact foreclosed by a first assumption of failure'.⁷³

⁶⁸ Ibid., 71, 72.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 86.

⁷³ Ibid.

Renaissancism (the process of historicizing the movement), therefore, became more than failed high jinks of a single decade—it signalled the evolution of the canonized and finite Harlem Renaissance towards a ‘resonantly and continuously productive set of tactics, strategies, and syllables that takes form at the turn of the century and extends to our own day’.⁷⁴ In Baker’s translation, the history of the Renaissance became less dependent upon place (Harlem) and time (1920s). For example, the validation of folk and vernacular expression in literature that occurred in the 1930s became fruits of renaissancism, representing a broader nationalistic engagement, one that encouraged intellectual and artistic awareness of the foundations of authentic expression may, in fact, be discovered through navigating and negotiating the mastery of form and deformation of mastery.

Baker’s methodology presented a fluid field for dynamic historical interpretations and critical possibilities. As Kenneth Janken acknowledged, Baker’s thesis and exposition of renaissancism raised an important question (left unanswered) about African-American cultural nationalism and history: ‘Why, and in what ways, has the Harlem Renaissance been a departure point for succeeding generations of African-American intellectuals’?⁷⁵ Cruse, Huggins, Lewis, Baraka, and Neal all addressed the failures of Renaissance participants to realize cultural autonomy, each arguing in his own unique fashion that, ‘despite its prodigious artistic production, the movement did not achieve one of its primary goals: production of an African-American cultural consciousness capable of sustaining a drive for full equality’.⁷⁶ Baker cultivated one of the first and most effective methodologies to identify and utilize the formal structure of African-American discourse to enrich, explore, and ultimately reevaluate the meaning of black literary history, providing a substantial antidote to the collective histories of failure that defined the Harlem Renaissance for a generation and offering innovative approaches to re-considering the achievements and challenges of early African American literary and cultural history.

Methodology and Thesis Overview

⁷⁴ Ibid., 91-92.

⁷⁵ Kenneth R. Janken. ‘Untitled: Review’. *The Journal of American History* 78 (June, 1991): 371.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

‘. . . (L)iterature has had its own shaping effects upon the interpreters, and that the apparent transhistorical dimension of literary texts is a significant, if little understood, part of its history. The stakes of literary history lie always in the relation between the contingencies that made the work of literature possible for those who created it and the contingencies that make it possible for ourselves. In this sense, literary history is always the history of the possibility of literature’.⁷⁷

The principles of New Historicism and Baker’s reading of the Black Aesthetic afforded interpretive possibilities that altered traditional approaches to historicizing the intellectual and cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement. The concurrent critical shifts in the 1980s exemplified by Baker’s work and the rise of New Historicism, encouraged scholars to examine how a literary text interacts with and participates in its historical context, with particular reference to the power relations operating within the society of its time. New Historicism filled the critical void created by Formalist literary scholarship that ignored the role of history in creative production for most of the twentieth century, and offered new critical approaches to language, cultural forms, and historical discourse, discovering the lost and hidden sounding of African American voice, agency, and authenticity that define a Black Aesthetic. New Historicism and Baker’s black vernacular challenged the limitations of dominant historical narratives that relied predominantly upon sources and narratives that diminished the value of cultural texts and theoretical approaches that captured the voices and images of the lost, the forgotten, and the oppressed. Baker and New Historicists gave equal weight to text that creates context, what they would define as historical text, utilizing the power of the anecdote by providing details of ordinary, daily experience and casting suspicion over grand unified narrative, which in previous Harlem Renaissance histories marginalized literature principally to the function of propaganda, as opposed to art that may or may not have a clear political and racial identity. Applying these methods to history supported drawing the significant texts, events, and culture of

⁷⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, ‘What is the History of Literature?’ *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring, 1997): 470.

the Harlem Renaissance out of Harlem where one can examine the Renaissance primarily through its cultural production (texts) and account, historically, for the ideologies and actions of its authors that revealed an optimism for authentic artistic representation, on equal footing with the agendas and schemes of political operatives (Charles S. Johnson, Du Bois, et al) who saw art functionally as a means for racial progress.

Literature was a public sphere in which African Americans fought for cultural legitimacy as a means of achieving political, social, and economic equality—full privileges of citizenship. The reassessment of the legitimacy and influence of the Harlem Renaissance through a New Historical approach reaffirmed not only the need for a critical vernacular to assess black literature and history but also the use of indigenous cultural texts to (re)define and (re)record the social, cultural, and literary history of African Americans. While the contemporary movement of literary criticism towards a New Historical representation became a catalyst for the re-evaluation and rediscovery of African American literature and its place in American literary and cultural history, the challenge to the critic of black literature, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. recognized, was ‘not to shy away from white power—that is, literary theory—but to translate it into black idiom, renaming principles of criticism and applying them to our own texts’.⁷⁸ By considering the meaning of a text to be established in concrete historical situations and produced within a specific historical context, the critical assessment of African American literature and literary history now possessed a theoretical weapon, the indigenous past, which communicated the complexities of its culture in an inherently native critical language.

Some recent literary critics have utilized the rise of New Historicism to reorganize and reclaim significant areas of the cultural (literary) landscape dismissed by early historians such as Huggins and Lewis. George Hutchinson’s The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White (1995) expanded the history of the 1920s, inter-racially, and broadened the renaissance’s meaning and contributions

⁷⁸ Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 79.

to modernism and a broader scale culturally and geographically. Barbara Foley's, Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro (2003) extended the impact of the period, politically, evaluating the New Negro's impact on the rise of African American radicalism. However, no historical work has yet extended the period, aesthetically and confronted the effects of five decades of Harlem-centric historiography that not only over-emphasized the reliability of 'eyewitness accounts' via autobiography, but also situated the historical significance of a national, race-based cultural revolution into a single urban neighbourhood, reducing the complexity of a diverse and protracted aesthetic movement into a sensational supernova that flamed brilliantly and vanished.

While some scholarly efforts since 1995 have challenged commonly held beliefs about the literature of the Harlem Renaissance and those who envisaged and championed it, few historians have utilized new methodologies to re-examine the history of the period itself or the principal intellectuals whose efforts facilitated the movement. Together, the methods and principles of New Historicism and Baker's Black Aesthetic legitimized texts (literature, language, political discourse) as valid and equal forms of meaning to those events and interpretations of history; they were no longer simply texts (artistic production) that existed primarily because of and are defined by more significant and meaningful context (history).

The history of the black aesthetic and W. E. B. Du Bois' crucial and paradoxical role in its development has been trapped in a Harlem-centric narrative of cultural vogue, and the perimeters of intellectual and cultural influence extended far beyond these boundaries. Because the Harlem Renaissance has been fetishized as an exceptional and exemplary period of the New Negro Renaissance, historical analysis of the leaders and the catalysts of an emerging Black Aesthetic have been viewed too narrowly, both chronologically and contextually (local vs. national). Traditional histories of the Harlem Renaissance have defined the period of 1924-1929 as the most essential moment to analyse ideological controversies faced in creating an aesthetic. The causes and outcomes of these

controversies needed historical reassessment in order to understand the importance of the movement nationally and ideologically. Previous histories accounted largely for people ((auto)biographically), their words, (literally), and their actions within the political realities of racial and economic inequality that limited, restrained, and contaminated cultural production. Because of their standardized approaches, previous accounts were predominantly narratives of inevitable failure told by historians criticizing the period and its participants for what it should have been, interpreted from an eyewitness perspective shaped by autobiography read too literally, and read without the nuanced understanding of intellectual revelations contained within the literature that defined the movement. No history of the intellectuals who inspired the Black Aesthetic has been told where their texts, particularly literary essays, are weighed equally with political events and racial realities. The operating strategy of this thesis attempts to prove that historians should not refrain from interpreting, therefore validating, texts and cultural artefacts as primary and significant sources of historical understanding. This type of critical textual analysis inherent to New Historicism expands the scope of historical understanding by uncovering substantial meaning in the writings and New Negro literature that traditional methods have not considered.

Historically, Du Bois' role as central antagonist to New Negro writers has been overemphasized. The evolution of his aesthetic ideologies from 1905-1926 has not been explained thoroughly and the longer view of his efforts to shape and lead an indigenous Black Aesthetic are not taken into account in traditional Harlem-centric histories. *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Origins of the Black Aesthetic: Rivalry, Resistance, and Renaissance Construction, 1905-1926* reconsiders Du Bois' role within the history of aesthetic controversy where prevailing notions about his opposition to the New Negro Renaissance are challenged and the scope of his contributions that inspire the conceptualization and production of a new Black Aesthetic are broadened contextually and extended chronologically.

The aesthetic ideals of his intellectual rivals and young writers that he challenges during the pinnacle of the New Negro Renaissance are predominantly ideas he

first encouraged artists to pursue. My research repositions Du Bois as a primary, if not also paradoxical ideological force at the genesis of the Black Aesthetic, both as an advocate and antagonist of the aesthetic ideals that fuel the movement. By tracing his intellectual evolution throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, my research identifies how intellectual and political rivalries influence Du Bois' evolving ideologies, and how his writings about art and his leadership as editor of *The Crisis* define the foundation by which New Negro artists create a Black Aesthetic.

My thesis seeks to reconcile previous problems with historical approaches and assessments of the New Negro Renaissance and re-evaluate the national events and personal experiences that motivate Du Bois in his quest to create the ideal Negro journal that promoted authentic cultural production, particularly literature. This research project reconsiders Du Bois' role within the history of aesthetic controversy where prevailing notions about his unilateral opposition to New Negro writers are challenged; and attempts to document the personal aspirations, flaws, and complexity of Du Bois. Accounting for his leadership faults and self-serving ambitions (seeing him as a person and not simply an abstraction) frees him from the restraints of previous historical interpretations that situate him as exclusively an anathema to the Harlem Renaissance and diminish his decades long pursuit of a Black Aesthetic that provides the foundation upon which New Negro writers pursue the creation of an authentic, self-determined artistic rendering of African American life and culture.

The first three chapters outline the history of Du Bois' efforts to establish and control a Black Aesthetic during the first two decades of the 20th century. Chapter One, 'Editorial Crisis: Race, Rivalry, and W.E.B. Du Bois' Struggle to Create an Authentic Negro Journal', examines how Du Bois develops his vision for an authentic Black Aesthetic from 1905-1916 and why the NAACP's political organ, *The Crisis*, becomes Du Bois' ideal and idealized vehicle for creating and promoting new cultural norms and aesthetic values that could be self-determined and accurately represented for African Americans in the early 20th century. His tireless efforts to establish a magazine that could represent an authentic cultural

medium placed Du Bois at odds with NAACP board members who held conflicting visions for the mission of a political organ. These persistent conflicts not only forged his unilateral and singular approach to leading a new Black Aesthetic, but the history of his rise to become the most influential African American editor in the early 20th century also foreshadows the dynamics and consequences of his conflicts with intellectual rivals in the 1920s.

The second chapter, 'Nationalizing the Black Aesthetic, Politicizing the New Negro: The Evolution of Purpose and Persona in Du Bois' "Great War" Editorials', acknowledges the intersection of politics and aesthetics, public service and personal interest, with particular emphasis on Du Bois' learned distrust of black-white alliances and his willingness to jettison his political values in order to serve individual agendas and promote growth of *The Crisis*. The chapter analyses how and why Du Bois' personal motives affect the evolution of his Great War editorials from 1914-1919, and seeks to explain why his post-war editorials come to idealize the 'common Negro experience', which define the emerging 'New Negro' spirit that emerges as the philosophical cornerstone of the new Black Aesthetic.

Chapter Three, 'Du Bois' Aesthetic Glorification of the 'Other 90 Percent' and the Emergence of a New Negro Cultural Ideology', explores Du Bois' motivations for championing the common man in creating new aesthetic values for Negro art and literature. Accounting for the effect his efforts at public redemption after Great War mistakes had on defining his criteria for art, the chapter uncovers the extent to which Du Bois' ideological shifts reflected in his seminal 1921 essay, 'Negro Art' were an effort to counter popular political and intellectual rivals, particularly Marcus Garvey, who challenged his cultural and social capital. While his essay became a landmark shift toward lionizing the 'common' Negro experience as the saviour for art, this chapter reveals how rivals influence Du Bois' intellectual development in the early 1920s and sets the stage for his dramatic reversal of aesthetic position in 1926.

'*Opportunity Seized, Opportunity Missed: Charles S. Johnson Announces the New Negro Renaissance*' investigates the role Charles S. Johnson plays in both

acknowledging and defining the New Negro artistic movement between 1923-1925. This chapter documents the significant events that defined Johnson's ambitious cultural agenda and created ideological divisions that, by 1926, came to represent two divergent schools of thought that defined the debate over the role of art and propaganda in New Negro literature. By analysing the impact of Johnson's famous 1924 Civic Club Dinner, the literary competition he initiated later that summer, and the meteoric rise of *Opportunity* magazine, this chapter highlights the circumstances under which Du Bois came to perceive Johnson as a viable rival who exerted influence over the potential for art and literature to promote the economic, social, and political equality of all African Americans.

Chapter Five, 'Du Bois' Anxiety of Influence: Alain Locke's The New Negro as Catalyst for Alienation and Evolving Aesthetics', reveals how the publication of *The New Negro* polarized Du Bois against Alain Locke while galvanizing young artists as they struggled to define and control the criteria and purpose of literature. Placing Locke's landmark anthology at the centre of the historical deliberation also provides a comparative standard to examine both the political and artistic values that represented the New Negro writer before the emergence of Harlem as its epicentre and the extent to which the publication of The New Negro defined the intellectual struggle for control and utilization of art as a means of social and economic improvement. The Du Bois/Locke schism was significant because scholars have used Du Bois' condemnation of The New Negro to justify failures inherent in the renaissance, and over-represented his accounts of what happened without fully understanding his personal motivations for reversing ideological positions and arguing against those artists who sought to fulfil a vision for a Black Aesthetic that were closely aligned with his own ideas before 1926. Du Bois' refusal to cooperate with others and his resistance to relinquish control of the movement led him to turn against it and develop views that contradicted two decades of his own work and beliefs, an act motivated by his refusal to share the singular power and influence he held throughout the 1910s. These personal flaws and motives not only undermined the legitimacy of his ideas but also raise new questions about their validity, particularly his argument that black writers sell out to white publishers for commercial profit and cultural

acceptance, an intellectual position that has dominated histories of the Harlem Renaissance.

In order to recover Du Bois' diminished role in establishing a cultural and intellectual foundation for a Negro Renaissance, the conclusion, 'Eliminating the Anxiety of Influence: Self-Determination in New Negro Literature' makes an original argument as to why Du Bois reverses his position so dramatically between 1921 and 1926 by addressing the fundamental question previous scholars have left unanswered: How did Du Bois come to disapprove of and become an 'outsider' to the artistic movement he worked two decades to realize and that incorporated the theories of beauty, truth, and art that he had championed at the beginning the 1920s? His ideological metamorphosis was due more to countering and contradicting his new intellectual rivals, such as Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke, and Charles S. Johnson, editor the Urban League's *Opportunity* magazine who adopted his ideas, earned great public recognition, and left him as an 'outsider' to the movement more than a disapproving response to how young artists incorporated the theories of beauty and truth that he had championed at the beginning the decade.

Literary scholars and historians have not addressed this possibility, because they have routinely ignored the significance of Du Bois' tumultuous history within the NAACP and the personal conflicts that defined his controversial editorship of *The Crisis* when considering why he changed his attitudes and turned against New Negro writers so swiftly in 1926. Historians traditionally have accepted Du Bois' shifting views on aesthetics verbatim, showing little interest in understanding the catalysts and motives for Du Bois to contradict his previous stances on beauty, truth, and the role of propaganda. This thesis aspires to confirm that his change of attitude has as much to do with the rise of intellectual rivals and their cultural publications which challenge his monolithic status as African America's pre-eminent cultural and leader as it does with genuine intellectual evolution.

By recognizing the role of intellectual, political and personal rivalry in shaping his aesthetic beliefs, my thesis opens new avenues of understanding the historical

significance of the Harlem Renaissance that transcends its localization, its racial dichotomies (which have been overly simplified) and views its successes and failures predominantly from the vantage point of those black cultural media (magazines) and intellectuals (editors/writers) who struggled to articulate an indigenous voice and self-determined direction to Negro literature in the 1920s. Historians have de-emphasized the extent to which intra-racial rivalry influenced ideological shifts because Du Bois' aesthetic recalibration is, in part, motivated by power struggles and personal rivals who threaten his dominance as African America's premier intellectual. The significance of these rivalries, when viewed within the context of black media struggling for market share/cultural influence, takes on a new, more complex meaning, but also reveals how the competition of ideas fuels a richer, stronger identity with Black Aesthetics.

Through close readings of their editorials and essays about art and literature and re-analysing archival materials and writings of renaissance leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, and by reassessing key literary texts frequently identified with the Harlem Renaissance, this thesis utilizes historical and interdisciplinary methodologies to ascertain why a New Negro literary movement spanning four decades became defined predominantly as the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1929). My research also reveals how the canonization of the Harlem Renaissance by scholars unnecessarily constricts the scope and significance of a national Negro Renaissance as well as the significance of key contributors. Ultimately, this project will determine the impact of historical interpretations of the Harlem Renaissance that segregates all New Negro intellectuals into a singular ideology and mythical geography; therefore, diminishing the complexity, influence, and history of the movement as a whole and miscalculating the paradoxical contributions of the most important African American intellectual of the early 20th century.

Chapter One: 'Editorial Crisis: Race, Rivalry, and W.E.B. Du Bois' Struggle to Create an Authentic Negro Journal'

As early as 1905, W.E.B. Du Bois recognized the need and potential for an independent, financially self-sufficient publication that captured the grim and glorious realities of the African American experience. In a letter written to Tuskegee and future NAACP benefactor Jacob Schiff, Du Bois produced a thoughtful four page outline he entitled, 'A Proposed Negro Journal', which explained his vision for both the mission and function of such a magazine. Offering insight into the role race relations played in confronting injustice and the philosophical foundations of his role as editor of such a journal, the outline recognized the need to develop a medium that could communicate a Black Aesthetic. Du Bois argued that the typical person, white or black, did not comprehend the achievements or the plight of African Americans because no media at the time devoted itself to an honest portrayal of Negro life. Du Bois pointed out that in 1905, only one quarterly magazine (a church periodical), two monthly magazines (*Colored American* in New York and *Voice of the Negro* in Atlanta), and 10 weekly newspapers with more than local circulation, wrote specifically about and for an African American audience in all the United States.

Du Bois aspired to develop an ideal Negro periodical, 'on the order of *Harper's Weekly* or *Colliers*' that reached not only broader populations of African Americans, but one whose content would also appeal to all races both at home and abroad.¹ He identified five key components he felt would characterize a magazine with mass appeal to ordinary citizens, raise political consciousness, both nationally and internationally, and foster black self-awareness. For Du Bois, the transnational journal should be a 'literary digest of fact and opinion concerning the Negro in

¹ Letter to Jacob Schiff, 13 April 1905. In W.E.B. Du Bois. Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961 ed. Herbert Aptheker. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 78. See also the exchange of letters between Du Bois and Schiff, The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 3, Frames 48-52. Du Bois wrote an undated (early April, 1905), three-page handwritten letter to Schiff he labelled 'Confidential' which outlined the basic ideas of his proposed journal. Schiff responded on 9 April, calling his idea 'to establish a high class journal to circulate among intelligent Negroes' both 'interesting and on its face has my sympathy'.

particular and all darker races’; ‘(a) compendium of the News among these people gathered by staff correspondents in the larger cities and centres of the U.S. and in the West Indies, West and south Africa, etc.’; and, an ‘(i)nterpretation of the current news of the larger world from the point of view of the welfare of the Negro’. While reporting newsworthy events in the black community that were either ignored or, worse, distorted and sensationalized by the mainstream press, the bulk of magazine content would be expressed in ‘short, pertinent and interesting articles’. Du Bois also recognized the need for such a journal to provide ‘(i)llustrations attempting to portray Negro life on its beautiful and interesting side’, portraits that might work to change the minds how people viewed African Americans at the turn of the 20th century.

‘Above all’, he emphasized, ‘the Journal should be cast on broad intelligent lines, interpreting a new race consciousness to the modern world and revealing the inner meaning of the modern world to the emerging races. It should rise above narrow interests, personal likes or dislikes and seek above all practical united effort toward ideal ends’.² Du Bois wrote eloquently about the purpose, character, and aesthetic of his journal, but he also included copious details about the practical issues of launching and sustaining the daily operation of a new magazine venture. Du Bois’ proposal offered detailed accounts of potential financial success, capital outlay needed to invest in such a project, with line item breakdowns of specific costs, and even the promise to invest his own savings if Schiff would support the project.³ Organizationally, Du Bois emphasized the importance of both white and black collaboration to ensure the ultimate success of this publishing venture as a vehicle to promote and achieve social harmony and political equality. Du Bois explained to Schiff that racial cooperation would be essential ‘to initiate forward movements in culture and social reform and to repel unjust attack. To stimulate this cooperation wide self-knowledge within the race, of its own needs and accomplishments, is

² Ibid., 78-79.

³ Ibid., 79.

demand; and certain ideals, racial and cultural, must be brought home to the rank and file. A proper Journal would be the first step toward these ends'.⁴

Even though Schiff declined to contribute financially, Du Bois, undeterred, moved forward with his efforts to create a magazine that could be an indigenous political and cultural medium, one he felt represented an authentic Negro experience in America. Over the next thirty years, his editorship of magazines and his long-standing devotion to creating the type of magazine he first articulated in 1905 remained a central component of Du Bois' intellectual life. While he frequently found securing funding for these projects to be difficult (his first two short lived magazines, *Moon Illustrated Weekly* (1905-1906) and *Horizon: A Journal of the Color Line* (1907-1910) suffered from a lack of funds and readers),⁵ Du Bois' third magazine endeavoured to catapult him to international fame, making him, by 1919, one of the most influential and controversial editors of any American magazine in the early 20th century.

Hired as Director of Publicity and Research for the nascent National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Du Bois assumed the role of founding editor for *The Crisis*, the organization's political organ and primary medium of communication and public outreach. Poised to implement important lessons learned from the financial failures of his previous magazine ventures, Du Bois placed a high priority on making *The Crisis* financially self-sufficient. Defiant independence, both fiscal and philosophical, became the trademarks of Du Bois' reign as editor of *The Crisis*. His overwhelming and singular influence in articulating the voice and message of the NAACP through its political organ in the 1910s reflected the predominance of ideas in shaping both the ideology of the emerging, politicized New Negro, as well as provided the medium through which Du

⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁵ Anne Elizabeth Carroll. Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 22.

Bois charted the course and direction that began to define and coalesce an authentic Black Aesthetic.

The striking similarities between Du Bois' 1905 vision of an ideal Negro journal and the prospectus of *The Crisis*, included as its mission statement in first published edition in November, 1910 foreshadowed the influence Du Bois sought in his role as editor. Written by Du Bois and approved by the NAACP board, 'The Crisis Prospectus' asserted:

It will first and foremost be a newspaper: it will record every important happening and movement in the world which bears on the great problem of interracial relations and especially those which affect Negro-Americans. Secondly, it will be a review of opinion and literature recording briefly every book, article, and important expression of opinion in the white and colored press on the race problem. Thirdly, it will publish a few terse short articles. Finally, its editorial page will stand for the rights of men, irrespective of color or race, for the highest ideals of American democracy, and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempt {sic} to gain these rights and realize these ideals. The magazine will be the organ of no clique or party and will avoid personal rancor of all sorts. In the absence of proof to the contrary it will assume honesty of purpose on the part of men, North and South, white and black.⁶

Du Bois' articulation of the organization's editorial policy reflected both his commitment to the broader political vision and mission of the NAACP and its board's vow to stand for the rights of man and the highest ideals of democracy; however, the format of the magazine outlined in the prospectus (a newspaper and review of opinion and literature focusing on issues affecting Negro-Americans, including 'short, terse articles') was clearly Du Bois' design and reflected a vision for production of such a magazine he had held for at least five years before the

⁶ Herbert Aptheker, ed. Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois. (White Plains, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986), 93.

NAACP was chartered. Even a modified prospectus published in early 1911, which promised the additions of ‘departments replete with interesting and timely matter, including a review of books and current literature’, as well as a magazine that had already proved to be ‘tastefully illustrated and its reproductions of colored faces have been especially commended’, reflected Du Bois’ 1905 visions of an ideal Negro journal.⁷ Initially, the NAACP board appeared content to afford Du Bois significant latitude in how the magazine would be produced, trusting implicitly both his previous magazine experience and that his editorship would ultimately reflect the greater priorities and purposes of the organization. Though the prospectus promised that *The Crisis* would avoid the influence of cliques and ‘personal rancor of all sorts’, the dominance of Du Bois’ influence on the aesthetic philosophy, design, and execution of *The Crisis* was unmistakable at its launch in 1910, and presaged the internal battles Du Bois waged over control and direction of the magazine that surfaced by 1914.

Du Bois’ insistence upon asserting a powerful, unilateral voice, ever present in his monthly editorials and predominant in the aesthetic and philosophical values of the content he both included and left cut on the editing room floor, accelerated the conflicts that arose over the purposes and production of the magazine. Left virtually unsupervised by the NAACP board to manage *The Crisis* during its first two years, Du Bois’ editorial philosophy echoed a familiar militancy that he, John Hope, Monroe Trotter, Frederick McGhee, and 25 others had espoused in founding the Niagara Movement in 1905. Beset by organizational weakness, the persistent lack of funds, as well as a permanent headquarters or staff, the Niagara Movement, formed exclusively by African Americans, never attracted wide-spread support, compelling Du Bois to invite Mary White Ovington and other white liberals to join with the nucleus of Niagara ‘militants’ to found the NAACP in 1909.⁸ Du Bois represented

⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁸ For more information about evolution of the Niagara Movement into the NAACP, see also Francis L. Broderick. W.E.B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959), 75-82

the primary ideological and leadership bridge between the two organizations. The NAACP's insistence on complete social and political equality mirrored principles that had been first set forth by The Niagara Movement. As Du Bois recalled in his autobiography, 'The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone but for all true Americans. It is a fight for ideals, lest this, our common fatherland, false to its founding, become in truth the land of the Thief and the home of the Slave—a by-word and a hissing among the nationals for its sounding pretensions and pitiful accomplishment'.⁹ From the beginning, his editorship of *The Crisis* appeared intent on retaining the radical agenda and organizational concepts of the Niagara Movement¹⁰ that universally renounced Booker T. Washington's accommodation policies set forth in his 1895 'Atlanta Compromise'. Initially, many founding members of the NAACP, which included distinguished social reformists like Ida B. Wells, Archibald Grimke, and Florence Kelley, embraced Du Bois' fiery rhetoric which had fuelled Niagara ideology and appeared frequently in the pages of *The Crisis*. In fact, founding board members chose a James Russell Lowell poem written in the heat of a civil war intent on saving a nation and freeing the slaves and Tom Paine's fiery pamphlet series of the American Revolution as inspirations for the selection of the name, 'The Crisis', for its political organ. Ideologically, Du Bois gladly retained the radical spirit of the Niagara Movement and hoped to realize its potential through the realization of his dream of a legitimate Negro journal. As scholar George Hutchinson acknowledged, 'The [Niagara Movement's] manifesto

⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), 90.

¹⁰ The timing of both the founding of the Niagara Movement (February 1905) and Du Bois' letter to Jacob Schiff seeking support for his proposed 'Negro Journal' (13 April 1905), implies that Du Bois recognized that a journal would be essential to realizing the political and cultural ambitions of the Niagara founders. The mission, character, and production plan for what would have served as the communication medium of Niagara militancy would have been viewed by Du Bois as both relevant and appropriate to foster the type of relationship he imagined should exist between *The Crisis* and the NAACP.

strikes what would be the dominant chord of *Crisis* magazine, a magazine that sought to be not only a beacon to black folk but the conscience of a nation'.¹¹

To suggest that Du Bois focused only on racial progress in 1911 would be to tell a half-truth. Race prejudice, lawlessness, and ignorance can and should be fought and overcome by telling the truth no matter how shocking or seemingly confrontational. Subsequently, his editorials from 1910 until the Great War embodied 'the relationship between racism and American democracy' as their central political themes. 'Racial inequality', for Du Bois, 'was not the product of "inborn antipathy" between whites and blacks, but a function of "social and economic caste". The struggle for social equality was absolutely essential to erode the walls of racial segregation and to expand the political and economic opportunities of black Americans'.¹² For millions of African Americans, the leadership successes of Booker T. Washington throughout the late 19th and early 20th century and his Tuskegee model of black empowerment reinforced subordination and gave racists the prerogative to eliminate democratic rights for oppressed people. Du Bois, in his role as founding member of both the Niagara Movement and the NAACP, appeared adamant about mobilizing African Americans nationally toward greater self-awareness about American injustices and the need for radical ideological shifts to secure racial equality. *The Crisis* proved to be the perfect vehicle to fulfil Du Bois' grand ambitions for dramatic and paradigmatic change.

Even though Du Bois' bold and uncompromising editorship initially represented a distinct and relatively unfamiliar type of militant Negro journalism that resonated primarily with 'the Talented Tenth', *The Crisis* also 'spoke to a broad spectrum of Americans, from rural southern blacks to white northern liberals. Its commentaries

¹¹ George Hutchinson. *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 141. Hutchinson argued that the Niagara Movement's fundamental mantra, 'We want full manhood suffrage and we want it now. . . .We are men!', shaped the core aesthetic value of militant, Negro self-sufficiency that emanated throughout Du Bois' editorials in the first decade of his editorship of *The Crisis*.

¹² Adolph Reed, Jr. *Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 76.

covered all aspects of the Afro-American community—churches, businesses, schools, health care, political and civil associations, literature, and music’.¹³ This editorial balance of content representation that Anne Elizabeth Carroll labelled ‘the juxtaposition of protest and affirmation’¹⁴ proved appealing to readers who responded favourably to the magazine’s stated purpose to ‘set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested today toward colored people’, ‘record important happenings and movements in the world which bear on the great problem of inter-racial relations, and especially those which affect the Negro-American’, and include reviews of ‘books, articles, and important expressions of opinion in the white and colored press on the race problem’.¹⁵ In the narrative tradition of Frederick Douglass, the complementary nature of Du Bois’ juxtaposition allowed him to write editorials that ‘appealed to American ideals and decried acts of racism as violations of those ideals’ . . . and ‘dripped with bitterness and anger’,¹⁶ while building upon the ‘traditions in other black periodicals of using visual and written texts to redefine African American identity’.¹⁷

When faced with the inherent dilemma of protesting racial injustices in America, Du Bois turned to truth to serve as the final arbiter. For example, Du Bois acknowledged the brutality of lynching in pages of *The Crisis*, routinely publishing graphic photographs that evoked strong revulsion among his readers; however, as Carroll noted Du Bois argued that truth in representation was essential to stir up opposition to lynching, even if by doing so ‘it also continued the process of dehumanization that lynching enacted’; in order ‘to persuasively demonstrate the horrible treatment of

¹³ Ibid., 77. Patricia Sullivan reasserted this perspective using the magazine’s focus on documenting conditions in the South and the rising tide of segregation in the North. She proclaimed, ‘*The Crisis* sank roots into black life in all parts of the nation, profiling black experiences and patterns of racial discrimination against a broad and shifting landscape’. See Sullivan’s, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 23.

¹⁴ Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro*, 20.

¹⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. ‘*The Crisis*’. *The Crisis* 1 (November 1910): 10.

¹⁶ Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro*, 30.

¹⁷ Ibid., 25.

African Americans, it had to demonstrate their dehumanization and their disempowerment, and that demonstration, in turn, risked perpetuating that status'.¹⁸

Philosophically, this emphasis upon truth in representation is similar to the controversy surrounding truth in art and literature circa 1925-1928. Du Bois rationalized that the necessity of portraying the horrors of lynching truthfully outweighed the inevitable negative consequences (revulsion, perpetuating dehumanization) and carried this same attitude forward in the early 1920s when writing about the role truth and beauty in art (See Chapter Five). Eventually, Du Bois became disenchanted by the lack of effectiveness of 'truth' and reversed his position. The detrimental consequences of pursuing authenticity, particularly the reinforcement of negative racial stereotypes that arose when depicting the squalor of common Negro life, became more important than pursuing aesthetic truth.

Moreover, Du Bois rejected these fictional representations because he argued they were inauthentic and/or tainted by white patronage/cultural validation. In editing *The Crisis* throughout the 1910s, Du Bois separated protest propaganda (lynching photographs) and cultural affirmation of Negro life, and viewed the relationship between the role cultural aesthetics and racial politics in literature in a similar, separate, but equally important, manner. By 1926, Du Bois viewed politics and art as inextricably connected, reversed his position regarding truth, and became a lightning rod of controversy concerning the rights of individual, artistic privilege versus political responsibility in creating authentic portrayals African American life.

Demographically, Du Bois proved to be an astute editor and accepted that while the outrage of protest would attract and retain some subscribers and new members into the NAACP, some readers were more interested in the self-awareness and self-empowerment represented through racial affirmation rather than attacks on white racism. Carroll noted that while the magazine 'was very much geared toward black middle-class readership, and to that extent strove for general—not just political or

¹⁸ Ibid., 34; 37.

educational—appeal. . . (a)nd Du Bois included in his mission the propagation among his readership of positive images and its accomplishments'.¹⁹ Each issue of *The Crisis* featured affirmation columns, such as 'Men of the Month', which featured five to eight African American who had attained significant professional and/or cultural achievements. Special issues regularly trumpeted the successes of African American high school and college graduates every July throughout the 1910s, as well as printed photograph series that drew attention to the promise of African American children,²⁰ a particularly poignant reminder of both the promise of tomorrow and the motivation of what the NAACP stood for and fought for today. These positive, reaffirming representations of the successes achieved by African Americans throughout the United States were incorporated into every issue, not only to praise the accomplishments of the 'Talented Tenth' demographic that represented the target subscription audience, but also to solicit financial support from the peers of those individuals who were held as examples of Negro achievement and excellence. As Adolph Reed, Jr. acknowledged: 'Early in the magazine's history Du Bois asked his readers to take out enough subscriptions to guarantee "complete financial independence and the assurance of permanence" for the *Crisis*. . . . Similarly, he called on his Talented Tenth readers to buy books so that black authors would acquire the latitude to break out of the straightjacket moulds imposed by a white clientele and become "privileged to follow the leadings of their own hearts and the laws which imperatively rule in the creation of literature"'.²¹ Two failed magazine ventures and the compromises forced upon the Niagara Movement due to a lack of financial support left Du Bois resolute in encouraging African Americans to patron their own news and literary publication and aggressively pursuing the growth of

¹⁹ Reed, Jr., *Du Bois and American Political Thought*, 57.

²⁰ Carroll, *Word, Image, and the New Negro*, 39-40.

²¹ Reed, Jr., *Du Bois and American Political Thought*, 57; W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Editorial'. *The Crisis* 5 (January 1913): 130; W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Editorial'. *The Crisis* 9 (February 1915): 184.

subscriptions to *The Crisis* so that eventually both he and the magazine could achieve financial independence.²²

The dramatic success of Du Bois' fledgling magazine served to reaffirm his importance within the NAACP and further entrenched him as the natural heir to Booker T. Washington as African America's pre-eminent leader. Although reaching Du Bois' projections for the financial self-sufficiency that he envisioned would free him from the constraints of white philanthropy and afford him complete editorial authority appeared improbable, the meteoric rise of *The Crisis* gave Du Bois hope that this goal could be reached and sustained.²³ After a first printing in November, 1910 of 1,000 copies, the January 1911 issue sold 3,000, thanks in part to a spirited editorial written by Jane Addams; February 1911, 4,000 copies were sold; March, 6,000.²⁴ By November 1911, on the first anniversary, the NAACP published 16,000 copies and circulation would reach 22,500 in April 1912.²⁵ The editor's year-end financial statement submitted to the NAACP treasurer reported total sales from November 1910 to November 1912 of 350,000 copies.²⁶ The value of *The Crisis* to NAACP efforts to gain traction as a legitimate political organization was immense.

²² Francis L. Broderick claimed that Du Bois' publishing plan for Negro self-help 'fared badly'. *Horizon's* failure, which coincided with the Niagara Movement's inability to establish itself as an 'autonomous Negro organization standing on its own feet' led Du Bois to believe, in Broderick's view, 'Negro America was unwilling to support a single uncompromising journal'. He began his new career as editor of *The Crisis* as 'a rescue from a series of recent failures'. See Broderick's W.E.B. Du Bois: Negro Leader, 88-89. These failures were a significant factor in shaping Du Bois' attitudes toward controlling the NAACP's political organ, his preoccupation with financial independence, and the effect that *The Crisis*' immediate success had on his unilateral leadership style and editorial agenda.

²³ W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. 'The Second Birthday'. *The Crisis* 5 (November 1912): 27-28. Referring to the possibility of the magazine becoming self-supporting, Du Bois acknowledged that '(m)any of our friends doubt this' and pointed to the recent failures of the *Colored American* and the *Voice of the Negro* as proof that 'the American Negro has not yet reached the place where he appreciates a magazine enough to pay for its support'. Du Bois countered by arguing that complications associated with distribution, not demand, was the real obstacle. 'We doubt this assertion. We actually sell each month over 21,500 magazines. We are sure that if we could get *The Crisis* to persons who want it we could to-day sell 50,000'; not co-incidentally, 50,000 was the circulation Du Bois commonly claimed would guarantee the magazine financial independence.

²⁴ David Levering Lewis. W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1993), 416.

²⁵ Arnold Rampersad. The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 138; Lewis, Biography of a Race, 416.

²⁶ Lewis, Biography of a Race, 416.

In the opinion of founding board member and chair of the legal committee Arthur Spingarn, ‘the rise of *The Crisis* from its penniless start was “an unprecedented achievement in American journalism,” and without its editor the NAACP could not have been “what it was and is”’.²⁷ However, Du Bois often diminished or failed altogether to acknowledge the NAACP for any role it played in fuelling the success of *The Crisis*.

In a self-congratulatory editorial honouring the second anniversary of the magazine, Du Bois recounted the twenty-four month history from penniless start up to a stable production of 22,000 issues each month, and claimed his magazine had none of the significant financial backing many believed must have ensured its immediate and overwhelming success. Referencing the magazine’s regular printing of 22,000: ‘When we tell facts like these, people imagine large capital and dividends in connection with our magazine. Not so. Not a cent of capital has been invested in the magazine, except that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has furnished the services of the editor free of charge. This means that *The Crisis* is not quite paying expenses, for it could not to-day, with its present income and expense, afford to pay an editor’.²⁸ Diminishing the roles of predominantly white philanthropists who financed both the NAACP and its political organ might have been considered a savvy tactic to utilize in the pages of *The Crisis* to inspire readers about the capacity of the American Negro to support its own causes and to motivate increased monetary support from his readers. The pride all African Americans could feel about the rise of his magazine thus far, Du Bois proclaimed,

²⁷ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 138.

²⁸ Du Bois, Editorial. ‘The Second Birthday’, 28. Charles Flint Kellogg refuted Du Bois’ claim, pointing out that the organisations contributions had been ‘considerable’. Over a 19 month period beginning in November, 1910, the NAACP ‘paid the salaries of the editor, his secretary, the bookkeeper, and the stenographer, in addition to rent, light, heat, telephone, and cleaning bills’. See Charles Flint Kellogg’s, *NAACP: A History of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Volume I, 1909-1920* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 150.

must be tempered by balancing the uncertainty of the future with the measured ability to take action.²⁹

However, Du Bois' anniversary editorial reiterated his increasingly brazen efforts to distance the magazine from the NAACP and to secure complete editorial and production autonomy from the very organization *The Crisis* had been created to serve. Du Bois' public clamouring for independence was neither the first or last underestimation of the NAACP's role and purpose in aiding his efforts. In spite of his success at increasing circulation and bringing tens of thousands of new members into the organization, resentments arose over Du Bois increasingly iconoclastic attitudes towards *The Crisis* and its relationship with and responsibilities to the parent organization. The rivalries that emerged throughout the mid-1910s, the fierce battles among key members of the board over the purpose and politics of the magazine played a tremendous role in defining the organizational and leadership hierarchy of the NAACP. Du Bois' contentious and unilateral reign as editor of *The Crisis* in the mid-1910s undermined the virtue of cross-racial cooperation he had evoked in his 1905 proposal. More significantly, the outcomes of these power struggles accelerated Du Bois' authority and status as a cultural icon, heightened his scepticism regarding the inevitable racial dynamics involved in working with white philanthropists, and reasserted his omnipotence as a singular public intellectual. His successes over NAACP rivals empowered him with both the right and the opportunity to define for all of America through his magazine the essential characteristics of a burgeoning Black Aesthetic. Despite recurring financial and ideological challenges that haunted Du Bois constantly throughout the three decades

²⁹ Ibid., 28. Even in 1912, Du Bois articulated for his readers a clear goal for the magazine, a target by which the goal could be achieved, and a realistic measure of optimism that Negro Americans alone could ensure this goal would be met. 'When once *The Crisis* can reach a circulation of 50,000 its permanence and independence are assured. Until it can there must always be the element of doubt as to whether such a magazine can command the requisite support. We believe it can. The experience of the first two years is more than encouraging'. Privately, Du Bois warned the Association's Board that since competition could threaten the magazine's monopoly at any moment, his goal was to build an indispensable publication that could meet any competition. See also Kellogg, *NAACP*, 150.

he worked to fulfil this vision, his enthusiasm for and commitment to create an authentically Negro journal rarely wavered.

Rivals, Race Strategy, and the NAACP Power Struggle

In his Pulitzer Prize winning biography, historian David Levering Lewis offered the most succinct and insightful interpretation as to why a persistent power struggle emerged between the magazine, its celebrity editor, and the organization whose ideas it had been created to serve.

The Crisis was to remain a paradox from its inception—a self-financing publication whose freewheeling, militant editor was expected to advance policies of an organization guided by the careful decisions of a board of directors. With Du Bois formally answerable to the NAACP board, on which he sat as one of the thirty directors, paradox was compounded by anomaly. It was as though the first and last links in the NAACP chain of command connected to form a circle. A good portion of the trouble derived from the fact that the association was in its infancy, its tactics of protest still inchoate, and its bureaucratic structures still evolving.³⁰

Du Bois seized full advantage of the NAACP's power vacuum and organizational uncertainty. As a member of the board which also ultimately held him accountable as its employee for his work as editor, Du Bois rebutted orders or suggestions made by individual members or small factions concerned by Du Bois' increasing authority over *The Crisis* and within the NAACP. Tensions mounted from the onset of Du Bois' arrival in the summer of 1910, escalated as the popularity of the magazine increased, and exploded in March, 1913 during a monumental clash between Du Bois, and then, chairman of the board, Oswald Villard. Son of a railroad tycoon, Villard had inherited *The Nation* from his father in 1900 and transformed it into a vastly popular, liberally-oriented publication devoted to contemporary politics and

³⁰ Lewis, Biography of a Race, 470. The NAACP's early organizational struggles are also detailed more broadly in Kellogg's, NAACP, 19-45.

cultural affairs. Due in part to his overwhelming success as a magazine owner and editor, Villard clashed frequently with Du Bois over the purpose, content, and management of *The Crisis* throughout his three year (1911-1914) tenure as chairman. Predictably, Villard, unaccustomed to being challenged about his authority or expertise in how one should operate a magazine or having that challenge expressed by a person of colour, assumed the role of chief rival to Du Bois.³¹ He represented a growing faction of board members concerned with the disconnect between the organization's political agenda and its communication medium and intent on curtailing Du Bois editorial autonomy, and thus, his ability to control and shape the ideological message of the entire organization.

Villard and his allies expressed serious concerns about what they viewed as an alienating political ethos of *The Crisis*. Some believed that Du Bois had stepped too far when he utilized his editorial pages to endorse militant self-defence against white mob rule or to convey provocative attitudes toward social equality, both provocations that Du Bois justified as efforts to instil a feeling of racial pride among his readers.³² Board members feared Du Bois' radical editorial positions stirred deep resentment in whites, in general, and raised suspicions among sympathetic white supporters of the NAACP. As Du Bois and the NAACP became increasingly synonymous with one another, '(t)he national image of the NAACP and the writings of Du Bois were frequently merged in the public mind, a political reality that often created tensions inside the Association'. Based upon the fiery and controversial editorials from Du Bois that appeared more frequently and grew increasingly more radical, one major source of that tension 'was the common perception that Du Bois hated all whites'.³³

³¹ The source of conflict between Villard and Du Bois centred upon disputes about the organisation of power and leadership and began at the conception of the NAACP with a disagreement over the size of and who should be included among the 'Committee of Forty'. See Kellogg, NAACP, 20-21; 30.

³² Rampersad, The Art and Imagination, 145.

³³ Manning Marable. W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 122.

With little real power designated directly to the chair of the board by the NAACP bylaws, Villard, nonetheless, challenged Du Bois' insistence upon exercising unilateral authority over *The Crisis* in March, 1913, declaring that neither he, nor the board he presumed to speak for in its entirety, could continue to work with Du Bois under these circumstances. Du Bois' written response, genteel yet resolute, spoke volumes about how he viewed himself and his responsibilities to the board.

All I ask . . . is reasonable initiative and independence in carrying out my part of the work. I count myself not as your subordinate but as a fellow officer. Any suggestions made to me by you will always receive careful attention, but I decline to receive orders from anyone but the board. That any member of the board has a right to criticize my work or suggest amendment goes without saying, but the chairman of the board has, in my opinion, no right to imply in his criticism that my independence of action is a breach of discipline or a personal discourtesy to him.³⁴

A Villard letter to Joel Spingarn two days later insisted that 'there never was any personal feeling as far as Dr. Du Bois is concerned', and that this dispute was strictly organisational. Villard believed the Chairman of the Board of Trustees 'must exercise certain authority over the paid employees of the Board, whether they be editors or clerk', and that the controversy exemplified what happened 'when an association makes the mistake of putting a paid employee on the Board of Directors'.³⁵ Nevertheless, the underlying element of racial tension and inequality surely complicated Du Bois relationship with the chair. Villard, whose Southern wife refused to host Negro or Jewish guests at their home, represented the well-intentioned, but, in Du Bois' view, patronising white philanthropist intent on saving

³⁴ Memorandum from W.E.B. Du Bois to Oswald Villard, 18 March 1913. Oswald Garrison Villard Papers (MS Am 1323), Container 2666. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Du Bois also sent a copy of this memorandum to Joel Spingarn. See Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel E. Spingarn, 18 March 1913. Joel E. Spingarn Collection, MSS 11, Box 1, Folder 10. James Weldon Johnson Collection. Yale University.

³⁵ Letter from Oswald G. Villard to Joel S. Spingarn, 20 March 1913. Joel S. Spingarn Papers, Box 95-11, Folder 455. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

the Negro. Du Bois' insistence on cultivating an ethos of Negro self-reliance, personal empowerment, and racial pride reflected his belief that he alone carried the personal insight, social clout, and intellectual expertise to execute the Association's positions. His steadfast devotion to these principles compelled the board time and again to side with the nobility of Du Bois and acquiesce to his demands for editorial autonomy.

The Villard/Du Bois power struggle reached critical mass in December, 1913. With Villard unwilling to continue as chair until the bylaws clearly defined the position, Du Bois countered with three plans for reorganisation, all of which re-entrenched Du Bois' editorial independence from the Association but none of which were adopted by the Board.³⁶ Weary from constant confrontations and unable to sway the Board to insert checks and balances to offset Du Bois' growing power and influence, Villard resigned his chair in January, 1914, recognizing the relative powerlessness of his position to assert any real authority or influence the direction of the NAACP or its political organ.

Villard assumed the duties of NAACP treasurer and chair of the finance committee; however, he found himself still pitted against Du Bois, this time over what he viewed as 'wholly unbusinesslike' practices of *The Crisis*. Citing that the NAACP had 'no monthly statement setting forth the exact cost per issue and exact returns', 'no accurate advertising records', and no knowledge of 'what newsdealers are in arrears', Villard confessed to Spingarn that he could not confront Du Bois because he had 'no assurance that what I say will not be misunderstood and lead to my being charged with butting in, with being overbearing and all the rest of my category of sins.' Villard believed that at 'its present number of readers the Crisis ought to be supporting itself and paying Du Bois' salary' and 'not only pay for itself, but produced a good profit towards the support of the Association'.³⁷ If Villard's

³⁶ Kellogg, *NAACP*, 96-97.

³⁷ 'Letter from Oswald G. Villard to Joel E. Spingarn', 16 April 1914, 95/11/455. Joel E. Spingarn Papers. M-SRC, Howard University. By 3 November 1915, Villard, exasperated with Du Bois wrote

calculations were correct, Du Bois could have achieved financial independence as earlier as 1914. Ironically, Du Bois' reluctance to cooperate with Villard and his propensity to alienate anyone who challenged his authority may have prevented him from establishing the economic rationale he so desperately sought to ensure the editorial autonomy that alluded him. Du Bois proceeded with a series of deft political manoeuvres over the next two years that would further concentrate the board's authority and insulate him from future intrusions upon his management of *The Crisis*.

By the summer, Du Bois once again challenged the Board and took another bold step, centralizing and systematizing his power within the Association. Seeking to address the organization's poor management structure and absence of a clear chain of command or financial accountability, the Board approved, in July, 1914, new bylaws investing the chairman with full executive authority and the treasurer with audit powers over all association's departments, including *The Crisis*. Du Bois, recognizing that these changes would threaten his unilateral authority over his magazine, offered a counter-proposal: full powers should be vested in a new executive committee comprised of four members—chairman, treasurer, editor, and secretary, all equal in power. The original change in the bylaws had been meant to curtail Du Bois and offer the Board a greater say in daily operations and ideological direction of its political organ; however, the Board 'blinked and reversed itself, giving Du Bois exactly what he wanted—impunity to run his department through an executive quartet in which no member had more power than the others'.³⁸

Du Bois reigned as editor, and the real power of the NAACP was now concentrated among an executive committee that still lacked the authority to contain or direct him. From Du Bois' perspective, meetings of the entire Board, emblematic of the disarray and unpredictability provided by over 30 unique opinions attempting to influence the

to Spingarn that 'the National Association will never do its duty to itself until it removes a man of Dr. Du Bois' spirit from all connection with it'.

³⁸ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 484.

direction of the Association, would decrease. After the July reorganization, Du Bois had every reason to believe the lines of authority between the NAACP and *The Crisis* were more or less permanently disentangled. Du Bois accepted the splitting of the association's authority among himself, Spingarn, Villard (now serving as treasurer), NAACP national secretary May Childs Nerney, as far superior to any hierarchical arrangement that left him subservient and directly accountable to any members of the Board.³⁹ Eighteen months of struggle to retain control of *The Crisis* had left Du Bois, by the summer of 1914, still as powerful, only now that power to affect the ideological direction of the magazine had been formalized.

The unfettered independence to shape the ideology and aesthetic for Black America, to work in isolation and free of the burdens and limitations of others, however, never materialized. Naïvely, Du Bois' believed that his voice and vision carried greater authority and his moral imperative far more nobility than his Board counterparts; and Du Bois' belief that he should be left alone to run his magazine autocratically continued to be met with resistance, even now from his close friend and new NAACP chair, Joel Spingarn. Villard's on-going queries into Du Bois' business practices compelled Spingarn to question the effectiveness of the editor's fiscal faculties. A 26 September letter from Spingarn rejected Du Bois' proposal regarding essential reduction of *Crisis* expenses.⁴⁰ By 12 October, after months of exchanges involving disputes over actual rent costs at the magazine's new Fifth Avenue location, Villard wrote Du Bois requesting a 'detailed statement of all the indebtedness of *The Crisis*'.⁴¹ Ten days later, Spingarn responded to Du Bois statement to the Treasurer, citing two discrepancies with the report that confirmed at least some of Villard's suspicions. First, Spingarn claimed Du Bois had over-estimated the actual rent expenses from the magazine's previous offices at 26 Vesey Street, which minimized the 100 percent increase the Association had actually

³⁹ Ibid., 490.

⁴⁰ Letter from Joel E. Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, 26 September 1914. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, Reel 4, Frame 1067.

⁴¹ Letter from Oswald G. Villard to W.E.B. Du Bois, 12 October 1914. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, Reel 4, Frame 1071.

assumed with the Fifth Avenue relocation. Subsequently, Spingarn took issue with Du Bois' rationale that the relocation was necessary for its location near area post offices, stating 'it would seem as if it were a serious error of judgment to have purchased so much "convenience" before the Crisis was wholly self-supporting'.⁴² He concluded by declaring that 'we are now confronted by an emergency which demands complete subordination of the wishes and inclinations of all of us to the central needs of the Association. . .'.⁴³

Spingarn's unequivocal proclamation that compromise and sacrifice were needed for the greater good struck an uneasy note with Du Bois. The following day, he penned three letters to Spingarn, the last, a hand-written and atypically personal plea that revealed Du Bois' insecurities about the status of their relationship.⁴⁴ Du Bois openly worried that he had 'become in some way an object of your [Spingarn's] suspicion' and now 'distinctly feel that you doubt my honesty'. He noted that in recent communications Spingarn had not met him 'frankly and openly as soul to soul but that rather you are saying: I must approach this fellow warily and cautiously watching for his dodging and deception.' He made every effort to reassure Spingarn that his primary objective was to support the NAACP, and reiterated that he desired 'the cooperation of all honest coworkers'. Most notably, however, the tone of Du Bois' letter, one of uncertain confidant, revealed how deeply he trusted Spingarn and relied upon his approval. Du Bois even acknowledged that 'I may be as I am often am ridiculously and indefensibly over-sensitive' but ended the letter pleading with Spingarn for reassurance: 'I do not often thus bother people with my private thoughts

⁴² Letter from Joel E. Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, 22 October 1914. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, Reel 4, Frame 1073.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See Letters from W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel E. Spingarn, 23 October 1914. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, Reel 4, Frames 1074-1075. Both letters are typewritten and address financial and editorial issues raised in Spingarn's 22 October letter—notably, a three-page reply to Spingarn's concern regarding discrepancies in his business accounts of *The Crisis*.

but in this case the feeling has become so poignant that it demanded—almost forced expression’.⁴⁵

Spingarn, however, was not predisposed to assuage Du Bois’ insecurities. Writing to Du Bois the following day, Spingarn asserted that Du Bois’ personal flaws had undermined his support on both micro and macro levels. Comparing him to great men he admired like Teddy Roosevelt, Spingarn noted that Du Bois possessed ‘an extraordinary unwillingness to acknowledge that you have made a mistake, even in trifles, and if accused of one, your mind will find or even invent reasons and quibbles of any kind to prove that you were never mistaken’, which in Spingarn’s view always surrounded Du Bois with ‘an atmosphere of antagonism’.⁴⁶ Spingarn, of course, made reference to his many conflicts with the executive board, particularly Villard and Nerney, and confided that the animosity Du Bois created had not been limited to the NAACP. ‘(I)t is in the whole colored world, and even some of your most intimate friends feel toward you a mingled affection and resentment’.⁴⁷ Spingarn rationalized the antagonism Du Bois created was, in part, due to a devotion to a principle that Du Bois himself had admitted that he ‘could never accept even the appearance of “inferiority” or “subserviency” without treason to the race ideals for which you fight, although in this matter it may be weakness rather than manliness to protest too much’. Spingarn claimed that others believed that the ideals they shared with Du Bois had nothing to do with the cause of their disagreement with your actions and your methods’ and that he mistook of ‘obstinacy for strength of character or at least strength of conviction, although it is indeed a very poor substitute for the art of managing men.’

Du Bois’ insistence that his superior perspective was always indisputable and beyond reproach drove his resistance to cooperation and subordination to the ideas of others

⁴⁵ Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel Spingarn, 23 October 1914. Joel E. Spingarn Collection, MSS 11, Box 1, Folder 10. James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University.

⁴⁶ Letter from Joel Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, 24 October 1914. Joel E. Spingarn Collection, MSS 11, Box 1, Folder 10. James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

was paramount to the conflicts he created. Spingarn hypothesized that Du Bois actually ‘preferred the wreck of the cause to the losing of some preferred point’ and that he misunderstood the causes of his many successes over the rivals who challenged him. ‘Perhaps’, Spingarn declared, ‘you may have imagined that your victory in many cases of dispute was due to successful argument or strength of character, but these men yielded to you for the reason that parents yield to spoilt children in company, for fear of creating a scene: they were less willing than you to wreck our cause before the colored world’. Spingarn likened Du Bois to a child a second time in his letter, claiming that in matters requiring cooperation, Du Bois ‘had to be approached with care and diplomacy, and made to do things by wheedling and questioning, as children are induced to do them’.

Essentially, Spingarn’s condemnation of Du Bois’ autocratic management and petulant personal tendencies served as warning to his friend concerning the growing unrest within the Association. Claiming that many board members viewed Du Bois as ‘the chief if not only source of the disorder and lack of unity in our organization’, Spingarn’s harsh and forthright letter had served notice to Du Bois about his rivals contentions ‘that the whole Association cannot work together effectively and without friction unless you are eliminated’. Spingarn reassured Du Bois about his exceptional and essential role (‘you are needed in this work as much as any man in the world’ and ‘come to this cause with a high purpose and a noble mind’) in the NAACP’s cause, even rationalizing that Du Bois’ acerbic and contentious temperament was the result of ‘all that has been urged against you’; however, Spingarn sided with Du Bois’ critics and demanded he concede his insistence on complete editorial independence. As NAACP chairman, Spingarn believed Du Bois represented the single most important factor in the success or failure of the organization, and his letter represented a stern plea for Du Bois to change or else:

(W)e cannot go on unless your talents are subordinated to the general welfare of the whole organization, and the rift between the various departments of the Association is closed once and for all. There can be no *Crisis* and no non-

Crisis; that way of dividing work has failed; both must be one. You must co-operate with us, as we are all anxious to co-operate with you . . . If you are not willing to espouse our cause whole-heartedly as one with your own, I am afraid that the Association is doomed.⁴⁸

Buoyed by both his rapid ascent to the status of African America's pre-eminent public intellectual and his success a year earlier in out-manoeuvring Villard's challenge to his authority, Du Bois' reply four days later initially welcomed Spingarn's criticisms.⁴⁹ The letter, however, quickly proceeded to dissect everything misguided about Spingarn's assessment of the relationship between magazine and organization, exposed his misunderstandings about Du Bois' personality and actions, and ultimately called Spingarn's bluff about the possibility of his removal from the Association.

Du Bois repeatedly justified Spingarn's miscalculations of his personality flaws by separating them from his persona. '(Y)ou are quite mistaken', Du Bois protested, 'to think me obstinate and acting from personal likes and dislikes', excusing his personality as a necessary product to achieving the higher cause of creating an authentic Negro journal. 'I do want a chance to do a big piece of work. I hate to see my plans spoiled in detail when I know that those who are spoiling them would be enthusiastic if they understood thoroughly my aim'.⁵⁰ For Du Bois his personality weaknesses were a direct consequence of the deficiencies of others, their inability to comprehend the depth of his devotion, and Du Bois' own history with working with others who could not grasp the complexity of his vision: 'Always in the past I have

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Letter from W.E. B. Du Bois to Joel Spingarn, 28 October 1914. Joel E. Spingarn Collection, MSS 11, Box 1, Folder 10. James Weldon Johnson Collection. Yale University. Du Bois admitted to Spingarn: 'Some of the criticism, I think, is fair. . . the spirit of the letter is right and that, after all is the chief thing.' After a long diatribe that justified both his management style and personality flaws as well as his insistence on maintaining his independence, he concluded, 'when the time comes that the Association or any considerable part of it think that I am in the way it will not take any "scene" to get rid of me'.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

been hampered and stopped so many times because good friends not seeing the big ideal thought me petty and opinionated’.

Du Bois refused to take responsibility for his failure to communicate his ‘big ideals’ to others and argued that this management dynamic had been realised once again. ‘What I ask now is not obstinate independence but a reasonable chance to finish the big thing which is now scarcely begun; and what I fear is that little criticisms and annoyances and interferences will spoil the big result simply because people lose faith in my ability and integrity’.⁵¹ Privately or in print, whenever Du Bois battled board members for absolute control over *The Crisis*, he bolstered his argument with a not so subtle reminder of the most noble and idealistic mission of the magazine, approved by the board at its inception: ‘The great ideal of establishing in the United States a dignified and authoritative organ of public opinion which should stand for the fundamental principles of American democracy’.⁵² Du Bois attributed the independence granted him to run *The Crisis* was given only ‘because so many were certain that I would fail’, and his insistence upon retaining autonomy was not a function of his disdain for others, but a reflection of his commitment to realization the dream for a truly Negro journal. Pleading with Spingarn to mitigate the influence of his detractors, Du Bois proclaimed that *The Crisis* ‘can be one of the great journals of the world. It can be a center of enterprise and co-operation such as black folk have not themselves dreamed. But for heaven’s sakes let me do the work. Do not hamper and bind and criticize in little matters’.⁵³ Ironically, Du Bois could not be bothered with others while creating a centre of cooperation. Even while admitting ‘there are imperfections, mistakes, shortcomings . . .’, Du Bois insisted that ‘the whole big plan which is developing slowly and surely is not imperfect and is not a mistake’. Spingarn and others needed only to overlook the petty misunderstandings and missteps and simply trust the talented Du Bois and his vision.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. ‘*The Crisis* and the NAACP’. *The Crisis* 11 (November 1915), 27.

⁵³ Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel Spingarn, 28 October 1914. Joel E. Spingarn Collection, MSS 11, Box 1, Folder 10. James Weldon Johnson Collection. Yale University.

More significantly, Du Bois' letter revealed precisely how he viewed the relationship between political organization and political organ, a dynamic which assuredly would not have been accepted by the vast majority of his fellow board members. Again justifying his insistence for unfettered editorial leeway, Du Bois contended: 'What I am working for with *The Crisis* is to make the N.A.A.C.P. *possible*. To-day it is *not possible*'. Du Bois argued that the only way to free ten million African Americans, to unleash the power and organization of their number on a national scale was through education, and unsurprisingly, Du Bois confessed his magazine was uniquely qualified for the mission. '. . . *The Crisis* can train them: not simply in its words, but in its manner, its pictures, its conception of life, its subsidiary enterprises. With a circulation of a hundred thousand we shall have begun work. Then the real machinery of the N.A.A.C.P can be perfected'.

Du Bois deftly countered Spingarn's accusations of disorganization, hindrance, and the lack of co-operation by extolling the virtues of his role of editor and NAACP commander-in-chief. While most board members would have been appalled at Du Bois' claims that the journal had created the organization it represented, circulation figures and the success of *The Crisis* in increasing NAACP membership rolls certainly lent credence to his assertion. Du Bois could contend, without being routinely dismissed as an egomaniac, that the magazine's exponential success validated the high esteem in which Du Bois held both the importance of *The Crisis* and his role as editor in ensuring the immediate success and long-term viability of the Association.

Du Bois' most eloquent and effective argument to undermine the legitimacy of the Board's concerns focused on how race complicated and limited the way interracial groups could be led and managed. Confounded by Spingarn's naïveté regarding the apparent ease of fostering cooperation and understanding among whites and black, Du Bois insisted: 'No organization like ours ever succeeded in America; either it became a group of white philanthropists "helping" the Negro like the Anti-Slavery societies; or it became a group of colored folk freezing out their white co-workers by

insolence and distrust. Everything tends to break along the color line'. Reflecting some of the lingering disenchantment associated with the demise of the Negro-only Niagara Movement, Du Bois' scepticism regarding interracial organizations with financial inequities amongst its member ran deep. Du Bois insisted that he had been trying 'to work out a plan in this organization for colored and white people to work together on the same level of authority and co-operation'; and that its failure 'will not be due to my obstinacy or intractability—it will be due to the color line'. Based on his own experiences, Du Bois maintained that interracial collaboration was impossible, that 'in America colored and white people cannot work in the same office and at the same tasks except when one is in authority over the other'. To avoid the dilemma Du Bois would have viewed as the inevitable and inherent imbalance of power prevalent in an interracial NAACP, he explained to Spingarn that his insistence on editorial independence was in fact a conscious leadership strategy that would benefit the organization as a whole. '. . . I've tried to see if we could not have two branches of the same work, one with a white head {presumably the Association at-large} and one with a colored {*The Crisis*}; working in harmony and sympathy for one end'. Du Bois' strategy of 'separate but equal' (a concept that, politically, Du Bois had abhorred and denounced throughout his career) contradicted essential principles of the NAACP's mission to promote interracial cooperation and collaboration to fight the injustices committed against Negroes in the United States. More likely, Du Bois' haphazard rationale reflected his desperate attempt to justify his personal priority of creating an exemplary Negro journal and assuage his antagonists who condemned Du Bois for alienating board members simply to secure operational autonomy for *The Crisis*. Du Bois appeared convinced that that his singular and autocratic leadership style, even if it alienated others, intended only to insure that the centre of authority within the NAACP would be 'colored' and reflect his vision. In sharp contrast to the 1905 vision of inter-racial collaboration, Du Bois now insisted that *The Crisis*, if it were to fulfil its mission, must be shaped only by a single black voice, his own.

Du Bois admitted that ‘the connecting and unifying power between the two branches has not been found’ and proffered that the solution might not lie in his separate but equal division, but that ‘(p)erhaps it must eventually be one man rather than, as I had hoped, a committee’, a view that foreshadowed his concerted effort to seize total control of the NAACP in late 1915. By the end of the letter, Du Bois chastised Spingarn for not recognizing the impact of ‘the inevitable American rift of the color line.’ Even as Du Bois admitted that ‘(p)erhaps I realize it {the colour line} over-much’, he still demanded from Spingarn ‘a full man’s chance to complete a work without chains and petty hampering’, ironically invoking the literal and constitutional (14th Amendment) legacies of slavery. Du Bois evoked race purposefully and interjected the legacy slavery as a means of shaming white board members to equate the actions they threatened against him with the imposition of will and force to deny freedom to those who had been enslaved. Du Bois reprimanded Spingarn and the Board for its ignorance of the colour line that created racial double standards, claiming that in the white world, a man of ability and integrity was given ‘the right to make mistakes if the final result is big enough to justify his effort’ and ‘(t)he colored man gets no such chance’. Without authority or freedom to manage independently, black leaders remained vulnerable to whites who persistently distrusted them. According to Du Bois, ‘(e)ven when his ability is patent it is “inexpedient” to trust him; the solution Du Bois offered to shifting this oppressive paradigm was as simple as it was applicable to ensuring he retained his current standing within the Association: ‘By changing it. By trusting black men with power’.⁵⁴

Although Du Bois expressed no reluctance about utilizing race as a means of securing his independence to edit *The Crisis*, David Levering Lewis observed that ‘Spingarn absolutely failed to see the logic of Du Bois’ contention that the NAACP couldn’t “fetter him in any way because it is important that a colored man should have the opportunity to acquire authority”. The growing unpopularity of Du Bois,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

within the organization and nationally, might be attributed in some cases to professional jealousies, in others to what Spingarn called his ‘tactless temperament’;⁵⁵ however, Spingarn recognized that Du Bois had to be protected from himself and his kamikaze leadership style. NAACP patrons had grown weary of Du Bois throughout the early 1910s, and even if Spingarn’s letter to Du Bois can be read as an intervention from a friend who respected Du Bois, but feared his choices might accelerate his demise, Du Bois offered no indication that he would alter either his acerbic, obstinate approach or his relentless pursuit of unregulated management of the magazine, characteristics that by the mid-1920s would come to represent the foundation of an emerging black aesthetic.⁵⁶

Spingarn’s letter had challenged Du Bois to cooperate, to realign his ideological views expressed in the NAACP’s political organ with the Board’s, or else be considered responsible for the demise of the NAACP. What Du Bois astutely recognized, both by his direct and written response to Spingarn’s reprimand and by the effectiveness of his indirect and deft political manipulation of the Board from 1910-1916 was that he held all the cards and that the fate of the Association was within his control. Spingarn understood Du Bois’ literal and symbolic power to the NAACP, the Board recognized the risk of parting ways with its most recognizable face, and ultimately, Du Bois believed that that he could and should continue his wilful defiance of the Board and edit his magazine with impunity. The audacity that Du Bois maintained in alienating others reflected an unwavering belief that Board’s threats were idle and what he contributed to the success of the NAACP made him indispensable and inimitable.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 496.

⁵⁶ Mary White Ovington joined Spingarn in direct efforts to warn Du Bois of the mounting opposition towards him within the Association. Writing to Spingarn ten days after Du Bois’ 28 October letter, Ovington revealed that she had warned Du Bois that some Board members hoped to oust him as director and editor, suggesting that he temper his speeches and articles to avoid endangering his position. See Letter from Mary White Ovington to Joel E. Spingarn, 7 November 1914. The Joel E. Spingarn Papers, Box 95-9, Folder 352. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Spingarn and Du Bois' rivals continued to press for change and diminish Du Bois' power within the Association. For the next fifteen months, Du Bois continued to wield the power of his status as the face of the NAACP to out flank his opponents at every turn. By December 1914, Spingarn had garnered enough Board support to reverse Du Bois' initial efforts to institutionalize his unrivalled authority and dissolve the executive committee created earlier that summer. Du Bois, recognizing the turning tide, traded his support for abolishing the executive committee in return for the Board's willingness to incorporate the magazine separately from the Association, establish a special *Crisis* fund that only he managed, and create a *Crisis* committee to oversee his editorship consisting of the chairman and two other board members, one of which would be his most loyal ally and NAACP co-founder, Mary White Ovington.⁵⁷ Ironically, the Board's efforts to curtail Du Bois' power left the organization's maverick to act with even greater autonomy. By incorporating *The Crisis*, the Board had established a formal and legal mechanism that separated the NAACP's monthly from the operations of its parent organization, accelerated Du Bois' quixotic and solitary mission to create the great American Negro journal, and fortified both Du Bois' insurgency and his rapidly escalating status as political and cultural icon.

The turmoil that surrounded Du Bois and his insistence upon complete aesthetic independence hampered the NAACP's efforts to define and streamline its organizational structure throughout the 1910s. Leadership vacuums, poorly defined and constantly amended bylaws, and organizational strife impeded collaboration and remained largely unresolved; however, the controversies consistently resolved to placate Du Bois reiterated that he was, without question, indispensable and irreplaceable. Du Bois eventually began to challenge the Board proactively to assert and reassert his authority whenever he felt threatened or impeded by others, rationalizing his autocratic leadership of the magazine as a measured and necessary response to power imbalances inherent in white-black collaborations. In December

⁵⁷ 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors', 1 December 1914. NAACP Papers, Reel 1, Frames 311-314.

1915, Du Bois declared the compromise he accepted a year earlier to disband the executive committee in favour of incorporation, unfair, arguing: ‘Since then, however, the “supervisory” authority of the chairman had stealthily become more intrusive, threatening to stand between the editor and the board’. Du Bois cried foul against those who now wished to see him acquiesce to the will of the Board. ““This Association knew who I was before it appointed me; it knew my ideas and personality.” He had not come to the NAACP “as a clerk”. He came as an executive “with power and direction””.⁵⁸

At the monthly board meeting on 13 December, Du Bois arrived fully prepared to resign if the Association did not accommodate his demands.⁵⁹ The board abandoned the chairman (Spingarn), ‘voting that it would be “inexpedient” to issue commands to Du Bois. Spingarn exploded, submitting his resignation as chairman. In the wake of the decision, Executive Secretary May Childs Nerney resigned in late December, and Du Bois proposed that he could alleviate the NAACP’s organizational troubles by filling Nerney’s vacant position, while retaining his post at *The Crisis*. Du Bois’ overt power play to seize total control of the Association backfired. ‘The prospect of an NAACP dominated by Du Bois galvanized the opposition’, and the Board insisted someone other than Du Bois fill Nerney’s vacated position.⁶⁰

Some critics, notably Harlem Renaissance scholar Arnold Rampersad, have argued that throughout his 24 years as editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois ‘clashed at one time or

⁵⁸ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 499.

⁵⁹ Du Bois’ had utilized the strategy of threatening resignation as a political maneuver in previous endeavors. Francis L. Broderick acknowledged that in 1907, an internal power struggle among Niagara Movement founders Clement Morgan and William Monroe Trotter ‘led Du Bois to threaten resignation when the executive committee failed to support his decision between the two’. Regarding his own agenda ‘as the only one worthy of acceptance’, Du Bois’ first biographer professed that Du Bois regularly insisted on having his way and was accustomed to being accommodated. See Broderick, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 79.

⁶⁰ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 499-500. Ironically, Du Bois pursuit of the Executive Secretary’s position appeared to fulfill the prophecy he had made to Spingarn in his letter of 28 October 1914 about the possibility that one man, not a committee, might be needed to unify what Du Bois labeled the two branches of the NAACP.

another with practically everyone with whom he worked' and 'created needless antagonisms among both his fellow workers and "the whole colored world"', leading even his closest friends to regard him with "mingled affection and resentment".⁶¹ If Du Bois 'needlessly' alienated others as he attempted to merge the roles of editor and NAACP Executive Secretary in order consolidate his power and insulate him from the control and oversight of others, it might not have been driven by the ambition to lead a greater cause. Du Bois professed at the time to close friends and throughout his life that he never desired to lead a civil rights organization. 'Just as he protested that his Niagara Movement role had distracted him from scholarship and taxed his personality, he insisted that he wanted only to be left alone to run *The Crisis*', and proclaimed to his old friend Butler Wilson in January, 1916 that there was no use in trying to be a popular leader and he "never had a desire to lead the NAACP".⁶² To accept Du Bois at his word, the political manoeuvring, persistent power plays, and protests for independence that defined his relationship with the NAACP throughout the 1910s were little more than necessary evils that intruded upon his devotion to producing a black cultural medium unlike any other in history.

Du Bois aspired to be, foremost, an intellectual, and inferred that he had been forced into political manoeuvring to resist serving the NAACP exclusively as a propagandist. After five years as editor, Du Bois viewed collaboration as meddlesome, and feared the moderate views of well-meaning white philanthropists might undermine his ability to produce a journal that represented a true vision of the promise and perils of African Americans. The perpetual struggle for editorial control within the Association may have convinced Du Bois of 'the racial or moral necessity to assume command of institutional tasks that he would otherwise have wished to renounce'.⁶³ If so, these editorial clashes proved to be essential historical experiences that Du Bois drew upon during his mercurial pursuit to define a black aesthetic during the 1920s. *The Crisis* provided Du Bois with the unique opportunity

⁶¹ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 135.

⁶² Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 468.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

to create an authentic cultural medium; however, his clashes with the NAACP board and constant struggles to retain complete editorial and managerial control fostered scepticism about the future of white/black collaborations. In sharp contrast to the 1905 opinions he shared with Jacob Schiff, Du Bois came to believe that blacks must occupy positions of leadership and retain ultimate authority in the quest to achieve racial justice and convey an accurate representation of the Negro experience.

By 1916, W.E.B. Du Bois had become the most influential African American in the United States, without a political or intellectual equal who could have challenged his authority, offered sound counsel during crisis, or fostered the development of his intellectual positions as the world around him evolved. With the United States government poised to engage in a global military conflict, Du Bois had no way to gauge the extent to which his views, his truth, represented the voice and the vision authentic African American culture. Certainly, Du Bois' unrivalled omnipotence left him profoundly self-assured in the righteousness of his vision for the magazine and its cultural and political agenda; however, while it was not in his nature to doubt his capacity, his myopia, heightened by the meteoric rise of *The Crisis* and his ascendancy within the NAACP, left him increasingly out of touch and ill-equipped to utilize his influence to serve the common needs and represent the cultural values of African Americans. His mercurial editorials about African American support of the Great War would challenge the legitimacy of his political leadership and diminish his efficacy in securing civil rights for all African Americans and shaping an authentic Black Aesthetic.

Chapter Two: ‘Nationalizing the Black Aesthetic, Politicizing the New Negro: The Evolution of Purpose and Persona in Du Bois’ “Great War” Editorials’

As founding editor of the NAACP’s magazine *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois ushered forth an unprecedented national expansion of black activism and political journalism. In part due to his role as Director of Publicity and Research, the NAACP claimed 300 branches and 88,448 members, nationally, while the circulation of *The Crisis*, which had already exceeded 41,000 in 1917, increased by over 70 per cent (70,000 monthly sales) before the end of the World War I.¹ Many of these new readers were born and came of age in the American South and had been staunch supporters of Booker T. Washington until his death in 1915; however, the Great Migration of the 1910s and the escalating racial inequality under the Wilson administration, exacerbated by America’s entry into a foreign war in the name of protecting democracy, had radicalized many conservative African Americans.

The opinions Du Bois expressed about World War I in editorials and articles he authored from 1914-1919 reflected dramatic ideological revisions that, to some degree, were influenced by both rapidly changing global politics as well as emerging personal conflicts of interest. His early editorials published before the United States entered the war examined the conflict ideologically and recognized that the Great War might ensure the rise of a ‘Negro civilization’ and a Black Aesthetic whose human values and cultural mores could replace a hypocritical Western hegemony that now destroyed lives and condoned unspeakable atrocities. Once US intervention became inevitable, Du Bois’ moral and philosophical concerns turned pragmatic and, somewhat surprisingly, conservative. By 1917, he deviated from his political radicalism and supported Joel Spingarn’s efforts to establish a segregated officer camp to train black officers. While the Espionage and Sedition Acts may have compelled him to buffer his radicalism during the war, Du Bois’ private pursuit of a military captaincy, a position requiring expressions of loyalty to the US government,

¹ Adolph Reed, Jr. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 97.

may also explain why he betrayed his history of revolutionary thought. Throughout 1918, Du Bois encouraged his readers to ‘close ranks’ and pursue long-term social and economic change by working from within a segregated system that had oppressed African Americans for generations; however, the extent to which his mollified political ideology reflected a genuine response to changing political contexts or a compromised hubris that justified using his intellectual platform for personal gain remains a vital, yet often neglected, historical consideration.

Once the United States declared war, Du Bois endorsed a status quo-tolerant position that encouraged full African American participation in a segregated military. By 1919, however, he unleashed fervent, anti-war condemnations of the US War Department and their oppressive treatment of Negro soldiers who had served. Many scholars have highlighted these later editorials as significant contributions that shaped the emergence of the ‘New Negro’ as a direct and militant response to the tragic injustices that occurred in the aftermath of World War I and the 1919 American race riots; however, this chapter investigates the personal and opportunistic motivations that held some sway over Du Bois’ ambivalent attitudes about the Great War expressed in *The Crisis*. Du Bois’ dramatic reversal of opinion from 1918 to 1919, from self-styled patriotic support of US intervention to African America’s most vocal critic of the US military, threatened to undermine his reputation as one of African America’s most respected editors and revered public figures. Moreover, the strategy he utilized to salvage his place as African America’s foremost intellectual leader has had unique historical and cultural consequences that have not yet been fully explored. His conscientious efforts to rehabilitate his public credibility by idealizing the common Negro experience and reconnecting with the ‘other 90 percent’ produced writings that documented and defined the emerging New Negro persona, formalized and radicalized his/her political identity, and established the philosophical cornerstones of what would become, by the mid-1920s, a new Black Aesthetic.

Controversy over African American Involvement in WWI

Du Bois' early editorials regarding the mounting war in Europe and Africa reflected a tone of hope and possibility, often providing his readers with a rationale for why this global conflict harkened the rise of Negro civilization. Initially, Du Bois appeared intent on interpreting the political and military battle as a sign of an impending cultural revolution, arguing that philosophically and anthropologically, African Americans should support England, France, and, eventually the United States. As early as 1914, Du Bois encouraged African Americans to take the threat of war seriously and rally in support of England and France. In his first editorial, Du Bois warned readers that presuming the present war was far removed from the colour problem of America was a grievous mistake. 'The present war in Europe', he declared, 'is one of the great disasters due to race and color prejudice and it but foreshadows greater disasters in the future'.² He claimed the war was a 'wild quest for Imperial expansion among colored races between Germany, England, and France . . .' driven by 'a theory of inferiority of the darker peoples and a contempt for their rights and aspirations' which has 'become all but universal in the greatest centers of modern culture'; all of which posed an indirect, and potentially direct, threat to African Americans. Certainly, this theory of inferiority he attributed to Germany was nothing dramatically different than what white Americans routinely practiced in the Jim Crow South. However, while he acknowledged England was primarily responsible for American slavery, Du Bois argued that 'the salvation of England is that she has the ability to learn from her mistakes', and proclaimed that no nation was fairer in its treatment of darker peoples.³ He acknowledged that England was 'not yet just, and she still nourishes much disdain for colored races, erects contemptible and humiliating political and social barriers and steals their land and labor; but as compared with Germany, England is an angel of light'. For Du Bois, African Americans who feared race prejudice as 'the greatest of War-markers', must lend support for the allies, not because France and Britain 'have conquered race prejudice, but they have at least begun to realize its cost and evil, while Germany

² W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. 'World War and the Color Line.' *The Crisis* 9 (November 1914): 28.

³ *Ibid.*, 29.

exalts it'. As the lesser of great evils, Du Bois implored readers to sympathize with those nations 'whose triumph will most tend to postpone if not to make unnecessary a world war of races'.⁴

Two years later, as the death toll mounted and American intervention became a possibility, Du Bois challenged his readers to recognize that the atrocities of the Great War signalled the end of so called Western civilization's pre-eminence and its proclivities for racism, sexism, and caste systems. In dramatic fashion, Du Bois interpreted the atrocities that continued throughout Europe as both a cultural apocalypse and, potentially, an opportunity for the end of oppression: 'Well, civilization has met its Waterloo. We have read of attacks by gas, of raids on non-fortified towns, of Zeppelins dropping bombs on women and children . . . events that presaged the advent of emancipation for European women, the demise of monarchies, and the advance of true Socialism'.⁵ Culturally, Du Bois proclaimed the monstrosities of war not only undermined the hegemony of Western values, politically, but also provided evidence to empower African Americans to reject the implied superiority of a white, European aesthetic and embrace new values. 'Honor', Du Bois confirmed, 'has had no meaning for us in this land of inconstant laws' and should now be viewed from a new perspective. Regarding aesthetics, Du Bois emphasized the vitality and authenticity of the indigenous, that a return to 'old standards of beauty beckon us again, not the blue-eyed, white skinned types which are set before us in school and literature but rich, brown and black men and women with glowing dark eyes and crinkling hair'. Du Bois rationalized that 'the war has shown us the cruelty of the civilization of the West' and the end of European cultural hegemony should be met with the acceptance of a Negro aesthetic to fill the cultural vacuum.⁶ Citing music as an example, Du Bois claimed that the political consequences of the Great War exemplified moral and aesthetic hypocrisy and should alter how people interpret the beauty of indigenous Negro art. '(W)ith the

⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. 'The Battle of Europe'. *The Crisis* 12 (September 1916): 216.

⁶ Ibid., 217.

disappearance of those *effete* ideals', Du Bois declared, 'comes the assurance that the plantation song is more in unison with the "harmony of the spheres" than Wagner's greatest triumph'. By denouncing the cruelty of European civilizations as hypocritical to the cultural mores of their civilizations, Du Bois justified the legitimacy of Negro civilization as both superior and aligned with democratic and humanitarian values. In claiming a mandate for Negro America to usher forth authentic cultural values and a new era for civilization, Du Bois advocated, 'Let ours be the civilization of no *man*, but of *all men*. This is the truth that sets us free'.⁷ Du Bois would enthusiastically welcome Wilson's decision to enter the Great War in April, 1917. The sooner the rotten edifice of racism and class exploitation crumbled, the sooner the world would be bathed, as Du Bois eloquently illuminated, in a 'golden hue that harks back to the heritage of Africa and the tropics'.⁸

Once American entry into the global conflict appeared inevitable, Du Bois' editorial commentary took on a decidedly pragmatic approach in evaluating African American prospects for actively securing equality, justice, and cultural legitimacy. Recounting the history of the African American experience as a persistent dilemma of recognizing and choosing the lesser of evils, Du Bois' April editorial, 'The Perpetual Dilemma', defended Joel Spingarn's proposal to build a segregated training camp for Negro military officers. Much of the black press, particularly newspapers in Chicago, Baltimore, and Cleveland, had denounced the initiative; however, since the US government had expressed grave concerns about allowing any kind of African American military participation, Du Bois argued: 'We must choose then between the insult of a separate camp and the irreparable injury of strengthening the present custom of putting no black men in positions of authority'.⁹ Although the dilemma echoed his own struggles with asserting black authority as editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois, often unwilling to acquiesce in his own affairs, justified his

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ David Levering Lewis. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1993), 525-526.

⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. 'The Perpetual Dilemma'. *The Crisis* 13 (April 1917): 270.

endorsement of compromise by not only claiming that the US Army does not want the camp at all, but also that Spingarn's training program was 'designed to FIGHT, not encourage discrimination in the army'.¹⁰ With conscription seemingly inevitable, Du Bois contended that the debates within African American intellectual circles about the merits and flaws of voluntary military service among Negroes would soon be academic, and the new dilemma will be 'conscription or rebellion'. Ever the pragmatist, Du Bois actively promoted Spingarn's idea as one that offered drafted black troops at least a remote chance of being led by their peers.

In June, Du Bois continued to fight his increasingly vocal media critics in the pages of *The Crisis*. 'Officers' began with a bold declaration: 'Give us Negro officers for Negro troops'.¹¹ Du Bois argued that justice demanded for Negroes to be admitted to civilian officer training camps on the same terms as white men; however, since that would not occur, a segregated camp would be a better option than no black leadership training whatsoever. Du Bois decried that neither he nor Spingarn supported 'Jim Crow' regiments and lamented that their support for such a measure placed them in a position where opposition cried foul no matter how they proceeded. 'If we organize separately for anything—"Jim Crow!" scream all the Disconsolate; if we organize with white people—"Traitors! Pressure! They're betraying us!" yell all the Suspicious'.¹² To compromise or do nothing created backlash, which Du Bois believed left him vulnerable to criticism no matter his position. Du Bois' submission to accept a segregated officer camp appeared far out of character for the man who built his reputation through militant editorials that rejected segregation and fostered black empowerment; however, his willingness to overlook the larger moral dilemma by embracing the lesser of two evils and encourage African Americans to accept a compromise that perpetuated an unjust social and political system, stemmed, at least in part, from his personal stake in Spingarn's project.

¹⁰ Ibid., 271.

¹¹ W.E.B. Du Bois. Editorial. 'Officers'. *The Crisis* 14 (June 1917): 60.

¹² Ibid., 61.

Three weeks before the printing deadline for the April issue of the magazine, Du Bois had received a letter from Joel Spingarn informing him about the creation of an officer training camp for African Americans, a project that Spingarn had initiated three months before the declaration of war and without consultation with NAACP board. The idea had gained traction through private conversations with Spingarn's Dutchess County, New York neighbour, General Leonard Wood, who mentioned the War Department might approve such a camp if he could recruit a respectable number of eligible African American candidates. Spingarn had circumnavigated the NAACP Board and appealed directly to Du Bois to help promote the idea.

The internal politics within the Association were no small matter. George Crawford cautioned Spingarn to refrain from leading the Board to take an official position on the war because of the strong pacifist tendencies of influential Board members.¹³ High profile NAACP stalwarts Oswald Villard, Jane Addams, and Mary White Ovington all publically criticised US involvement in the global conflict so any efforts Spingarn and Du Bois might have made for an Association endorsement would certainly have created controversy within the organization and incited divisive criticism from public intellectuals who would view any NAACP endorsement of segregation as a betrayal of its core values and militant tradition. By the time he had written to Du Bois, Spingarn had already launched his own efforts, writing pamphlets and lecturing at historically black colleges, to rally support for a segregated camp that would be located in Iowa. Spingarn also argued that undermining institutional racism remained an essential motivating factor for

¹³ George Crawford to Joel Spingarn, April 7, 1917. Box 95-4, Folder 115. Joel E. Spingarn Papers, M-SRC, Howard. Crawford also advised Spingarn to pursue the Iowa officers training camp as a personal matter and not seek the NAACP's endorsement. See also Charles Flint Kellogg's, NAACP: A History of The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Volume I, 1909-1920 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 248-249.

pursuing the project. He insisted that 'Army officials want the camp to fail' and the camp 'is intended to FIGHT segregation in the Army and not to help it'.¹⁴

Spingarn recognized that Du Bois was the only influential board member who sympathized with his point of view. Former chair Oswald Villard supported neutrality, which Spingarn condemned as irresponsible, and he held even less patience with Mary White Ovington's pacifism, which reflected the prevailing sentiment of the Association's leadership. Even though he continued to claim the Socialist party represented his political and social ideals, Du Bois had broken ties once the national party voted to oppose the war only days after Congress approved President Wilson's request. As black newspapers became increasingly hostile to Spingarn's recruitment of students on college campuses, Du Bois and *The Crisis* became more essential to offset the media attacks that might jeopardize his mission. Ultimately, Spingarn convinced Du Bois that the camp would help black men, but his editorials in support of the segregated officers camp, instead of legitimizing the endeavour, intensified the criticism published in the African American press, particularly the *Chicago Defender* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*.¹⁵

Few prominent African American intellectuals argued as vehemently for African American military participation in the war as did Du Bois; a curious ideological stance for the country's most widely recognized African American radical. After rationalizing that the war would benefit Negroes because it would lead to the collapse of Western Civilization, he now encouraged his readers to view this historic event as an opportunity for future social progress and a means for African American men to acquire the trappings of masculine honour and respect that they had been so long denied. The officer camp, allowing young, college educated men who represented Du Bois' Talented Tenth to demonstrate their commitment to service and willingness to fight and die for their country, would not only provide proof that

¹⁴ Joel E. Spingarn. 'Military Training Camp For Colored Officers. Dr. J.E. Spingarn Explains His Reasons In A Nutshell'. 8 March 1917. Joel E. Spingarn Papers. Box 95-13, Folder 533. M-SRC, Howard University.

¹⁵ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 528.

African Americans were equals; more importantly, for Du Bois, their valour and sacrifice might hasten the collapse of a racist Western civilization and usher for a new era for the American Negro and the Black Aesthetic in the 20th century. Du Bois had hoped that the sacrifices of black soldiers would ‘show the world again what the loyalty and bravery of black men means’. Subsequently, he based his strategy for promoting Negro military participation in the Great War as an avenue for racial equality upon two fundamental assumptions: First, that loyal participation by American Negroes in the conflict would lead to expanded democratic rights and a lessening of social injustices and lynchings in the post-war era; and, second, that the war would promote the political independence of former German African colonies. By the end of the decade, however, both assumptions proved tragically incorrect.¹⁶

Because some board members believed Spingarn’s promotion of the Iowa camps might threaten the viability of the NAACP, he offered to resign as chair. Although many, including Du Bois, would have refused his resignation, Spingarn’s call to Reserve Officers Training Camp left the Board to name Mary White Ovington as acting chair in his absence.¹⁷ Those opposed to the war and conscription still believed that the Association should fight to ensure no servicemen were placed in a role below that of white soldiers. The Board voted unanimously to support this policy.¹⁸ A divided Board ultimately agreed to oppose all forms of segregation, including the officers’ camp, but accepted that the new draft law might leave conscripted black soldiers without any black officers, they voted to support separate training camps.¹⁹ Although 700,000 African Americans registered for duty on 5 July 1917, first day Selective Service Act, doubts about whether or not blacks would be allowed to actually serve in the military did not discourage the editor’s efforts to support Spingarn’s initiative.

¹⁶ Reed, Jr., Du Bois and American Political Thought, 97.

¹⁷ Board Minutes, May 14, 1917. Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frame 540; See also Kellogg, NAACP, 253.

¹⁸ Board Minutes, April 9, 1917. Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frame 536

¹⁹ Board Minutes, May 14, 1917. Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frame 540; See also Kellogg, NAACP, 255.

Du Bois' replaced his uncompromising suppositions regarding institutional racism in with promises about the immediate and practical benefits of black military involvement in World War I, an evolution in ideological priorities that benefited Du Bois personal pursuits as much as his noble ambitions to lead African Americans toward civil rights and social equality. Du Bois had supported the war from the beginning, and outside of his support of Spingarn's initiative that 'accommodated' his position on segregation, Du Bois continued to attack racial injustice in his familiar, unrelenting approach.²⁰ Even as late as May 1918, Du Bois criticised the War Department of racism and its willingness to treat black soldiers as second class citizens: 'It seems necessary to insist upon justice toward the Negro from the War Department. –As Negroes we propose to fight for the right, no matter what our treatment may be; but we submit to the public that intentional injustice to colored soldiers is the poorest investment that the nation can make just now'.²¹ Thus, the dramatic shift of his editorial tone two months later, to an accommodationist and overtly patriotic support of the US war effort proved both perplexing and inconsistent with Du Bois history of unequivocal radicalism.

Privately, Du Bois' editorial autonomy and freedom to express unfettered radicalism without consequence rapidly deteriorated as threats, candid and veiled, began to threaten the viability of both the Association and *The Crisis*. The US government's direct efforts to mitigate and regulate Du Bois' cultural authority certainly began subtly and no later than 1 April. A letter from War Department Special Assistant Emmett Scott informed Du Bois that he and 'other gentlemen' 'have been approved to serve the Nation by enlightening Negro public opinion as to the War Aims of the Government, such service to be rendered by delivering addresses, writing Articles, and otherwise stimulating the patriotism of the Negro people'. Scott echoed the

²⁰ Mark Ellis pointed out that Du Bois continued to write radical editorials critical of the US government in 1918, including 'Thirteen'. *The Crisis* 15 (January 1918): 114; 'Colonel Young'. *The Crisis* 15 (March 1918): 218; 'Houston and East St. Louis'. *The Crisis* 15 (April 1918): 269; and, 'The Negro and the War Department'. *The Crisis* 16 (May 1918). See, 'W.E.B. Du Bois and the Formation of Black Opinion in World War I: A Commentary on "The Damnable Dilemma"'. *The Journal of American History* 81 (March 1995): 1588.

²¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Editorial: The Negro and The War Department'. *The Crisis* 16 (May 1918): 7.

Director of the Speaking Division, calling ‘the creation and mobilization of the public opinion’, among the most important work in the prosecution of the war. The responsibility of leaders, like Du Bois, who shaped public opinion, was one to be ‘performed only by men and women who themselves were well informed and who cooperate with all patriotic organizations, governmental and private, which are unifying public opinion in support of the national purpose’.²²

Increasingly, the US government sought to homogenise all public mediums of communication and Du Bois responded with measured caution. Even in April, Theodore Kornweibel argued, Du Bois ‘could likely have been prosecuted under the Espionage Act for obstructing the war effort or recruiting and enlistment, simply by printing a play in which one of the characters argued that blacks had no cause for which to fight.’²³ With the passage of The Sedition Act six weeks away, the US government increasingly provided legislative justifications for the War Department to exact draconian penalties for speaking, writing, or publishing disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the United States government, its flag, or its armed forces or that caused others to view the American government or its institutions with contempt. And the US military, subsequently, exercised this authority upon *The Crisis* and many other black publications in a direct and threatening manner.

²² Emmett Scott to W.E.B. Du Bois, 1 April 1918. The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 7, Frame 99. Du Bois replied the next day, telling Scott ‘I can do some speaking for the War Department, but, of course, you will realize that I have not much time’. Ibid., Reel 7, Frame 100. Even with Du Bois begging off from making a whole-hearted commitment, he recognized how closely the War Department monitored his public declarations. Pre-emptively, Du Bois wrote Scott on 24 April about an upcoming lecture tour in Virginia and North Carolina so that ‘the proper parties in the War Department or other departments of the Government know about these lectures, what they are and the reason for my speaking’. Du Bois outlined the three main objectives of his talk ‘The Negro in the War’ because ‘I am quite certain that unless I have my objects thoroughly understood, someone in North Carolina will discover that I am a German propagandist’. Ibid., Reel 7 Frame 101.

²³ Theodore Kornweibel, Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 133. Kornweibel also noted the inherent bias and self-interest involved in these charges: ‘Whom the government chose to prosecute often reflected public or political pressure on the government to silence particular dissent, rather than clear or consistent definitions of guilt or innocence or standards of disloyalty’.

On 1 May, NAACP attorney and Board Member Charles Studin wrote Du Bois outlining the grave concerns expressed by Assistant US Attorney Earl B. Barnes in a 29 April letter. After pointing out several examples of ‘subversive’ articles published in January and March, 1918 numbers that he claimed were ‘calculated to create a feeling of dissatisfaction among colored people’, Barnes conveyed to Studin that ‘the Government proposes to take steps to prevent propaganda of this kind’. Barnes requested both a complete file of *The Crisis* from April, 1917 onward and to be added to the magazine’s mailing list. Barnes also suggested that future articles which might ‘be open to misconstruction’ should be ‘submitted to the view of some outside person’ and suggested that Studin should be used for this purpose. Studin closed his letter by telling Du Bois that although it was unfortunate that the Government ‘should have been induced to feel that some things may have been said by it [*The Crisis*] which were better left out of the magazine during this period, . . . I am confident that the Government can rely upon the assurance I gave Mr. Barnes that hereafter no question will arise as to the whole-hearted determination of *The Crisis* to render its service in the cause of winning the war’.²⁴

Taking the Assistant US Attorney’s recommendation one step further, the Board passed a resolution at its 13 May 1918 meeting to add Studin to the *Crisis* Committee, and, more importantly, declared ‘that all *Crisis* material, of whatever character, be passed upon by Mr. Studin before being printed’.²⁵ To avoid government censorship and ensure the monthly delivery of the magazine by the US Post Office, Kellogg explained that ‘(t)he Board appointed Charles Studin to the *Crisis* committee so that he could make a legal judgment on all *Crisis* materials before publication, and the committee agreed to confine *The Crisis* to facts and constructive criticism for the duration of the war’.²⁶ The 22 May memorandum to

²⁴ Charles Studin to W.E.B. Du Bois, 1 May, 1918. The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 926.

²⁵ ‘Memorandum for Dr. Du Bois’, 22 May 1918. The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 936.

²⁶ Kellogg, *NAACP*, 272; See also, Board Minutes, 13 May 1918, Papers of the NAACP, Feal 1; 10 June 1918; Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frames 606, 614.

Du Bois confirmed Studin's role in monitoring *The Crisis* as official Association policy.

Once Studin had been officially designated editorial guardian of *The Crisis*, the US military initiated correspondence to ensure tight self-regulation and strict adherence to the newly passed Sedition Act. On 3 June, Joel Spingarn, writing on behalf of Colonel Marlborough Churchill, declared to Studin that '[a] great many complaints have been directed against the contents of *The Crisis* in the past, and we suggest that you make a special effort to eliminate all matter that may render the paper liable to suppression in the future'. Threatening Studin with the authority of Congressional legislation to repress 'seditious and disloyal utterances' and citing that the Military Intelligence Branch 'can not tolerate carping and bitter utterances likely to foment disaffection and destroy the morale of our people for the winning of the war', Churchill expressed his willingness 'to co-operate with you in any constructive programme which you may suggest for the eradication of any just causes for complain'.²⁷

Nine days later, Studin assured Churchill and Spingarn that 'no pains will be spared to make all future issues of this magazine comply with the wishes of the Government both in letter and spirit', and pledged the loyalty of 'those associated in its publication'. Studin welcomed Churchill's offer to assist in constructive programming for the elimination of just grievances, and asserted that 'owing to the unique position held by this organization and the influence of *The Crisis* among a large number of our citizens, that the Government may feel that we can render certain services better than other agencies, and I am authorized to say that we will regard it as a privilege to be called upon to perform any function which may be

²⁷Colonel Marlborough Churchill (by Joel E. Spingarn) to Charles Studin, 3 June 1918. Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans (1917-1925): The First World War, The Red Scare, and the Garvey Movement. Theodore Kornweibel, Jr. (ed.) (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1986), Reel 19, Frame 636.

assigned to us'.²⁸ The Churchill/Studin exchange appeared to be the first in a series of manoeuvres Spingarn executed on behalf of the MIB to ensure the NAACP and *The Crisis* would become essential patriotic partners in battle to win over public support of the war and minimize propaganda that encouraged Negro sedition.

After a year of carefully negotiating public dissent against the officer camp, Spingarn, who had now taken a position as major in the Military Intelligence Branch²⁹, called Du Bois to Washington D.C. on 4 June 1918 and offered him a captaincy so that they could work together to win the war for democracy in Europe and civil rights in America. Du Bois agreed that day to accept his offer, perhaps, as Ellis suggested: 1) he 'felt hampered by the wartime limitations on freedom of expression'; and 2) 'by joining a branch of the General Staff, he could confirm his leadership of the younger generation'.³⁰ Once the government compelled Studin and the NAACP to enforce ad hoc editorial oversight of the magazine, partnering with Spingarn may have appeared the most prudent way for Du Bois to exercise his editorial authority, and allay the mounting threats of Justice Department, the United States Post Office, and Churchill's Military Intelligence Branch of the War Department.

Three weeks earlier, President Wilson had signed the Sedition Act into law, and Du Bois proved eager to please his military recruiters. On 10 June, Spingarn authored a three page memo for Colonel Churchill outlining his plan to combat Negro subversion. Among his seven points to construct 'Counter propaganda', Spingarn included information about his 4 June interview with Du Bois, stating the editor had promised: '(a) to submit all matter in magazine to designated person in advance of

²⁸ Charles Studin to Colonel Marlborough Churchill, June 12, 1918. Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans, Reel 19, Frame 637. For another analysis of these two exchanges, see Mark Ellis, Race, War, and Surveillance, 145.

²⁹ According to Mark Ellis, 'Spingarn accepted the MIB post, believing that he had been given a great opportunity to change government policy and influence black opinion. He had regarded the creation of the black officers' training camp in 1917 as a major victory, and it may have encouraged him to believe that with sufficient pressure the government might bend in other areas'. See Race, War, and Surveillance, 143.

³⁰ Ibid., 162.

publication, and—(b) to make his paper an organ of patriotic propaganda hereafter'.³¹ After eight years of resounding criticism of the US government's complacency towards segregation, lynching, and myriad forms of institutional racism, Du Bois spent much of June, 1918 proving his loyalty to the war effort through his actions.

With the most influential and widely circulated Negro monthly squarely on board, Spingarn's next step called for an 'epoch making alliance' he proposed at a June 19-21 conference held in Washington D.C. of 41 prominent African Americans, 31 of whom were publishers and editors. While some more radical intellectuals like Monroe Trotter boycotted the event, Spingarn reassured attendees that the government was only intent on curtailing anti-American propaganda and not suppressing free speech in the press. Du Bois' enthusiasm for the initiative, which included writing a policy statement signed by influential media from across America 'promising "active, enthusiastic and self-sacrificing participation in the war"'³² insured the War Department that African America's most influential intellectual would rally his peers and his readers behind the war effort in return for the promise of wielding greater power in the struggle to achieve racial equality during and, ideally, after the war.

The day after the conference, Spingarn 'assured Churchill that the *Crisis* editor was playing a vital role in voicing and shaping the political and racial consciousness of the black population' and 'sent the head of MI-4 details of Du Bois's career'. On 24 June, Du Bois formally applied for a commission in military intelligence, 'listing his chief interest as "race problems."' ³³ The next step, Du Bois' public declaration of

³¹ Joel E. Spingarn to Colonel Marlborough Churchill, 10 June 1918. Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans, Reel 19, Frame 727. The War Department Chief of Staff also reviewed the memo, 'thanking [Spingarn] him for his very interesting memorandum on Negro Subversion'. Ibid., Reel 19 Frame 730.

³² Theodore Kornweibel, Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 143.

³³ Ellis, Race, War, and Surveillance, 163

patriotic loyalty in the July issue of *The Crisis*, proved exactly the evidence Spingarn needed to confirm Du Bois' loyalty and his captaincy.

Written with the brevity of The Gettysburg Address and the temerity of a self-described prophet, Du Bois' July editorial, 'Closing Ranks', set off a firestorm of controversy and criticism that left Du Bois reeling from public condemnation. Calling the moment a 'great Day of Decision', Du Bois reiterated the warnings made in previous editorials concerning the threat of German power to spell 'death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom and democracy'.³⁴ He urged all Negro citizens to put aside their doubts and concerns for the sake of the nation, and proclaimed that as long as the war lasted, Negroes should 'forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy'. Calling the sacrifice unordinary, but one that should be made gladly and 'with eyes lifted to the hills', Du Bois set aside nearly a decade of fervent criticism that he had levelled at the American government for violent atrocities committed and racial injustices condoned in order to accommodate a unified national front to meet a broader, more dangerous threat to democracy.³⁵

The central question for African Americans regarding race, justice, and military participation was whether or not social advancement through military service could offset the political and moral compromises of serving in a segregated military during a time of widespread racial violence and domestic oppression. White America 'deplored the thought of militarily trained black men in their communities' and many military leaders were conflicted as to whether the need for men was urgent enough to risk training officers and arming a group so long held in subjugation through violence.³⁶ For some among the black intelligentsia, Du Bois' editorial further capitulated the NAACP's popular, radical agenda and condoned the hypocrisy of

³⁴ W.E.B Du Bois. Editorial. 'Close Ranks'. *The Crisis* 16 (July 1918): 111.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Stacy Reardon. 'The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro'. *Callaloo* 33 (Fall 2010): 1141.

encouraging African Americans to support fighting a war for democracy in Europe when they had been denied essential human rights for almost 300 years. As Chad Williams noted ‘African Americans continued to struggle with their wartime support for a country that cast them as second-class citizens. “Close Ranks” hit such a sensitive nerve because, by polarizing race from nation, it suggested that African Americans had to make a choice between the two’.³⁷ Du Bois had professed the war to be a great opportunity for African Americans, and expressed dismay that the black press had a bitter response to ‘Close Ranks’.³⁸

By the late 1910s, Anne Carroll noted, *The Crisis* had been joined by a number of other periodicals, including Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* and *The Messenger* that featured harsh critiques of American racism and gave voice to African Americans’ frustration with racism and increasing violence carried out against them.³⁹ *The Messenger*, founded nine months earlier and affiliated with the Socialist Party which categorically opposed the war, recognized Du Bois’ increasingly conservative ideology as an opportunity to seize control of the radical black agenda, now that the NAACP had seemingly abandoned the militancy that defined the organization throughout the 1910s. For co-editors Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, ‘Closing Ranks’ exemplified what *The Messenger* sought to combat and presented the embryonic journal with a unique opportunity to voice its mission on a national

³⁷ Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 201), 77. Historians have generally offered three interpretations of Du Bois’ motivations for writing ‘Close Ranks’. Mark Ellis (*Race, War, and Surveillance*, 163-182) portrayed ‘Close Ranks’ as a quid pro quo for a military captaincy. William Jordan (‘The Damnable Dilemma: African-American Accommodation and Protest in World War I’ *Journal of American History* 81 (March 1995): 1562-1583) insisted the editorial was not a compromise for his captaincy but consistent with his tendency towards accommodation in certain contexts and consistent with other black intellectuals during the war. Theodore Kornweibel (*Investigate Everything*, 132-144) viewed ‘Close Ranks’, in large part, as a direct response to Justice Department and Post Office investigations that threatened to suppress the distribution of *The Crisis* under the Espionage and Sedition Acts. See also David Levering Lewis (*Biography of a Race*, 552-560) who supported Ellis’ hypothesis.

³⁸ For an excellent overview of black media response to ‘Close Ranks’ and the controversy surrounding its publication, see Williams G. Jordan’s, *Black Newspapers and America’s War for Democracy, 1914-1920*, 112-115.

³⁹ Anne Elizabeth Carroll. *Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 52.

stage. Randolph and Owen had vowed that *The Messenger* would serve ‘to appeal to reason, to lift our pens above the cringing demagoguery of the times and above the cheap, peanut politics of the old, reactionary Negro leaders.’⁴⁰ The mission they articulated in late 1917 had predicted the ‘old, reactionary’ rationale Du Bois utilized to justify full participation and support for the war. For a new journal like *The Messenger*, which represented an emerging trend among Negro publications to challenge the NAACP’s monolithic political organ, their voice led a chorus of black media who denounced Du Bois on principle. The prophetic words of their mission—‘Patriotism has no appeal to us; justice has. Party has no weight with us; principle has. Loyalty is meaningless; it depends on what one is loyal to’—proved ample to outline the ideological challenges that bombarded Du Bois in the summer of 1918.⁴¹

While *The Messenger* led media challenges against Du Bois’ summer editorials, virtually the entire Negro press and even leaders of the NAACP denounced Du Bois’ dubious motives for supporting the war once news of his promised captaincy became public. Mass meetings had been held in New York ‘in which Dr. Du Bois has been bitterly assailed and called a traitor, while the Government has come in for its share of criticism for having brought about this condition by influencing Dr. Du Bois to abandon his former principles’.⁴² Du Bois anticipated he would eventually overcome the dissent inevitable among the NAACP board; however, he dramatically underestimated the universal and public backlash against both his editorials and his military ambitions. The great strength of Du Bois’ leadership, the obstinate certainty that no distinction existed between what was important to him and what should be

⁴⁰ Chandler Owen and A. Phillip Randolph. ‘Editorial’. *The Messenger* 1 (November 1917): 5.

⁴¹ Ibid, 5. For an excellent history of *The Messenger* and other politically radical African American periodicals that emerged in the late 1910s, see Barbara Foley’s, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro*. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003). While analyzing the impact of influential periodicals with wide circulations, such as Marcus Garvey’s *Negro World* and *The Liberator*, Foley also examined the intellectual contributions of niche, short-lived journals such as *The Call*, *The Crusader*, and *The Messenger*.

⁴² Theodore Kornweibel, *Investigate Everything*, 144. See also, *Torchbearers of Democracy*, 73-74; *Black Newspapers*, 122-125.

valued to those he represented, transformed immediately and entirely into an Achilles' heel in handling the controversy.⁴³

Initially, perhaps, Spingarn reassured Du Bois about the positive impact of 'Close Ranks' within the US War Department as sufficient evidence that he would prevail. Emmett Scott, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War wrote to Spingarn that on the morning of 26 June, he showed Secretary Baker 'Close Ranks' and 'told him of the spirit of our conference last week, of Dr. Du Bois fine attitude'. After reviewing the editorial, Baker signed a letter addressed to Colonel Churchill in support of Du Bois' captaincy, and Scott expressed his pleasure in what appeared to be the editor's inevitable appointment: 'I am most happy that you permitted me to put this thing through for the cause'.⁴⁴ In early July, Spingarn enclosed a copy of 'Close Ranks' in a memo to Colonel Churchill entitled, 'Subject: Changed Attitude of Colored Press', 'indicating the gradual change of tone in the colored press. . .--evidence of the effect of M.I.B policy'. Churchill returned the memo to Spingarn with a handwritten note on the bottom left corner: 'Very Satisfactory M.C.'.⁴⁵ Despite the mounting public disdain for his willful accommodation, Du Bois remained resolute and impervious to the chorus of critics who condemned his views on principle.

At the 8 July board meeting, Du Bois gave official notice of his intentions to accept the Military Intelligence commission.⁴⁶ The minutes of the meeting reflect that he would accept the appointment on the condition '(a) that the Board approved his

⁴³ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 564.

⁴⁴ Letter from Emmett Scott to Major Joel E. Spingarn, 26 June 1918, Box 95-10, Folder 394. Joel E. Spingarn Papers. M-SRC, Howard University.

⁴⁵ Spingarn to Churchill, 6 July 1918, Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans, Reel 19, Frame 767.

⁴⁶ On 2 July, Du Bois sent a memo to the NAACP Board of Directors announcing his MIB offer to be 'associated with Major Spingarn in a constructive attempt to guide negro public opinion by removing pressing grievances of colored folk which hinder the presentation of the war'. The memo confirmed that Spingarn and Mary White Ovington supported this initiative (though Ovington's 10 June letter hints otherwise). Du Bois also outlined the limitations of accepting appointment if it was finally made: 'I cannot do this if the acceptance involves the giving up of what I regard as my life work—THE CRISIS, or if it reduces my present income.' Du Bois expressed that the military was 'willing that I should retain control of THE CRISIS', an endorsement he surely hoped would pressure the Board to grant his request. See W.E.B. Du Bois, 'To the Board of Directors', 2 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 952.

acceptance in the Intelligence Bureau and regard it as in the nature of work for the cause to which the Association is committed and upon which it has agreed; (b) that he retain the directorship of publications and research and editorship of the Crisis; (c) that his salary from the government be supplemented by such part of his present salary as was not needed for extra editorial assistance'.⁴⁷ Predictably, members previously critical of Du Bois and his persistent power grabs resisted his request; however, even some of his allies expressed concern over the obvious conflict of interest inherent to serving as both editor of America's foremost Negro publication and intelligence officer in the US military.

The Board voted against Du Bois' proposal, citing that the Director and editor 'be able to give his full time and attention to the important work involved in publicity and research work and particularly in that of editing The Crisis'. The Board argued that it 'would not be justified in depriving 79,000 subscribers and purchasers of the Crisis and the 35,000 members of the Association of the services of a full time Director. . . inasmuch as the acceptance by Dr. Du Bois of a commission in the Intelligence Bureau of the War Department is conditioned upon his continuing to serve as Director of Publications and Research and editor of the Crisis, giving to the Association's work only such time and attention as the necessarily arduous and compelling duties of the War Department would permit, the Board of Directors is reluctantly compelled to the conclusion that, for the situation, it is inadvisable that Dr. Du Bois undertake to combine the duties.'⁴⁸ David Levering Lewis claimed that Du Bois could brush aside any criticism of continuing as editor while serving in the military because he made no distinction between the morality of the cause and the virtuousness of himself. 'Personal vanity and civil rights aspirations', for Du Bois, 'were inextricably enmeshed, and the strategy adopted by Du Bois to win over the

⁴⁷ Board Minutes, 8 July 1918. Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frame 619.

⁴⁸ Board Minutes, 8 July 1918. Papers of the NAACP, Reel 1, Frame 619.

public was intended to preempt, disconcert, and even cow critics of the captaincy offer before there could be any widespread, reasoned discussion'.⁴⁹

Writing to Spingarn the next day, Du Bois attempted to rationalize the Board's resistance to endorse his military ambitions as ideological: 'The attendance which was small was strongly pacifist,--Mr. Villard, Mrs. Kelley, Mr. Grimke, Mr. Loud. The real deciding thing was Mr. Grimke's passionate belief that my acceptance of the commission in the Intelligence Bureau would disrupt the Washington Branch and spread suspicion and discouragement. The Board, therefore, decided that I ought not to take the commission'.⁵⁰ The potential for organisational fracturing was certainly a concern for some Board members. The Washington branch eventually censured Du Bois for his 'selfish desire to hold two positions', and Nevel H. Thomas, a leader in the Washington branch, had proclaimed to Villard that he 'regarded both Du Bois and Spingarn as enemies'.⁵¹

However, a 10 July letter from Mary White Ovington offered a very different account of the Board's rationale, one that coincided with the minutes of the meeting, and unveiled a unique insight into Du Bois' wavering mindset as the controversy escalated. 'I am most relieved at the decisions and I think you are probably glad of it. Of course, if the government makes a demand you may have to obey, but as you suggested you might go into the work expecting it to be one thing and find that it had to be quite another'.⁵² Given her references to Du Bois feeling 'relieved', Ovington intimated that he must have shared reservations about pursuing the captaincy in the two weeks since the editorial had been first published. Privately, Du Bois had begun to waver in his pursuit to join Spingarn in Washington DC; however, he withheld his

⁴⁹ Ibid., 555.

⁵⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois to Major Joel E. Spingarn, 9 July 1918, Box 1, Folder 11. Joel E. Spingarn Papers, James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University. Du Bois attempted to reassure Spingarn: 'I had already secured by mail the consent of enough to have carried the proposition'. See Du Bois Papers Reel 19, Frames 649-661 for samples of letters of support for Du Bois' proposition.

⁵¹ Kellogg, *NAACP*, 273. See also Nevel H. Thomas to Oswald Villard, 13 September 1918. Oswald Garrison Villard Papers (MS Am 1323). Houghton Library, Harvard University. Thomas also claimed in the letter that regarding Spingarn's plan for Du Bois, 'We down here knew it in May'.

⁵² Mary White Ovington to W.E.B. Du Bois, 10 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 973.

doubts from Spingarn, and the major fired off a threatening response to the Board's decision based on Du Bois' account that the NAACP would not support him in support the war effort.

Spingarn viewed the Board's decision as an example that the NAACP regarded 'military service as work unworthy of its members' and insisted that 'I cannot remain a member of the Association for another moment, and must not only resign but must notify all those who remain in it that the organisation is dangerously unpatriotic and anti-American.' Spingarn's threats were serious, but he did offer the Board one final opportunity at reconciliation. 'There is only one test by which I shall judge the Association—whether or not it encourages Dr. Du Bois to do highly patriotic service and constructive work which has been planned for him here'.⁵³ As Spingarn placed his Association leadership in jeopardy and issued ultimatums to force the Board into supporting his would be captain, Du Bois appeared poised to drop the military cause altogether. Responding to Ovington's letter, he confessed, 'I have decided not to go to Washington. I may change my mind but probably not'.⁵⁴ With both Spingarn and Ovington, Du Bois rationalised the Board's decision due to 'anti-war' sentiment; however, the nature and extent of his resolve to carry on varied dramatically in his correspondences with Ovington (the NAACP) and Spingarn (the military).

A simultaneous letter to an old mentor affiliated with neither the NAACP nor the military may well have revealed Du Bois' truest motivations and priorities. Still seeking to resolve the escalating crisis, he explained the situation to John Hope, President of Atlanta University, as one pivoting around the editorial control of his magazine:

(T)he colored people of Washington have got it into their heads that either I have sold out to the Government or that the Government is about to capture and muzzle me. Of course, on the other hand, I and all other editors are

⁵³ Joel E. Spingarn to Charles Studin, 10 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 975.

⁵⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois to Mary White Ovington, 11 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 976.

going to be muzzled during the remainder of this war, but the question is— will I be any more muzzled in the service or out? I believe it a matter of great strategic policy for me to accept the commission, do my bit and then come back to my regular work, but just there comes the rub. I naturally do not want to give up THE CRISIS. I want to keep hold and I want CRISIS funds to help supplement my smaller military salary. The last meeting of the Board declined to agree with this, but I think it would not be difficult to get the consensus of the board.⁵⁵

Du Bois' pursuit of a captaincy as a 'great strategic policy' indicated he was at least as interested in retaining control of *The Crisis* during a period in which he believed the government would censor all editors. This portrait of the captaincy as 'doing his bit' reflected a much greater commitment to protecting his 'regular work' than to serving his country.

That same day, Du Bois acknowledged his awareness of 'how deeply you [Spingarn] have been harassed and hurt in the last few days', and admitted '(n)either of us had dreamed of this curious upheaval and it is extremely difficult to know just what ones duty is under the circumstances'. Curiously, Du Bois made no mention of losing control of *The Crisis*, but explained his circumstances as fiscally precarious:

If I had no family to support or if I were ten years younger, I should not hesitate for a moment. I should resign from the Association and accept admission, but at present I have to consider what chance a man of fifty or more would have of earning a living after this war; how could I squeeze through the war on my captain's salary; and, finally, what would be the effect on the Association.⁵⁶

Ultimately, his apparent financial dilemma provided Du Bois with a convenient opportunity to concoct an excuse for Spingarn that allowed him to hedge against the

⁵⁵W.E.B. Du Bois to John Hope, 12 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 535.

⁵⁶W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel. E. Spingarn, 12 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 977.

consequences of a hasty choice that many respected intellectuals met with fervent resistance.⁵⁷

Spingarn was certainly aware that Du Bois was being reticent about his true feelings. On 16 July Spingarn confronted Du Bois about ‘wiring your friends that you do not think you will be accepting the commission’. Perhaps in denial or out of desperation, Spingarn refused to believe this would be ‘your ultimate decision’ and forged ahead with their plans ‘on the assumption that you will accept and that before long all those who believe in you will approve of your decision’. Spingarn also proposed a compromise for Du Bois: Insist that the Association ‘give you a leave of absence and give you a pledge that you will return to full control of the Crisis as soon as you leave the military service’. Desperate to reconcile the situation, Spingarn insisted that his continuance as editor was not so important. ‘Too much depends on your coming to make any missteps now’, Spingarn implored. ‘My whole constructive programme here is on trial, and in danger of toppling over if you do not join forces with me now’.⁵⁸

When Du Bois replied three days later, he dropped his original salary demands, and agreed to accept the commission ‘(i)f the Association assures me control of the Crisis after the War’. Still, he insisted upon the necessity of his continued oversight of the magazine ‘for the sake of preserving my carefully built up machine’, since Villard had already rejected his only viable replacement, Du Bois’ business manager A.G.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 558. Lewis pointed out that ‘Spingarn soon learned from both Studin and Shillady {NAACP board members} that Du Bois’s agonizing dilemma over salary was largely concocted. Although the board was firm in its insistence that either [Archibald] Grimke or [James Weldon] Johnson . . . should take over *The Crisis*, both the attorney and the executive secretary insisted that there had never been any reservation about maintaining Du Bois’s gross income at its present level while he served his country’. Du Bois, therefore, appeared more concerned about the loss of editorial control and public outcry than lost wages—the excuse he gave to Spingarn to back out of their original agreement.

⁵⁸ Joel. E. Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, 16 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 978. Spingarn also tried to alleviate Du Bois’ concerns about money and his future: ‘Whether it makes up for your financial loss in accepting a commission is of lesser moment, for that can be taken care of in other ways if need be’—most certainly a promise that Spingarn would once again help him financially if needed.

Dill'.⁵⁹ Du Bois' persistent demand to remain as editor throughout the duration of his military service was in no way out of character; just another example of his overwhelming self-assurance in the righteousness of his vision and his indispensable role within the NAACP. Du Bois had built his editorial career and reputation on his audacity. Throughout his rise to power within the NAACP, he had routinely triumphed through risky manoeuvres that exemplified his supreme self-confidence in the righteousness of his intellectual vision and the inviolability of his personal service to the greater cause of pursuing justice and equality for all African Americans. Unwilling to make substantial sacrifices and facing growing public criticism, the military denied Du Bois his captaincy, and on 30 July, Spingarn informed Du Bois that 'the programme which I planned for work in the colored field, and which was to include your being commissioned a captain in the National Army, has not been approved'.⁶⁰

When the inevitable accusations arose that he had compromised the NAACP's reputation by publishing 'Close Ranks', Du Bois resorted to deception in order to protect his reputation from the appearance that he had become a government lackey for personal profit. In lieu of admitting his miscalculation, Du Bois surreptitiously schemed to contain the public relations mess that unfolded and ultimately undermined his iconic reputation. He had assured Lafayette Hershaw on 5 August that 'the journal had already been in print for two weeks when he was "summoned to Washington"'. Mark Ellis rightly reconstructed the actual timeline, making Du Bois' version appear 'scarcely credible'. Du Bois certainly met with Spingarn on 4 June, 'which would have required the July Crisis, editorials and all, to have been in print by mid-May, if the sequence he described were true'. Ellis also pointed out from the content of other issues in 1918 that 'the journal was never in final form four to six

⁵⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois to Joel Spingarn, 19 July, 1918, Box 1, Folder 11. Joel E. Spingarn Papers, James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale University. See also Mark Ellis, Race, War, and Surveillance, 169-170.

⁶⁰ Joel E. Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, 16 July 1918. Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Reel 6, Frame 980.

weeks in advance of appearing on newsstands'.⁶¹ Du Bois compounded his deception when, forced to recount the chronology of events for the president of the NAACP's Cleveland branch on 8 August 1918, Du Bois claimed that Spingarn made the tentative offer for a captaincy on 15 June. He explained that in order to meet the printer's deadline on 10 June, he wrote the controversial editorial on 6 June, hoping to avoid the appearance that his enthusiastic support for the war had been purchased.⁶²

While no one proved this deception in 1918, the appearance of impropriety loomed large over Du Bois, raising serious doubts about his character and commitment to the cause of racial justice. He scrambled to reassure NAACP leaders of his noble intentions and retain the possibility of serving as both military captain and editor; however, once Du Bois had professed his patriotic allegiances in African America's most revered and widely-circulated magazine during the summer of 1918, the War Department had no further use for Du Bois or Spingarn's military special unit.

Even after the captaincy had been denied and Spingarn's initiative dissolved, Du Bois attempted to salvage his reputation and counter public and intellectual criticisms of his polarizing 'Closing Ranks' with editorials in August and September, defending his accommodationist positions against the outcries in the African American press. In 'A Philosophy in Time of War', Du Bois outlined his agenda and rationale for unequivocal support of the United States in systematic, Wilsonesque fashion. He summarized five major principles and arguments relevant to his claims that African Americans should wholeheartedly support the US war effort. One, 'Our country is at war. . . . If this is OUR country, then this is OUR war. We must fight

⁶¹ Mark Ellis, "'Closing Ranks' and 'Seeking Honors': W.E.B. Du Bois in World War I". *The Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 120. Spingarn's own confessions to his wife Amy also unravel Du Bois sloppy woven fabrication: 'I gave him the shock of his life by offering him a commission, but don't breathe a word of this to a human soul until it goes through'. Joel E. Spingarn to Amy Spingarn, 9 June 1918. Box 95-15, Folder 580. The Joel E. Spingarn Papers. M-SRC, Howard University.

⁶² Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 555-556.

with every ounce of blood and treasure'.⁶³ Two, Germany is the greater of evils (hearkening back to his argument from the previous year). 'We must fight, then, for the survival of the Best against the threats of the Worst'. Three, 'War does not excuse Disfranchisement, "Jim-Crow" cars and social injustices, but it does make our *first* duty clear. It does say deep to the heart of every Negro American: We shall not bargain without loyalty'. Four, '(W)e fight today in and for America—not for a price, not for ourselves alone, but for the World'.⁶⁴ Five, Protest and victory as a result of 'cheap bargaining' must be put aside, for the moment. Victory must be 'clean and glorious, won by our manliness, and not by the threat of the footpad. . . . (O)ur souls are ours, but our bodies belong to our country'. Ironically, his final point evoked a strong semblance of slavery and the rationale of 19th century accommodationists who argued for continued oppression and incivility in the name of national pride and patriotism. Du Bois' call for a patriotic commitment to America raised the possibility that his ideological shift, so obviously contrary to views he had espoused for decades now served Du Bois' personal interests and could be justified as politically expedient. Never one to accept compromise, Du Bois now promoted a political position that undermined his previously radical approaches to combating American racism without any guarantee that these sacrifices would benefit the immediate or long-term interests of the race.⁶⁵

The following month, Du Bois published, 'Our Special Grievances', a direct defence of his position espoused in 'Closing Ranks', which he claimed had been reviewed and approved without objection by 'prominent members and officers of the board before printing'.⁶⁶ Du Bois argued that his editorial had remained consistent with the historical principles of the organization, which the Negro press had challenged

⁶³ W.E.B Du Bois. Editorial. 'A Philosophy in Time of War'. *The Crisis* 16 (August 1918): 164.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁵ Du Bois' editorials circumvented the NAACP board, which never endorsed or approved of 'Close Ranks' or the subsequent rationalizations that pleaded with African Americans to take up arms and potentially perish in the service of a segregated military.

⁶⁶ W.E.B Du Bois. Editorial. 'Our Special Grievances'. *The Crisis* 16 (September 1918): 216. Du Bois' claim held no truth as he attempted to correlate the Board's editorial support offered in the August number, which accompanied Du Bois' essay, 'A Philosophy in Time of War', with their review and approval of 'Close Ranks', published a month earlier.

and condemned vociferously throughout the summer. Du Bois' two main justifications struck an inconsistent, even hypocritical note. First, in explaining that setting racial injustices and individual grievances aside, temporarily, was not akin to making them right or discounting their significance, Du Bois declared, 'that any man or race that seeks to turn his country's tragic predicament to his own personal gain is fatally cheating himself'.⁶⁷ In hindsight, such a statement expressed either Du Bois' oblivion to the personal benefits promised to him in return for embracing a pro-war position, his gall at condemning other opportunists just as he sought to make the most of his alliance with Spingarn and the US War Department, or possibly a harsh attack that masked his deep remorse for compromising his values for the sake of securing his captaincy. While advocating a 'first your Country, then your Rights!'⁶⁸ position (which he curiously attributed to the magazine and not himself), Du Bois outlined the rich history of African American involvement in previous wars, from the American Revolution to the Spanish-American War, highlighting that in each instance, wartime sacrifice bore marked improvement in the lives of African descendants. He counted the achievements of the Great War, recognition of citizens via the draft, the soon to be newly minted Negro officers trained in Iowa, higher wages, better employment, the overthrow of segregation ordinances, President Wilson's denouncement of lynching, and special representation in the War and Labour Departments as the initial proof of even greater forthcoming benefits for pledging unilateral allegiances to the United States.⁶⁹

Du Bois' editorials in the summer of 1918 disengaged *The Crisis* and the NAACP from its nearly decade-long agenda of radicalizing Negro America, renouncing previous ideology to assert opinions that encouraged, even justified, segregation, inequality, and temporary sacrifice of civil liberties in the name of patriotism and service to country. Du Bois scrapped seven years of militant, activist agenda that railed against the unjust policies of the United States in order to curry favour with the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

US government and attain a prized military appointment. Du Bois believed naïvely that Spingarn's proposition would afford him, much like the editorship of *The Crisis* had in 1910, an unparalleled opportunity to assert even greater influence as a leader and propel African America forward, ever closer to achieving full rights as citizens denied to them for three centuries.

The three editorials Du Bois penned in the summer of 1918 offered concrete evidence of his loyalty and proof that his commitment warranted the captaincy Spingarn had promised. Du Bois had presumed his readers and the public at-large would accept his sudden ideological shift to promote acquiescence of the segregationist status quo as a necessary and temporary sacrifice for the greater good. Whatever self-interest was involved, Du Bois rationalized that his pursuit of more influence and greater status within a racist government would certainly be accepted and recognized as a natural continuation of his life-long commitment to lead a national movement that would usher forth a new era for a new Negro. His public and his critics, however, were not as understanding. The exposure of his chase for a military captaincy and the compromises he made with US military officials to mitigate the vitriolic critiques of *The Crisis* provoked wide-spread protest, fuelled hostility among those who now viewed Du Bois as a sell-out, and rattled him profoundly, creating doubt about both his own infallibility and his pre-eminence as the voice and leader of African America. The Spingarn-Du Bois alliance, as Lewis noted, 'implied cold calculation and make-or-break audacity', and tainted, not only Du Bois' future commentary on the war, but raised doubts about the personal nature of his true motives for transforming his political ideology.

Spingarn's recruitment of Du Bois yielded a windfall of political benefits for the US government. First, the War Department had managed to utilize Du Bois' privileged and powerful position to promote a zealous, self-sacrificing, pro-American position on the war to his 70,000 African American readers. Second, by offering Du Bois a captaincy in exchange for disseminating military propaganda, the War Department undermined the credibility of the most influential and potentially lethal African

American media outlet. Third, Du Bois, now painted into a corner and too proud to admit he had been wrong to encourage African Americans to put aside their grievances and support the American war effort, had been neutralized as a militant voice of opposition. Major Loving concluded that Du Bois should simply remain editor of *The Crisis* and ‘that the War Department had had the benefit of their excellent services without being saddled with either NAACP man’.⁷⁰ At the end of July, the War Department issued notice to Du Bois that his application for a commission had been rejected and new orders terminated Spingarn’s proposed intelligence agency designed to encourage and monitor domestic African American participation in the war and reassigned him to monitor Negro troop morale on the European front.⁷¹

Du Bois could have written his editorials in support of the United States that could have been defended on their own merits and criticized based solely upon differences in ideology. However, what Du Bois wrote in the summer of 1918 ‘was in large part written in order to consummate the bargain’ he made with Spingarn and the War Department. ‘Close Ranks’ was the first instalment made to honour their alliance.⁷² Du Bois did not reverse his position or immediately condemn US military involvement in the war, silenced in part because of his self-deception, his pride, and the NAACP’s fear of the retribution possible under the Espionage and Sedition Acts.

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 560.

⁷¹ Du Bois never publicly acknowledged that he regretted pursuing the military captaincy; however, he appeared to view the relationships that Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson struck with the leaders of white cultural media in New York in the early 1920s with great scepticism and parallel to his own relationships with Spingarn and the US War Department in the summer of 1918. Arguably, Du Bois viewed the popularity of *The New Negro* as yet another instance of African Americans trusting a white power establishment and essentially selling-out in order to pursue an idealized view of what a black-white alliance could accomplish for the promise of personal affirmation, monetary benefits, and increased social status. Du Bois achieved little from his 1918 compromise, other than to use his wide reaching influence and clout to sway the African American community. Conditions for African Americans were far worse by the end of the Great War and the promise of what he and Spingarn might have achieved, lost in the riotous flames that burned urban American cities and rural hamlets throughout the summer of 1919. Certainly, he could have interpreted the apparent ‘successes’ of Locke and Johnson in building alliances with whites sceptically and eventually come to view the entire New Negro Renaissance as tainted by the corrupting influences of white patronage (See Chapter Five and Conclusion).

⁷² Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 555.

In the fall of 1918, Du Bois bided his time, and when the Allies reached armistice with Germany in November, 1918, Du Bois launched a public and vitriolic counterattack that would change African American politics and aesthetics forever.

Articulating the Voice of the New Negro:

Before embarking for France to monitor Negro troop morale on the Western Front in September, 1918, Joel Spingarn privately assessed the psychological consequences on Du Bois of their failed alliance. Writing to his wife, Amy, Spingarn supposed 'Du Bois has never recovered from the blow to his popularity among his own people'.⁷³ Du Bois had little choice but to bear significant responsibility for the fate of over 200,000 African-American soldiers shipped overseas, the vast majority of whom 'had ended up in Pershing's SOS units where they fought the war with strong backs and shovels, and where they had been generally treated like subhumans by southern white officers and NCOs'.⁷⁴ The parallel of their circumstances to plantation slavery could not have been lost on Du Bois, and his public support had championed an accommodationist position to both US military involvement in the war and enthusiastic African American participation. In the fall of 1918, his reputation as a passive, non-confrontational promoter of segregation had become not unlike that of his former rival Booker T. Washington, whom Du Bois had worked tirelessly to discredit as a leader. Du Bois, in negotiating his public endorsement in exchange for a captaincy, had 'risked discredit from a bargain that the other party had found convenient not to honor'.⁷⁵ This perceived betrayal by the US government, however, rekindled Du Bois' radical resistance to American injustice, and provided him with the impetus to champion the rights of the 'other 90 percent' that he had compromised in his Great War editorials, a mission that proved to be a crucial pivot point in defining the New Negro publically, politically, and, eventually, aesthetically. By leading the charge to champion the emboldened New Negro spirit

⁷³ Letter from Joel to Amy Spingarn, Box 1. Joel and Amy Spingarn Collection. Schomburg Research Center.

⁷⁴ Lewis, Biography of a Race, 563.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 563.

that emerged at the end of World War I, Du Bois reasserted his commitment to defending the rights and honour of the common man, and re-shaped his tainted public image from that of an elitist eager to betray his principles and his constituents for a military bribe into a champion of justice and equality for ‘The People’.

Du Bois proceeded to transform his reputation with uncharacteristic caution but with typical cunning. His armistice editorial ‘Peace’, written in December 1918, was a concise, melodramatic meditation that expressed gratitude for the end of civilization’s first global conflict. He exalted: ‘The nightmare is over. The world awakes. The long horrible years of dreadful night are passed. Behold the sun! . . . And now suddenly we awake! It is done. We are sane. We are alive.’⁷⁶ Du Bois refrained from asserting judgment or alleging blame; however, a separate announcement within the same opinion piece, subtitled ‘War History’, provided a subtle clue as to how Du Bois planned to refurbish his reputation. Du Bois announced that the NAACP had appropriated funds and commissioned him to compile a history of the Negro in the Great War. He had been charged to create an editorial board of Negro scholars, soldiers, and officers to assist him in the task, so that the organization could issue an ‘authentic, scientific and definitive history of our part in this war’.⁷⁷ While the announcement made no specific claim that the contributions of African Americans in the success of the war effort had been misrepresented or underappreciated, Du Bois, without ever admitting or apologizing for his editorial indiscretions, had created the ideal opportunity to reassert himself as a militant leader committed solely to truth and the validation of African Americans as worthy and deserving citizens. In spite of Du Bois’ previous poor judgment, ‘civil rights-conscious African-Americans expected audacity above all from Du Bois, his magazine, and his organization’,⁷⁸ and he retained enough editorial and political clout to respond to his Great War failures. Du Bois’ re-radicalized history of Negro

⁷⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois. ‘Opinions of W.E.B. Du Bois’. *The Crisis* 17 (December 1918): 59.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62. The editorial board Du Bois promised to organize was never formed. The project, after the publication of ‘An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War’ in June, 1919, was abandoned.

⁷⁸ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 481.

military efforts would both define the NAACP's post-war political agenda and find resonance with Du Bois' reading audience, who would find life after the battle to secure democracy in Europe still filled with hypocrisy, racism, and violent suppression of those who sought equality in the United States.

On February 17, 1919 over one million people honoured the return of New York City's Negro 369th Regiment, 'The Harlem Hellfighters', from World War I with a parade up Fifth Avenue from lower Manhattan to Harlem's 135th Street. Black veterans had fought in the name of preserving democracy throughout Europe and returned to the United States decorated heroes to the hundreds of thousands African Americans who lined the streets of New York that day to welcome them home. But the soldiers of the 369th and other Negro regiments returned to America with much more than war stories and medals. Black soldiers paraded the streets of St. Louis, Chicago, and New York City in the spring and early summer of 1919 with memories of the French, many of whom had treated black soldiers with the same dignity, gratitude and respect that had been expressed to their white counterparts.

They returned with the knowledge that African American soldiers participated in World War I within a segregated military that in large part consigned them to service roles: building roads, digging trenches, and unloading cargo. They served and sacrificed in the name of democracy, and returned with the belief that because of their eagerness to enlist (some 2.3 million African Americans enlisted with the Selective Service) and fight as Americans, they had earned for themselves and all African Americans the right to democratic liberties and justice. Veterans no longer simply hoped their service in World War I would persuade Americans to allow African Americans the privileges of first class citizens; soldiers returned emboldened, fully expecting, even demanding, that the principles of democracy for which they had shed blood in Europe would be applied to all American citizens; and

thus, they returned from war with an energized spirit of pride and independence that quickly spread throughout Harlem and black communities across the country.⁷⁹

Yet the prevalence of race riots and lynchings of African American veterans still in uniform challenged their optimism instantaneously.⁸⁰ As this militant spirit proliferated rapidly from soldiers returning from France into the black masses, Du Bois was eager to capitalize on the optimism growing within African American communities, retard the white public's demand for a return to normalcy, and build a new foundation for the pursuit of democratic life in the United States. After the War Department denied Du Bois his captaincy and suspended efforts regarding Joel Spingarn's special bureau, Du Bois, spurned and reeling from his very public humiliation, re-commissioned himself as the voice of criticism against the US government, the voice of the New Negro. His first editorial that criticized the war appeared in May, 1919 and implicitly sought to redeem Du Bois for the imprudence he had exhibited in writing 'Close Ranks' and the editorials of 1918.

'Returning Soldiers' read like a roadmap of his personal betrayal, one emblematic of the treachery against African Americans typified by the United States throughout its history. Recalibrating his own ideological views to embody the nation's experience, Du Bois preached:

(W)e fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant southern oligarchy entrenched in Washington, we fought in bitter resignation. For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult—for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight, also.⁸¹

⁷⁹ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 189.

⁸⁰ Reardon, 'The Great War', 1140.

⁸¹ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Opinion: Returning Soldiers'. *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 13.

The loathing Du Bois had reserved for Germany as the greatest threat to the darker races and democracy was now directed squarely at a United States that had betrayed Du Bois' patriotism. The editorial claimed the government and War Department overrepresented the Jim Crow South; culturally and politically, America continued to condone the atrocities (lynching, disenfranchisement, and violent oppression) *The Crisis* had railed against throughout the 1910s. Whereas Germany had been the greater of two evils and the enemy of earlier editorials that justified his support of the war, Du Bois now condemned the military service that he had glorified, rationalizing that Negro soldiers had been forced into combat unwillingly and equating that sacrifice with the greatest of African American travesties.⁸² 'We return from the slavery of uniform which the world's madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil garb'.⁸³ Claiming that vindictive fate and the world's madness had demanded Negroes to mobilize, Du Bois conveniently overlooked his own culpability in promoting military participation in order to turn his readers' and the public's attention to how transformative this experience would be for America's future. 'This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for

⁸² Some historians, such as Lewis, have examined Du Bois' intellectual evolution in 1918 and 1919 exclusively in its political contexts, arguing that Du Bois may not have had another viable option in 1918 other than to cast his lot with the US government. By 1919, Du Bois appeared no longer concerned with government retribution (Sedition Act) for his fiery criticisms, nor did he see the need to cooperate with white institutions to achieve mutual goals. My concern of a 'political context' only analysis is based in the timing of Du Bois' actions, relative to his captaincy, the public backlash against his dubious action, and the extent to which he felt threatened by government censorship. By late 1918, Du Bois was already gathering evidence for his 1919 editorials that uncovered the racist treatment of Negro soldiers. If the influence of the Sedition Act was a motivating factor in acquiescing in 1918, Du Bois appeared less threatened by government prosecution, even though the expression of opinion that cast the government or the war in a negative light remained an active political issue. While President Wilson released or reduced the sentences of some two hundred prisoners convicted under the Espionage Act or the Sedition Act in March, 1919, many others, including Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer waged a public campaign to ensure a peacetime version of the Sedition Act remained intact. Du Bois would have received a circular authored by Palmer outlining his rationale to newspaper editors in January 1919, citing the dangerous foreign-language press and radical attempts to create unrest in African American communities. The government continued to pressure newspapers and magazines throughout 1919, yet Du Bois no longer supported the US military. Certainly, the evidence of Negro troops experiencing racism triggered Du Bois' shift in opinion about the US military. My point, however, is that Du Bois' individual betrayal was a factor as well, particularly with regards to the fervour in which he attacked the US government in his editorials in the summer of 1919.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14.

which we fought! But it is *our* fatherland. It was right for us to fight. The faults of our country are our faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again.’⁸⁴ Without expressing contrition, Du Bois argued that the mistakes of African American support of the war had been a shared liability. He still professed it had been ‘right for us to fight’, but insisted the miscalculations belonged to everyone. Du Bois sought personal vindication for his misguided advice and leadership by encouraging readers to accept collective responsibility and re-orient their anger and betrayal toward the radical confrontation of domestic injustice.

Characterizing the new militancy embodied by Negro veterans, Du Bois concluded:

But by the God in Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against 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.⁸⁵

Du Bois recognized that African Americans would and should no longer tolerate the injustices of Jim Crow or the institutional racism of American democracy. The war had infused a powerful sense of self-worth and self-determination among African Americans that would challenge the effectiveness of white intimidation as a weapon of submission. Racism would no longer be accepted passively as an inherent condition of American democracy. Negro soldiers had died abroad in the name of freedom for others, and if America would not grant similar liberties to its own citizens of colour, they too were now willing to die rather than remain victims of oppression. In the eyes of many, Du Bois’ editorial represented the most dramatic and far reaching articulation of the New Negro spirit. After surviving the bloody atrocities war and saving democracy in Europe, Du Bois’ post-war radicalism primed African Americans to fight for themselves against domestic ‘forces of hell’. The

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

empowerment associated with brave Negro soldiers who fought and died to secure civil and human rights for others would now translate to confronting the hypocrisies rampant in American democracy. Du Bois, rebuffed in his attempts to work for change from within government institutions, re-cast himself as the voice of New Negro protest, leading a disenfranchised nation unwilling to wait patiently for equality.

In the same month that 'Returning Soldiers' appeared, *The Crisis* published, 'Documents of War', a collection of eight letters and classified memos which Du Bois had acquired during his four month post-war tour in France. The documents, dated from August, 1918 through February, 1919, revealed coordinated American military efforts to curtail collegiality and mutual respect growing between French and Negro troops, to undermine the legitimacy and authority of Negro officers, as well as provided eyewitness accounts of humiliating and horrific treatment of Negro soldiers. The most scathing document was a classified memo sent by the War Department through the French Committee and directed to French officers who commanded Negro regiments and worked directly with Negro officers. Written immediately after Du Bois had been denied his captaincy and signed by Artillery Colonel Jean Linard, Chief Officer of the French Mission and primary liaison with the American Army, the memo outlined the status Negroes occupied in American society, defined stereotypical characteristics of the Negro character, and provided recommendations regarding how to lead and subvert the authority of Negro soldiers. Citing public protest and fear that 'contact with the French will inspire in black Americans aspirations which to them [the whites] appear intolerable', the communiqué proclaimed that American opinion regarding prejudice was 'unanimous'.⁸⁶ US officials rationalized that the United States fostered a segregated society because '(t)he black is constantly being censured for his want of intelligence and discretion, his lack of civic and professional conscience and for his tendency

⁸⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Documents of the War'. *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 16.

toward undue familiarity’,⁸⁷ and would create ‘a menace of degeneracy were it not that an impassible gulf has been made between them’.⁸⁸ Critical of the French for treating Negro soldiers ‘with familiarity and indulgence’, the memo claimed French tolerance and collegiality was an ‘affront to their national policy’ and every effort should be made to avoid ‘profoundly estranging American opinion’.⁸⁹

The communiqué offered three recommendations to ensure that the French did not further mishandle Negro troops and alienate its essential ally. First, prevent the rise of intimacy. French officers ‘cannot deal with them on the same plane as white American officers’ and ‘must not eat with them, must not shake hands or seek to talk or meet with them outside the requirements of military service’.⁹⁰ Second, the US warned that ‘(w)e must not commend too highly the black American troops, particularly in the presence of [white] Americans’; and finally, French officers needed to ‘(m)ake a point of keeping the native cantonment population from “spoiling” the Negroes’, pointing specifically to public expressions of ‘intimacy between white women with black men’ as an ‘over-weening menace to the prestige of the white race’.⁹¹

Other documents in Du Bois’ collection reiterated how Army officials perpetuated long standing stereotypes of violent, hyper-sexual black men in efforts to undermine their legitimacy as soldiers and military officers. In a December letter written to Tennessee Senator Kenneth D. McKellar, Allen J. Greer, Chief of Staff of the African American 92nd Division, claimed that approximately 30 cases of rape had occurred during US training, including ‘one where twenty-two men at Camp Grant raped one woman’.⁹² Greer also alleged that Negro soldiers had attempted an additional fifteen sexual assaults and had committed ‘numerous accidental shootings,

⁸⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁹¹ Ibid., 20.

⁹² Ibid., 21.

several murders'.⁹³ Negroes, Greer estimated, were equipped to 'do anything but fight', and racial inferiority propelled them to 'engage very largely in the pursuit of French women', making them 'dangerous to no one except themselves and women'.⁹⁴

Beyond the threat of violence, sexual or otherwise, Du Bois published classified letters that depicted white officers claiming Negro soldiers also exhibited non-violent, stereotypical incompetency's that made them unfit for service and leadership. In an effort to replace coloured officers, Colonel Herschel Tupes, Commanding Officer of the 372nd Infantry, contended that a 'characteristic tendency' existed among coloured officers that led them to 'neglect the welfare of their men and to perform their duties in a perfunctory manner'.⁹⁵ Tupes insisted that black officers should be replaced by whites 'of like grade'; however, 'if white officers are not available as replacements; white officers of lower grades (should) be forwarded instead'.⁹⁶ The attitudes of Colonels Tupes and Greer exemplified the worst fears of many African Americans who had doubted that military service would translate into social equality and racial justice. The same stereotypes used for centuries to justify slavery, segregation, and inequality continued to be disseminated as a means to impede and constrain black soldiers who were now fighting and dying for the United States.

Publishing classified letters and memos, even under the threat of violating the Sedition Act, allowed Du Bois to reveal the hypocrisy of American military departments and officials who pursued a global war to save democracy while insisting that the French aid in perpetuating inequality and segregation for African Americans. Du Bois' editorial strategy seemed clear: undermine the legitimacy and sincerity of US relations with Negro soldiers; reveal the duplicity and deceit of the US government; create sympathy for Du Bois' earlier miscalculations; and unleash

⁹³ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

fervent criticism that directed the 'New Negro' to rise up and fight directly against domestic injustices that the United States had no intention of addressing or alleviating. Du Bois' editorial strategy to provoke outrage among African Americans was certainly effective; the May issue sold more copies than any other in the history of the magazine.⁹⁷

Du Bois followed his May triumph with, 'An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War'. By far the longest piece ever published in *The Crisis*, the June article summarized the contributions of soldiers of colour: American Negroes, Sengalese, Congolese, and black British West Indians. Divided into sections identified by roles (Stevedores, Negro Officers), issues (Prejudice) and units (93rd Division, 370th Infantry, et al), Du Bois' historical overview refuted many of the claims that had been made by white American military officials regarding black contributions to the war. While much of Du Bois' essay indirectly countered the racist attacks by providing summaries of contributions, highlights of service, and honours awarded to black soldiers, he also challenged the assessment of the 92nd Division made by Chief of Staff Allen Greer that Du Bois had published a month earlier. Du Bois claimed officers and soldiers of the 92nd suffered from the open and covert opposition of General Charles Clarendon Ballou and his 'southern white officers who despised "nigger" officers'.⁹⁸ Du Bois declared Ballou himself 'was well-meaning, but weak, vacillating, without great ability and afraid of southern criticism'. In order to compensate, Du Bois maintained Ballou 'sought to make his Negro officers feel personal responsibility for the Houston outbreak'⁹⁹ and 'ordered them to submit to certain personal humiliations and discriminations without protest', spreading 'hatred and distrust among his officers and men' before the division had

⁹⁷ Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 463. US Postmaster Albert S. Burleson had wanted to suppress the May issue, which according to Rampersad (138), sold a record 106,000 copies.

⁹⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War'. *The Crisis* 18 (June 1919): 64.

⁹⁹ Du Bois is referring to the deadly Houston race riot that occurred on August 23, 1917 involving 156 soldiers from the all-black 24th Infantry stationed at Camp Logan.

been fully formed.¹⁰⁰ Du Bois acknowledged that '(w)ithout doubt there was among colored as among white American officers much inefficiency, due to lack of adaptability, training and the hurry of preparation'.¹⁰¹ What Du Bois argued, however, was, unlike their white counterparts, Ballou's commanders sought to remove Negro officers they claimed were ineffective 'because they were colored'; their charge of inefficiency 'was a wholesale one against their "race and nature"'.¹⁰² Many of Greer's claims regarding violence, rape, and attempted sexual assault were undocumented hearsay that Du Bois simply ignored in defending the 92nd Division. His detailed accounts of events from the perspective of black soldiers, particularly the alleged failures of the 368th Infantry, provided a more balanced evaluation of shortcomings and mistakes, an account that weighed the mistakes of white field officers and their white commanders more evenly alongside the errors and faults of black enlisted men.

After his fervent diatribe against the white military establishment, Du Bois turned his attention toward identifying black officers who had obstructed African American war efforts. In July's editorial, 'Our Success and Failures', Du Bois re-directed the criticism he had received from encouraging Negro participation in World War I squarely onto the shoulders of Emmett J. Scott, former right hand man of Booker T. Washington, and Special Assistant to the Secretary of War charged with overseeing Negro affairs. While noting that the service of 200,000 strong led by a thousand black officers had 'gained the sympathy and respect of France and the civilized world—and . . . a new self-respect and a new consciousness of power', Du Bois conveniently connected the intelligence scheme that produced his proposed captaincy with Scott. Initially, the piece introduced Scott as a sympathetic figure who was disappointed that Spingarn's initiative was not organized and that the Government would not have 'the benefit of your counsel and advice'.¹⁰³ Instead of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁰² Ibid., 67.

¹⁰³ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Opinion: Our Success and Failure'. *The Crisis* 18 (July 1919): 127.

continuing his praise, however, Du Bois proceeded to recount the abject mistreatment of soldiers and grievous conditions they had experienced under Scott's supervision, including: the dismissal and transfer of officers regardless of merit; wide and continuous distribution of propaganda against an "inferior" race; reiteration of unfounded charges of cowardice and infamous crime; deliberate attempts to discourage the morale; and, mistreating, overworking and enslaving stevedore labourers.¹⁰⁴ Professing to serve the role of 'public mentor and adviser', Du Bois confronted Scott directly in the editorial, determined to know why these men 'could be crucified, insulted degraded and maltreated . . .'.¹⁰⁵ He challenged Scott to explain why he had concealed fatal knowledge, and that if Scott had lacked the authority to do anything, 'how did he know that others were equally helpless? How did he know that all of us together would be equally helpless'?¹⁰⁶ Du Bois extended his accusations further, suggesting Scott had been morally depraved and professionally incompetent, allegations that a year earlier he might have viewed as unpatriotic, if not also an act of treason. He questioned why Scott could not have passed information along to his friends in the Negro press 'quietly' and wondered aloud: 'Was his only recourse silence and the repeated assurance to inquiry that everything was going well'?¹⁰⁷

Exactly one year after being accused of selling-out Negro soldiers for personal profit, Du Bois fingered Scott as the true antagonist and exposed him as a traitor. Attacking Scott's callous and convenient ignorance of the horrendous conditions of black soldiers allowed Du Bois to rationalize his earlier misjudgements (like everyone in the Negro press he, too, had been misled) and redirect the accusatory anger of those who had attacked him. Du Bois' motives in condemning Scott directly and singularly, however, surpassed those of a responsible investigative journalist. By uncovering Scott's culpability in the pages of *The Crisis*, Du Bois earned the public

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 129.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 130.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

retribution he had sought, not only because Scott had ignored the atrocious treatment of Negroes in the military, but also because of the role he had played in undermining Spingarn's military intelligence scheme and Du Bois' captaincy. To his readers, Du Bois' post-war editorials and articles unearthed an insidious and pervasive prejudice toward soldiers and re-established him as the pre-eminent leader of African America. In the name of seeking the truth, he conveniently rehabilitated his own image, exposed the depths of racism in the American military, and identified the real villains who misguided African Americans. His personal vendetta, against Scott and the entire US War Department that had betrayed him, remained implicit, couched as an unintended consequence of his newly enlightened ideologies and personal redemption. The greater historical consequence of Du Bois' quest for vindication, capturing the political voice of the New Negro, helped Du Bois realize his vision for the common cause that could mobilize an army of citizens, one in which *The Crisis* would play an exclusive role in educating and motivating citizens.¹⁰⁸

The end of World War I and the race riots of Red Summer in 1919 marked the inevitable confrontation of the democratic doctrine that justified the America's military involvement in World War I with the institutional racism and African American struggle for freedom at home. Race riots throughout the country in small

¹⁰⁸ See Letter from Du Bois to Joel Spingarn, 28 October 1914. Du Bois' letter revealed precisely how he viewed the relationship between political organization and its magazine, a dynamic which assuredly would not have been accepted by the vast majority of his fellow board members. Again justifying his insistence for unfettered editorial leeway, Du Bois contended: 'What I am working for with *The Crisis* is to make the N.A.A.C.P. possible. To-day it is *not* possible'. Du Bois argued that the only way to free ten million African Americans, to unleash the power and organization of their number on a national scale was through education, and unsurprisingly, Du Bois confessed his magazine was uniquely qualified for the mission. '. . . *The Crisis* can train them: not simply in its words, but in its manner, its pictures, its conception of life, its subsidiary enterprises. With a circulation of a hundred thousand we shall have begun work. Then the real machinery of the N.A.A.C.P. can be perfected'. In the extreme, reaching the circulation target he had projected to Spingarn in 1914 would have affirmed everything Du Bois believed to be true about his importance within the NAACP and the degree to which the organization was dependent upon *The Crisis* to achieve its mission. In the very least, circulation numbers over 100,000 placed Du Bois, once again, beyond reproach or control of the Board, and utilize the magazine to pursue his objectives.

towns like Longview, Texas and in metropolises as large as Chicago all possessed one common denominator: The Negro's vocal intolerance to intimidation and injustice, and his willingness to fight and die in his own defence. These riots and the black martyrs who died confronting oppression signified the onset of an American ideological conflict, a battle between two racially-divided and mutually exclusive views of democracy that subsequently galvanized the New Negro spirit. Until 1919, many African Americans had resisted institutional oppression by utilizing subtle, covert, and subversive means of insurrection. But the end of World War I led African Americans into the streets to celebrate their heroic contributions to the American victory over despotism and confront the hypocrisy of their own government. Never before had a public spirit of political rebellion disseminated throughout the country, across class lines and geographic boundaries, to unify African Americans in a collective cause against American injustice. The 'New Negro' had disembarked on the shores of Manhattan, and returned to the segregated urban neighbourhoods and rural hamlets governed by Jim Crow laws with an emboldened, militant spirit that would dominate black political and cultural life for the next decade. Du Bois' 1919 editorials publicized this reality and gave a voice to the New Negro.¹⁰⁹

The most significant motives for Du Bois' persistently changing editorial positions throughout World War I may never fully be understood. After his public humiliation

¹⁰⁹ Du Bois applied a similar public relations strategy in 1925-1926 after the publication of Locke's, The New Negro. When rivals (who praised young writers mentored by Locke) challenged the effectiveness of his leadership and labelled his views as those of an 'old school' relic, Du Bois shifted ideologically in an effort to counter the decline of his reputation and to boost *The Crisis*' rapidly dwindling circulation. Du Bois' management of his role in the controversy over art vs. propaganda (see Chapter Five) closely resembled how he handled the attacks on his reputation during the Great War controversy in three distinct ways: 1) How he protected his leadership position as editor of *The Crisis*; 2) how he attacked rivals on the grounds of race and the insidious influences of white benefactors (Carl Van Vechten, et al); and 3) how he fluctuated readily between ideological positions to suit his needs at the moment, adopting whatever positions that allowed him to protect his turf. Alain Locke and Charles S. Johnson replaced the NAACP board as the institution which challenged his unilateral authority and supremacy as African America's pre-eminent intellectual. Ironically, they supplanted him simply by executing his own aesthetic philosophy more effectively.

of 1918, the dramatic circulation boost¹¹⁰ created by his summer editorials restored Du Bois' faith in the righteousness of his vision to lead the newly empowered Negro brimming with confidence and demanding equality. That spirit, fuelled by the redeeming power of the beauty and truth of the authentic Negro experience, motivated how he proselytized black pride throughout the pages of *The Crisis* and restored his reputation as a relentless, uncompromising man of principle. *The Crisis*, not so coincidentally, experienced a 'return to militancy' radicalized by the unrealized promise and broken promises of the Great War. For Du Bois, art and literature would become the primary media to celebrate an inclusive view of life that legitimized and lauded the truth and beauty of the common Negro experience, the means by which he would continue to redeem himself to ordinary African Americans he had misguided during the Great War.¹¹¹

As his attention turned increasingly toward cultural issues in the early 1920s, Du Bois attempted to integrate the new militancy and entitlement spreading throughout African America into cultural productions that celebrated this collective courage and represented its moral superiority to the European cultural values left in shambles after World War I. Du Bois believed the translation of this spirit into palpable change could be realized most effectively in the potential for art to achieve what military service and political protest had not: social equality and acceptance as full

¹¹⁰ Circulation spikes like those in May and June associated with reporting that uncovered institutionalized racism, the miscarriage of justice, and misrepresentation of African Americans had a precedent. In September, 1917, Du Bois' article, 'The Massacre of East St. Louis', contradicted mainstream reporting on the Illinois race riots and pushed circulation of *The Crisis* to the brink of his long-coveted 50,000 mark that he believed would achieve financial independence from philanthropists who supported the NAACP. In this instance, the magazine maintained circulation figure near this level in subsequent months, topping 70,000 by the beginning of 1919. According to Lewis (539) *The Crisis* circulation peaked (104,000 copies sold) in June 1919. By February 1920, circulation returned to a more normal 72,000, and thereafter declined steadily until Du Bois resigned in 1934. In 1921, 50,000 copies was the average sale; by 1924, 35,000 copies. Despite discrepancies in Lewis and Rampersad's circulation numbers, the May and June *Crisis* numbers sold over 30,000 issues beyond regular subscribers in 1919, but could not consistently sustain this level of sales.

¹¹¹ This experience influenced Du Bois understanding of how 'propaganda' pushes magazine sales. When *The Crisis* experienced increased competition from new rivals in the 1920s, Du Bois insistence that all art must be propaganda aligned him into a position that he believed would help him stem the tide of declining circulation, as well as differentiate himself from those, like Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, who had adopted similar aesthetic positions and executed them with great critical acclaim and some financial success.

citizens. Buoyed by his reincarnation as the voice of the New Negro in America, Du Bois spent much of the next decade defining and redefining the principles and values of an indigenous Black Aesthetic, before ultimately rejecting the very ideology that he had legitimized. His aesthetic transformation through the 1920s paralleled Du Bois' intellectual evolution during The Great War, both in its ideological trajectory and the personal catalysts that played significant roles in modifying his beliefs. Du Bois' World War I editorials reflected a distinctive pattern of repositioning his ideologies that continued throughout the 1920s when debates over African American military participation turned to controversies over the function and purpose of Negro art as political propaganda. Du Bois' shifts in thinking always contained a political and public rationale; however, his intellectual transformations also conveniently served his own interests while often countering and/or co-opting those who challenged his authority, culturally and commercially.

Chapter Three: Du Bois' Aesthetic Glorification of the 'Other 90 Percent' and the Emergence of a New Negro Cultural Ideology

'We want everything that is said about us to tell of the best and highest and noblest in us. We insist that our art and propaganda be one. This is wrong and in the end it is harmful'.¹ (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1921)

'Thus all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda'.² (W.E.B. Du Bois, 1926)

In a formative five-year, post-war period, Du Bois' principles for a Black Aesthetic evolved so rapidly and so dramatically that by 1926, he fervently opposed artistic criteria he had once staunchly defended as righteous and just. In 1921, Du Bois believed art should be more than propaganda; art could be, should be, a representation of every intrinsic and extrinsic nuance of blackness. He recognized that tremendous opportunities awaited African Americans in a cultural climate of self-determination and overt rebellion against the constraints of American racial inequality. Before a Harlem Renaissance would occur, and years before Alain Locke would canonize the newfound pride and independence of young writers in his 1925 anthology The New Negro, Du Bois recognized the impact a politicized New Negro might have upon liberating black cultural production, and in turn, articulated the concept of a Black Aesthetic. What caused Du Bois to renounce his own beliefs less than five years later and turn against those who actively pursued the fundamental principles of his Black Aesthetic has remained an essential issue in understanding Du Bois' significance to the history of both the New Negro and the Harlem Renaissance.

¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Negro Art'. *The Crisis* 22 (June 1921): 55-56. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from The Crisis, Volume 1, 1911-1925. (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), 301.

² W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Criteria of Negro Art'. *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290-297. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from The Crisis, Volume 2, 1926-1934. (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), 448.

Assessing the significance of his personal motives for this brazen ideological change has often been viewed as secondary or insignificant. The traditional view has held that external and cultural catalysts, particularly his objections to pernicious white influences that he believed compromised New Negro artists and their aesthetic values, justified Du Bois' absolute evolution. Traditionally, historians, including Nathan Huggins and David Levering Lewis, have portrayed Du Bois as an prescient sage who saw the renaissance as corrupted by white influence and decadence; while others, as in the case of Langston Hughes and Arnold Rampersad, viewed him as a reactionary relic of a conservative black traditionalism who defended the role of art exclusively as a tool for political propaganda and racial progress. This proponent/opponent dichotomy used to gauge Du Bois' influence and place in shaping the Harlem Renaissance, however, is over-simplified. The evolution of his ideology from that of a vocal advocate of liberated self-expression to a hard-line supporter of literary agitprop provided the most significant insight into the fierce intellectual rivalries that defined his battle to control cultural production and the intellectual terms of a new Black Aesthetic during the 1920s.

This chapter examines Du Bois' views on art immediately after World War I with particular focus on how the rise of Marcus Garvey compelled him to create a Black Aesthetic that celebrated the common Negro experience and shaped aesthetic principles that contrasted and co-opted Garvey's radicalism. On the heels of his World War I editorials which had roused both public humiliation and redemption, Du Bois, by 1921, came to celebrate the common Negro experience as a primary inspiration for black cultural achievement. The emergence of a new political and intellectual rival who challenged his relevance and ability to speak about and for the ordinary Negro experience forced Du Bois to respond to Garvey's popular message of black pride, his commercial success, and his potential to supplant him as the leader of the New Negro. Criticized as a faux-Negro, a multi-racial patrician whose elitist ideologies made him unfit to represent African American, Du Bois countered Garvey by reaching out to and lauding the 'everyman', which became a major

intellectual foundation for the aesthetic values he established in 1921 and the context in which his beliefs would subsequently evolve after Garvey's demise.

This chapter also explores both the early stages of Du Bois' dramatic ideological evolution regarding the relationship between political propaganda and art and literature in achieving racial equality, as well as measuring the personal and professional consequences of his declining influence upon young writers and artists. Du Bois' cultural mores evolved rapidly and radically to compensate for the rise of Garvey and his diminishing influence upon artists who, historically, defined the spirit and cultural ideology of the New Negro. The perpetual transformations of his ideology epitomized how complicated the problem of aesthetics and racial politics were artistically and personally throughout the decade.

Understanding the intellectual catalysts and personal motives for his aesthetic evolution are central to my argument that previous histories have largely ignored the significance of Du Bois' desperation to remain African America's pre-eminent leader who would shape and guide the creation of an emerging, indigenous New Negro cultural ideology throughout the 1920s. In order to consider the significance of Du Bois' autocratic vision of leadership and the extent to which his changing intellectual views are reactionary responses to rivals who persistently threatened his cultural and political omnipotence, this chapter pursues four primary objectives: 1) to substantiate the intellectual basis for Du Bois' views on the meaning and purpose of art and literature between 1905-1921; 2) to uncover the intellectual consequences of his disdain for the growing influence of his publishing and literary rivals; 3) to chart the beginning of his decline of his status and influence during the rise of the Harlem Renaissance; and, 4) to introduce the ideological foundation that eventually led him to condemn most New Negro authors and contradict his own aesthetic position on the role of art as propaganda. Du Bois' sudden metamorphosis led directly to his efforts to launch a culture war of morality against the most influential young writers of the Harlem Renaissance; writers who, ironically, created art and

literature that exemplified strikingly similar aesthetic principles that Du Bois had endorsed unequivocally at the beginning of the 1920s.

Du Bois' vision for a Black Aesthetic articulated during the early 1920s contained one constant: however subjective his notions of Truth, Beauty and authentic representation, the pride and exceptional nature of black folk life radiated throughout Du Bois' writings. By calling for the creation of an indigenous aesthetic that honoured ordinary life, Du Bois modified his previous beliefs about the 'Talented Tenth' that he had defended throughout much of his early intellectual and political life. The purpose of art, Du Bois' beliefs about why art should be created and how it should be utilized to inspire audiences and effect change, transformed radically throughout the first three decades of the 20th century. First, from his insistence on progress through unequivocal support of a 'Talented Tenth'; then, to unrestrained optimism for the celebration of black common folk through art as a means to achieve social equality and civil rights, and, ultimately, to poignant scepticism regarding the potential of Negro artists to counter the manipulation and oppression by racist American cultural institutions. Subsequently, Du Bois could not then and cannot now be associated singularly with conservative genteel traditions or the principles of New Negro ideology.

Du Bois' Writings and *The Crisis*: Literature Should Celebrate the Common Man?

In his ground breaking cultural history, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, George Hutchinson opined that in order to understand fully the New Negro movement, one must make 'a careful examination of the *overall* cultural politics of the journals and publishing houses that promoted it and of the conditions that gave rise to these journals and houses . . .'.³ Hutchinson believed a cultural history of the institutions (magazines and publishing houses) complimented the ideologies, biographies, and creative productions of the artists whose work created and fuelled

³ George Hutchinson. *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 125.

the movement. The historical significance of art and literature, Hutchinson posited, depended heavily upon evaluating the unique processes of production, distribution, and reception and deconstructing relationships that existed both between each process and the overarching aesthetic, the criteria utilized to determine what is beautiful, what is inspiring, and what warrants consideration as art.

In 1905, Du Bois had recognized that before African Americans could shape and define their own aesthetic, they must create a journal that, in his words, could provide '(i)llustrations attempting to portray Negro life on its beautiful and interesting side', portraits that might work to change the minds how people viewed African Americans at the turn of the 20th century.⁴ Although Du Bois had often 'been identified disparagingly with the conservative literary practices of The Genteel Tradition and with the efforts of Negroes to become assimilated by separating themselves from the folk culture',⁵ he first articulated the need for an autonomous, self-sufficient medium of production and distribution to achieve an authentic Black Aesthetic over twenty years before the pinnacle of the Harlem Renaissance.

Once he assumed editorial control of the NAACP's political organ, Du Bois recognized his opportunity to build a truly Negro cultural production had arrived. He envisaged a journal that could be 'cast on broad intelligent lines, interpreting a new race consciousness to the modern world and revealing the inner meaning of the modern world to the emerging races'.⁶ Immediately, Du Bois expressed a keen interest in the important role literature would play in fulfilling his vision of an ideal Negro journal. Writing about the death of renowned black poet Frances Watkins Harper in the sixth number of *The Crisis*, Du Bois pleaded with young writers and his audience to recognize the lesson of the poet's death; the need to create a finer, more plentiful body of Negro literature. Citing that among ten million there now

⁴ 'Letter to Jacob Schiff, 13 April 1905'. In W.E.B. Du Bois. Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961. ed. Herbert Aptheker. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 78.

⁵ Darwin T. Turner, 'W. E. B. Du Bois and the Theory of a Black Aesthetic'. In The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined. (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 10.

⁶ 'Letter to Jacob Schiff, 13 April 1905', 78.

existed only ‘one poet, one novelist, and two or three recognized writers of articles and essays’, Du Bois proclaimed his readers must support the cultivation of a languishing culture: ‘Here is a nation whose soul is still dumb, yet big with feeling, song and story. What are we doing to develop writers to express this wealth of emotion fitly? Very little’.⁷ Du Bois identified Negro literary culture as ‘a tremendous field for improvement’, and promised within six months, if *The Crisis* ‘receives the same remarkable encouragement as in the past’ he would introduce ‘a matured plan for encouraging young writers to follow in the hallowed footsteps of Frances Watkins Harper’.⁸ Although that formal plan materialized nearly a decade later, within the year, *The Crisis* began to solicit literary manuscripts from its subscribers for publication and incorporated a celebration of black writing, music, and visual arts into the monthly editorial agenda of the political organ.

Du Bois recognized early on that the cultural and political implications of literature resonated far beyond the boundaries of featuring individual artistic expression. As a social scientist and political leader, Du Bois had long believed art to be an effective medium to foster racial pride and promote social ideas. Seizing the moment to nurture the potential of Negro art, he began to investigate the literary history of African Americans and establish the cultural foundations for intellectuals to conceptualize and artists to create according to a theory of receptive to the Negro perspective.

‘The Negro in Literature and Art’ presented an historical summary of the literary achievements of African Americans that both celebrated the rich yet sparse past achievements of writers and provided a clarion of hope for the magnificent untapped potential for artists to achieve greatness in the future. Beginning with Phyllis Wheatley, Du Bois outlined the black literary tradition from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th, emphasizing the significance of often ignored literary achievements, the autobiographical slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano and

⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois. ‘Editorial: Writers’. *The Crisis* 1 (April 1911): 21.

⁸ Ibid.

Frederick Douglass, for example, that represented the potential for writers to make significant contributions to American culture. Du Bois' essay also highlighted original trends among writers: the focus on politics in the 1870s, on the history and function of Negro churches in the 1880s, and the turn toward biography, novels and poems at the end of the 19th century. Writing primarily to an audience of white academics, Du Bois took a measured approach to his historical analysis, claiming that while 'the literary output of the American Negro has been both large and creditable . . . few great names have appeared and only here and there work that could be called first class . . .'.⁹ Du Bois declared this reality was 'not a peculiarity of Negro literature' and concluded his concise literary history by proclaiming a promising future for Negro artists. Acknowledging the persistent impact of economic stress and racial persecution that prevented 'the leisure and the poise' to create great literature, Du Bois exclaimed that 'never in the world has a richer mass of material been accumulated by a people than that which the Negroes possess today and are becoming conscious of. Slowly but surely they are developing artists of technic {sic} who will be able to use this material'.¹⁰ Du Bois professed that the public at-large was unaware of this enormous potential because 'everything touching the Negro is banned by magazines and publishers unless it take the form of caricature or bitter attack', sapping the literary flavour of Negro artists.¹¹ With rare exception, a talented Negro artist, Du Bois concluded, 'had little or no chance in a world determined to make him menial' and that his own summary of Negro literary and artistic achievement represented 'an imperfect indication of what the Negro race is capable of in America and in the world'.¹²

Throughout the 1910s, Du Bois persisted in his efforts to broaden the recognition of black cultural achievement and to help Negro artists and American reading audiences overcome the caricatures and stereotypes he acknowledged impeded artistic

⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'The Negro in Art and Literature'. *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (September 1913): 233.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹² *Ibid.*, 237.

potential. Distinguished literary scholar Arnold Rampersad noted that while *The Crisis* had developed an international flavour to its literary offerings, publishing essays about Brazilian writing, Japanese haikus, and the nascent literature of the Caribbean, the major emphasis was always on American Negroes and their culture.¹³ By 1916, Du Bois had formalized *The Crisis*' monthly efforts to highlight the potential of African American writers and literature, penning and publishing regular columns, such as 'The Looking Glass', that evaluated and promoted Negro cultural achievement. For example, in June, Du Bois featured frank and succinct reviews of seven volumes of Negro poetry that, in his analysis, ranged from 'good, bad and indifferent'. Novels by William N. Ashely and F.G. Gilmore were limited because their treatments of race 'were too near realities to write beautifully about them', while C.G. Woodson's second number of *The Journal of Negro History* 'should be in the hands of everyone interested in the Negro race'.¹⁴ Much as he had claimed three years earlier, the Negro novelist and poet still struggled to capture essential realities of American life; however, he also acknowledged the great promise exhibited in other literary forms, notably drama, and showed no hesitation in articulating bold claims that the arts could and would eventually reflect the beauty and truth of Negro life.¹⁵

¹³ Arnold Rampersad. *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 188-189.

¹⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'The Looking Glass'. *The Crisis* 12 (June 1916): 69.

¹⁵ In his essay, 'The Drama Among Black Folk', *The Crisis* 12 (August 1916), a review of the dramatic pageant 'The Star of Ethiopia', Du Bois wrote that 'The Negro is essentially dramatic. His greatest gift to the world had been and will be a gift of art, of appreciation and realization of beauty'. (169) This type of dramatic presentation fulfilled an important ambition Du Bois had for Negro art: 'It seemed to me that it might be possible with such a demonstration to get people interested in this development of Negro drama to teach on the one hand the colored people themselves the meaning of their history and their rich, emotional life through a new theatre, and on the other, to reveal the Negro life to the white world as a human, feeling thing. (171) Du Bois had conceived the idea for the pageant in 1911, which was first presented at the Emancipation Exposition in New York City in 1913. Acknowledging that 'the white public has shown little or no interest in the movement', the dramatic performance, he argued, 'demonstrated that pageantry among colored people is not only possible, but in many ways of unsurpassed beauty and can be made a means of uplift and education and the beginning of a folk drama. (173) Citing the growth of a considerable number of colored theatres and moving picture places, Du Bois claimed that 'a new and inner demand for Negro drama has arisen'. Du Bois predicted 'The next step will undoubtedly be the slow growth of a new folk drama built

The influence that *The Crisis* exercised on African American arts throughout the 1910s had no historical precedent or contemporary rival. With a circulation and financial resources that far exceeded those of its chief black competitors, Du Bois' journal reigned as 'the most important black magazine interested in the arts'. Even A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, editors of the up-and-coming radical socialist magazine *The Messenger*, admitted in July 1918 that he was 'the leading literateur' of the race, because music, art, and literature maintained prominent places in *The Crisis*' monthly survey of political and cultural events.¹⁶ Among black newspapers and the flurry of weekly and monthly periodicals that sprang up during and immediately after World War I, *The Crisis* remained firmly entrenched as 'the prime mover of black American literature'.¹⁷

In the summer of 1919, Du Bois, buoyed by overwhelming popular response to his fiery attacks against the US military, redoubled his efforts to create an idealized journal of Negro life and culture that he had envisioned in 1905. Once *The Crisis*' circulation had reached 100,000, financial independence afforded Du Bois the chance to make major changes in the magazine through the expansion of existing departments. Du Bois added a full-time literary editor, Jessie Redmond Fauset, to the staff of twelve, and, along with Augustus G. Dill, founded *The Brownies' Book*, an expansion of the successful yearly numbers of *The Crisis* devoted to young people and designed specifically to foster racial pride among black children.¹⁸ Because the dramatic increase in new subscribers covered the costs of expansion, The NAACP Board acquiesced to Du Bois' demands, and he now plunged head long into documenting the blossoming New Negro movement that he believed would fuel a cultural renaissance. A September editorial promised a substantial increase in the size of future issues, pages that would be devoted to additional illustrations, regular

around the actual experience of Negro life'. (169) This statement clearly foreshadowed some of the ideological principles of a Black Aesthetic he outlined in his 1921 landmark essay, 'Negro Art'.

¹⁶ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 189. *The Messenger* also admitted in its April-May 1920 issue that Du Bois had been the chief force behind the new radical pride, willingly anointing him the leader of the political New Negro.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

selections of Negro poetry and fiction, and ‘above all, one or two solid articles monthly on historical or sociological subjects affecting the Negro’.¹⁹ Du Bois also expanded his personal efforts to publicize cultural achievements and literacy. His regular review of literature of the race, ‘What To Read’, which was previously a slight ‘generally uncritical bibliography’ grew exponentially both in length and degree of sophisticated analysis ‘of books on race and politics, including novels, plays, and poetry’.²⁰

Even with Fauset on board as literary editor, Du Bois continued to micromanage *The Crisis* and commanded his expanded staff with absolute authority. Still a prolific reader and writer, Du Bois authored much of the editorial content related to literature and culture throughout the 1920s. Although Fauset was instrumental in identifying and publishing early works of prominent New Negro writers, such as Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, Du Bois remained the final editorial arbiter on decisions regarding which writers would and would not be published and what literary efforts deserved recognition in the hallowed pages of his great magazine.²¹

Some of Du Bois’ editorial decisions, particularly his unwillingness to collaborate and communicate with those artists selected for publication, drew the ire of young writers.²² One such public criticism made by Claude McKay sparked Du Bois’ mission to lead a renaissance of Negro literature. Claiming that *The Crisis* rejected some of his work because ‘colored editors, in general, defer to white editors’

¹⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois. ‘Opinion’. *The Crisis* 18 (September 1919): 235.

²⁰ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 142.

²¹ In 1919, Claude McKay became the first of the seminal artists of the Renaissance to publish in *The Crisis*. Langston Hughes’ first published poem, the canonical ‘The Negro Speaks of Rivers’, appeared in June 1921. In April 1922, Du Bois published Jean Toomer’s ‘Song of the Sun’, which would re-appear in his 1923 groundbreaking work, *Cane*. For various reasons, all three would grow disenchanted with Du Bois, Fauset, and *The Crisis*, and distanced themselves and/or severed relations entirely. These fractured relationships with three of the most important literary figures of the 1920s undermined the potential (and the remarkable competitive advantage) of *The Crisis* in leading the cultural renaissance Du Bois had long imagined and insisted was poised to occur in the aftermath of World War I.

²² As George Hutchinson noted: ‘Langston Hughes had to write to W.E.B. Du Bois more than once to ask him to return or destroy old poems of his, for work that he considered weak continued to appear in *The Crisis* without his prior knowledge. McKay had a similar experience’ (132).

opinions', Du Bois used McKay's denunciation to 'call our attention to the need of encouraging Negro writers'.²³ In his response to McKay's claims that he adhered too closely to the expectations of Western European cultural mores and the opinions of white American editors, Du Bois implied McKay's real issue as one of limited opportunities available in white publications, which discouraged aspiring writers. Echoing his 1911 feelings about the dearth of great Negro writers, Du Bois countered: 'We have today all too few, for the reason that there is a small market for their ideas among whites, and their energies are being called to other and more lucrative ways of earning a living. Nevertheless, we have literary ability and the race needs it. A renaissance of American Negro literature is due'.²⁴

Du Bois had few concerns about the potential artistic resources available to young artists, insisting that 'the material about us in the strange, heart-rending race tangle is rich beyond dream and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart'.²⁵ As he had throughout the previous decade, Du Bois remained optimistic about the fertile cultural ground that lay fallow and ready to be tended by the discerning artist. By stating the need for a renaissance, Du Bois acknowledged the existence of commercial barriers that still remained 15 years after he had pleaded with Schiff for financial assistance. Artists continued to suffer from the absence of an ample media to publish and distribute their cultural productions. Now, more than ever, artists energized by the cultural and political dynamics of the post-war New Negro movement needed the opportunities to publish widely and the benefits of greater patronage (preferably through subscriptions to *The Crisis*). Reader support would ensure writers like McKay could have both a readership primed to engage with his artistic endeavours, as well as provide financial support with a sustainable income. McKay's audacious challenge that Du Bois kowtowed to white cultural elites elicited, at least publically, sympathy from the iconic leader for the lack of media access available to black writers. Even at the pinnacle of its success, *The Crisis*

²³ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Negro Writers'. *The Crisis* 19 (April 1920): 299.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

alone could not possibly provide a medium for every deserving work of art created by an African American; so, instead of chastising McKay in print as Du Bois was prone to do to his critics, he directed his concern broadly and theoretically, to the racial and aesthetic dilemmas Negro artists confronted in 1920. Du Bois assumed the responsibility of leading the renaissance and establishing standards for a Black Aesthetic, one that rationalized why artists should not forego the greatness of their own culture to appease white artistic standards; one that encouraged the development of original concepts, methods, style and material inspired by the essential and authentic realities of Negro life.

In June 1921, Du Bois fulfilled the promise he made to readers of *The Crisis* a decade earlier to present a 'matured plan for encouraging young writers' and published his first essay devoted solely to justifying the need for a Black Aesthetic. 'Negro Art' proposed unfettered artistic freedom as a fundamental component of black art and insisted that African Americans must be allowed to confront the truth about their lives. Bolstered by the optimism and political courage inspired by the New Negro spirit, Du Bois insisted that artists should no longer bow under the pressure to solicit the approval of their audiences. Although artists had traditionally experienced peer and cultural pressure to represent idealized aspects of black life that proved the merit of African Americans as full citizens worthy of equality, Du Bois vowed to encourage all artists to develop a Black Aesthetic centred around the truth and beauty prevalent in common, everyday experience, even at the risk of public disapproval.

Du Bois felt new post-war political activism that condemned American racism and demanded equality should also encourage African American writers and their audiences to express confidence in their collective accomplishments and exhibit self-confidence 'to lend the whole stern human truth about ourselves to the transforming hand and seeing eye of the Artist, white or black . . .'.²⁶ Although Du Bois acknowledged that the truth about Negro life had historically been distorted to the

²⁶ Du Bois, 'Negro Art', 302.

detriment of all, he insisted that readers must stop rebelling against their humanity, their human frailties. Audiences, he advised, should not demand that art represent the best and noblest only. Insisting art and propaganda always be synonymous inhibited the creative powers of writers, painters, and musicians, as well as precluded broad cross-sections of Negro life that might inspire creative genius that produced authentic cultural representations. Ultimately, 'Negro Art' hypothesized that demanding art must always propagate a political agenda that advanced racial equality was wrong and ultimately harmful.

Du Bois realized, under some circumstances, propaganda could have a powerful and positive relationship with art. He argued that readers had the right, in the interest of justice and securing humane treatment, to encourage artists to produce something of the best in human character and not be judged only by their criminals and prostitutes. He argued that artists also had a basic right to produce art that was representative of the best in human character in order to insure that black representation was not simply an unfair presentation of the worst elements of the race. For Du Bois, this decision must be the choice of the artist and not a mandate from his audience. While he rationalized this treatment of exceptional aspects of the African American experience as a protective cultural seal against a racist American society, Du Bois urged that artists must also be encouraged to portray a realistic version of Negro life, one that not only conceded frailties, faults, and shortcomings existed, but also presented a rich, bountiful resource for creative inspiration.

Du Bois insisted that incorporating the lives of ordinary and flawed characters was tantamount to achieving truth in art and liberating artists and their audiences to pursue and appreciate an aesthetic that glorified native authenticity. All ethnic groups included ignorant and debased individuals, and since the existence of these elements represented a fundamental truth of the human condition, artists must be granted the right to paint the whole and not ignore that which is not as perfect or as idealistic as one might wish. Advocating for the unrestricted rights of the artist to present all aspects of Negro, Du Bois encouraged his audience to accept: 'When the

artist paints us he has a right to paint us as a whole and not ignore everything which is not as perfect as we would wish it to be. The black Shakespeare must portray his Iagos as well as his white Othellos'.²⁷

Sceptics who questioned Du Bois' emphasis upon truthful portraits of ignorant and debased characters felt these interpretations of common life fostered a collective fear; that 'evil' representations of African American life would be interpreted as racial, and not viewed as qualities of particular individuals, as they would be in art that represented dominant white culture. The images and characterizations of imperfect Negroes, his detractors argued, would be translated as conditions of race and racial failure, not renderings of the shortcomings of humans and humanity at large. In Du Bois' view, people who succumbed to these fears paid a premium for idealizing the truth and insisting on art that highlighted only the exceptional in order to advance the race. They suffered from the loss of joy and beauty derived from art. 'The more highly trained we become', Du Bois lamented, 'the less we can laugh at Negro comedy—we will have it all tragedy and the triumph of dark Right over pale Villainy'.²⁸ The dilemma of reconciling Du Bois' concern about the loss of humanity (the ability to recognize and appreciate beauty) with the fear of misrepresenting the truth by audiences and artists alike embodied two major challenges to implementing a black aesthetic in American during the 1920s: 1) how to overcome the limitations of creativity through the conscious and unconscious racial restrictions that impeded unfettered exploration of an indigenous truth; and 2) how to supersede the foreign and racially alienating cultural hegemony that wielded a powerful influence over what art was created, what art was published, and how an audience interpreted it.

Du Bois pleaded with his readers to cultivate and corroborate their own standards that praised apolitical beauty, standards that could encourage cultural productions

²⁷ Ibid., 301. This notion was precisely the condition he attacked when he declared, in 1926, a 'moral war on any literature that degraded Afro-American culture'.

²⁸ Ibid.

celebrated for their authenticity and ensure their creators did not suffer from political retribution and/or racial condemnation for representing the 'common' black experience. For Du Bois, criteria that relegated art to serve exclusively as political propaganda categorically stigmatized black artists and impeded an accurate, critical evaluation of the black artist and art created about and/or inspired by black life. Historically, adverse social and political conditions had compelled artists to presume that readers, particularly white audiences, would misinterpret authentic yet flawed aspects of black experience, forcing artists to mute their natural voices and their creative potential. In an effort to render audiences with racist agendas powerless, artists rejected the folk experience because they feared representing the complexity of the ordinary life meant both criticizing their own and opening themselves to criticism for betraying the race. This perspective, in Du Bois' assessment, caused a fundamental failure, one that left artists blind to see 'Eternal Beauty' that existed in all truth and limited artists to portraying only a stilted, artificial world of black folks that, in his mind, had never existed. Du Bois proclaimed: 'With a vast wealth of human material about us, our own writers and artists fear to paint the truth lest they criticize their own and be in turn criticized for it. They fail to see the eternal beauty that shines through all truth and try to portray a world of stilted artificial black folk such as never were on land or sea'.²⁹ In 'Negro Art', Du Bois implored that all artists should create a truthful, authentic representation of black life defined by their own aesthetic standards, without fear of audience backlash and without relenting to demands that art must invariably advance the race. New criteria for art were essential to liberate all from cultural and creative constrictions imposed upon them by a history of racism.

According to Du Bois, art, predicated upon the standards of a white, hegemonic cultural, would inevitably coerce artists to compromise their artistic visions and productions in the name of racial politics; subsequently, any production would be unfaithful to a representative truth of the African American experience. Freed from

²⁹ Ibid., 301.

a Western aesthetic and the constraints to create only respectable portraits of black life, Du Bois recognized any artist, regardless of his or her race, might convey the truth in black life accurately and thoroughly; thus, all artists who utilized Negro life as a primary subject must be evaluated by the same criteria, independent of political and social consequences and racial contexts. Among the principles Du Bois proposed in his essay, this proved to be the most radical; potentially, both whites and blacks could realize truth and beauty in Negro life equally.

Du Bois confessed white artists writing about Negro life held some advantages. In selecting subjects, sources of inspiration, and focal points for their creations, Du Bois proffered that whites were not limited by the racial expectations black audiences imposed upon black artists, and could, if they were 'wise and discerning' see the 'beauty, tragedy and comedy more truly than we dare'.³⁰ Certainly, some whites historically had seen 'only exaggerated evil' in rendering a distorted and stereotypical representation of Negro life. In these instances, Du Bois proclaimed, white writers failed in the opposite extremes. Du Bois also sympathized with whites who conceived and produced works of art that evoked truth and beauty but also faced what he viewed as unwarranted criticism from black critics and were often condemned for their efforts.³¹ Du Bois claimed Eugene O'Neil's *The Emperor Jones* had been unduly criticized and cited critics who demanded that his was the kind of play that should never be staged because 'it portrays the worst traits of the bad element of both races'.³² He also cited the critical reception to Edward B. Sheldon's *The Nigger* as an example of deficiencies in current aesthetic values inhibited by race. Du Bois claimed that 'Sheldon's play has repeatedly been driven from the stage by ill-advised Negroes who objected to its name'.³³ He also pointed out that Sheldon's art was evaluated not for its portrayal of Negro life, but for the implied malevolence and racism stigmatized with his title. While Du Bois' opinion

³⁰ Ibid., 301.

³¹ This view is not 'assimilationist', but racially and artistically radical because Du Bois proposed that the role of artist and creator supplanted racial identity and responsibility.

³² Du Bois, 'Negro Art', 302.

³³ Ibid., 301.

about the social impact of racially insensitive titles changed dramatically by the 1926 publication of Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*, in 1921, he felt assured that African Americans could be secure enough in their accomplishments and should be self-confident enough in themselves to allow artists, white or black, to utilize the complete range of expression and experience to maximize their efforts to capture the beauty of Negro life through the creative process.

Parlaying his 1919 success in capturing and recapitulating the frustrations of New Negroes, Du Bois now expected that as editor of *The Crisis*, he would define how to integrate the political energy and empowerment of the aesthetic of the New Negro into a new cultural aesthetic. In the pages of *Crisis* numbers of 1922, Du Bois highlighted two elements necessary to ensure success. First, an indigenous cultural movement must be supported financially by its citizens. In May, Du Bois warned in his editorial 'Art for Nothing' that 'unless colored people were willing to support their artists with money and organization, they would get just what they failed to pay for—little or nothing in the way of broad cultural recognition'.³⁴ This editorial established a rationale for his readers to support *The Crisis* as primary vehicle for cultural affirmation, one which would help offset the steady decline of the magazine's circulation by using a similar strategy imploring readers that funding equalled achievement and independence that he had used in 1912 to increase circulation.

Second, Du Bois proclaimed that 'the great mission of the Negro to America and the modern world' was now 'the development of Art and the appreciation of the Beautiful'.³⁵ In order to ensure the success of his new aesthetic, artists and audiences must resist racially 'foreign' standards of beauty. Fuelled by African Americans who were empowered by racial pride, Du Bois maintained that black aesthetic life remained vulnerable to 'the over-emphasis of ethics to meet the Puritans round about who conceal their little joys and deny them with crass

³⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Editorial: Art for Nothing'. *The Crisis* 24 (May 1922): 8-9.

³⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Truth and Beauty'. *The Crisis* 25 (November 1922): 8.

utilitarianism'.³⁶ Du Bois acknowledged that failure to resist the demand to work by a Puritan ethos would have a devastating effect: 'Our love of life, the wild and beautiful desire of our women and men for each other—all, all this sinks to being "good" and being "useful" and being "white"'.³⁷ ³⁸ Du Bois maintained African Americans should stand firm against this trend, according to Manning Marable, so that artists could 'ground their works in the cultural diversity of the black experience'.³⁹

At this juncture, Du Bois appeared more concerned about the quality of art produced than how that art was consumed and what the consequences of its consumption might be. Du Bois recognized that the black intellectual community needed to more readily and universally accept a truthful portrait of the Negro in art. Black critics who viewed the role of art and literature symbiotically with political progress might be persuaded that predominantly white criteria of art could be replaced with an indigenous critical methodology. The challenge of dismantling stereotypical caricatures of Negro art and the frequently prejudiced expectations of the American public caused even the most hopeful intellectuals to waver over the practical applications of Du Bois' Black Aesthetic that liberated artists completely from

³⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁸ As a means of justifying Du Bois' dramatic reversal of attitudes toward art and aesthetics in 1926, Arnold Rampensad, among others, rationalized that Du Bois insistence that artists must reject Puritan ethics so that they could celebrate the totality of the black experience miscalculated the 'ethical temper of the new generation' and reflected a 'limited understanding of the stylistic trends of the new age'. Rampensad and others have excused Du Bois for simply being out of touch with the cultural New Negro and absolved Du Bois accordingly: 'He did not realize that the liberty on which he insisted for the black artist could turn to license. He failed to sense that, whereas morality was central to his vision of America, this view might not be shared by younger writers less disciplined in their moral education and more contemporary in their resistance to moral arguments'. My argument in this and subsequent chapters, emphasizes Du Bois' tendencies to invoke and reconfigure his aesthetic ideologies based upon situations, circumstances, and contexts that a) improved his leverage against new rivals (in politics, in publishing, and in public perception); b) countered or co-opted trends that threatened the influence and reach of *The Crisis*, and c) challenged emerging leaders who might threaten his position as the most influential African American. Du Bois may well have not realized exactly how his ideas would be incorporated by young New Negro authors; however, his arguments against them are as much about his loss of authority and influence over them as it is about his rejection of their ideas.

³⁹ Manning Marable. W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 131.

political responsibilities. Du Bois published his 1921-1922 opinions regarding the Black Aesthetic just as the political spirit of the New Negro had begun to flourish as a prominent force in American culture. *Shuffle Along* had been a mainstream Broadway blockbuster, and Claude McKay and Jean Toomer wrote candid portraits of Negro life that won them both critical and popular acclaim; however, according to Darwin Turner, ‘Even during these early triumphs (of the Harlem Renaissance) . . . Du Bois worried about a barrier which might obstruct the creation of honest black art—the prejudice of American audiences, who expected blacks to be “bizarre and unusual and funny for whites”’.⁴⁰

The aesthetic values outlined in ‘Negro Art’ reflected a significant departure from his previous attitudes toward the Negro masses. Less than two decades earlier, Du Bois had challenged the authority of Booker T. Washington, Jr.’s accommodationist ideas that prioritized economic advancement through vocational training by defining ‘The Talented Tenth’ as the primary key to racial uplift. In 1903, he had asked rhetorically: ‘Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character’?⁴¹ Du Bois’ ideologies of progress led by an educated social upper class trained to enlighten the black masses had prevailed throughout his rise to international prominence; however, by the end of 1922, Du Bois seemingly had reassessed the value and significance of ordinary citizens to ensure racial progress, making their lives, their characters, and their experience the most fundamental component of deriving truth and beauty in the creation of Negro art. Curiously, Du Bois now extolled the virtues of their character and daily lives that he had once claimed must be ‘saved by exceptional men’ and who needed to be guided by the

⁴⁰ Darwin T. Turner, ‘W. E. B. Du Bois’, 13. Other literary scholars and historians have supported Turner’s implication that Du Bois did not account for the practical challenges to his aesthetic treatise. My argument challenges this idea, presuming that Du Bois’ myriad experiences with racist misinterpretations of his *Crisis* articles and opinions would have left him completely aware that neither he nor anyone could control reader expectations or consumer demands that might motivate audiences to demand art that represented prevalent and predominant stereotypes.

⁴¹ W.E.B. Du Bois. ‘The Talented Tenth’. In W.E.B. Du Bois, *Writings*. (New York: The Library of American, 1986), 847.

‘Best of this race . . . away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races’.⁴² Although Du Bois would have certainly counted the best artists among his ‘talented tenth’, his motivations for insisting writers, painters, and musicians must be encouraged to explore the imperfect lives of the other 90 per cent appeared far more practical and circumstantial rather than signalling a radical reassessment of his own ideology. Within five years, after scores of New Negro artists had embraced Du Bois’ aesthetic to much commercial and critical success, he recanted virtually every principle he had outlined, never admitting his opinions to be misjudgements, but simply reversing positions and condemning the artists who incorporated his ideas into the creation of their art.

The aesthetic relationship between race and the truth and beauty found in common Negro life contradicted many of Du Bois’ own experiences (which had fostered scepticism of whites) and his previous views (the reliance upon a Talented Tenth) of how to achieve racial progress. By designating the role of art to achieve what political protest and military service had not, Du Bois’ early vision of the Black Aesthetic reflected either a rediscovered hope for the promise of interracial progress and cooperation to achieve an end to racism and oppression, or something quite different. Historians and literary critics have yet to address two significant questions: How much did his intellectual rivals and their persistent charges of promoting elitism that was both out of date and out of touch, pushed him toward a celebration of the folk like of ordinary African Americans? And to what extent are his aesthetic values articulated in 1921-1922 genuine beliefs rather than convenient rhetoric that mimicked and countered more radical New Negro ideology while undermining the authority of those who challenged his relevance and dominance as pre-eminent leader and cultural icon? These questions are best addressed by examining the emergence of his Black Aesthetic as a means to aid his efforts to curtail his dwindling editorial authority within the NAACP and mitigate his most significant political and cultural rival, Marcus Garvey.

⁴² Ibid., 842.

A Push Towards the ‘Popular’: Marcus Garvey and Du Bois’ Unexpected Reverence for Ordinary Folk

In the summer of 1918, Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association galvanized discontented and radical African Americans that Du Bois had alienated with his ‘Close Ranks’ editorials. New migrants who moved by the tens of thousands into northern urban cities from the Caribbean and Deep South throughout the 1910s now saw Du Bois and the NAACP as a collection of ‘outdated racial militants, well-meaning fuddy-duddies’.⁴³ Young radicals no longer presumed the infallibility of Du Bois’ wisdom or his leadership, and ‘(t)he roiling controversy over Du Bois’ hankering for a captaincy in military intelligence (splitting the association’s national headquarters and almost causing the Washington branch to secede) seemed only to prove them right’.⁴⁴

Initially, Du Bois held his early rivals and those who had challenged him for his 1918 Great War compromises as inept agitators whose furious, ad hominem attacks were nuisances, ‘reproaches from a few un-credentialed and immigrant intellectuals’.⁴⁵ Radical publications, such as *The Messenger*, *The Crusader*, and *The Voice* produced fiery rhetoric that confronted Du Bois’ hypocrisies and diminishing militancy, however once *The Crisis* regained the public’s trust in 1919 and returned to its decade-long efforts to uncover injustice and bring the darkness of American racism to light, Du Bois recognized these periodicals and their small circulations held little threat to his editorial prominence or the publishing behemoth he had constructed. With a circulation ten times the size of any journal whose opinions opposed those Du Bois printed monthly, he could view these fresh and volatile voices, as Lewis has suggested, as ‘an encouraging sign of an emergent complex of diverse American Negro opinions, useful, certainly, but subordinate if

⁴³David Levering Lewis. W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 56.

⁴⁴Ibid., 57.

⁴⁵Ibid., 58.

not marginal factors in the formulation of racial policy'.⁴⁶ Du Bois continued to downplay their relevance in his editorials for the next five years, including in a June 1921 essay 'The Class Struggle' that appeared the same month as his landmark 'Negro Art'; however, the rapid ascent of Garvey's *Negro World* which coincided with the initial decline of *The Crisis*' circulation, created a competition for readers that affected both Du Bois' perception of his more radical adversaries as well as his own public views regarding the importance and value of the common African American.

Garvey had defined himself an antithesis to Du Bois, never hesitant to challenge the NAACP's ability to lead and represent the values and persons of colour around the globe. By March 1919, Garvey launched a steady, unrelenting attack on Du Bois that sought to discredit his commitment to the welfare of Negroes around the world. Claiming that Du Bois fought half-heartedly for post-war de-colonization of Germany's African colonies (trumped up charges that stoked the fires of post-'Close Ranks' suspicions about Du Bois), Garvey hoped to present himself as the heir to Du Bois in the age of the New Negro, a fearless leader who would not sacrifice the unabated pursuit of racial justice and equality simply to ensure inter-racial cooperation and the appeasement of white institutions who aspired to maintain an oppressive status quo. Garvey's invocation of 'the recent historical memory of black military service as a strategy to popularize the UNIA and promote his vision of the diasporic black empire'⁴⁷ appealed to many disillusioned African Americans and veterans, creating a legitimate rival for Du Bois. Supported by a distinct political ideology and the institutional force of *Negro World*, Garvey campaigned vigorously to discredit Du Bois and the NAACP by associating it as entity compromised

⁴⁶ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁷ Chad Williams. Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 287.

financially by a white philanthropy that insisted upon moderate political positions that ensured black oppression.⁴⁸

Much like *The Crisis* had for Du Bois, Garvey's *Negro World* gave him the medium to propagate his vision for unifying persons of colour. Within three years of its first printing in January, 1918, readers embraced his vision with such enthusiasm and in such great numbers that the NAACP's chair, Mary White Ovington admitted that Garvey was 'the first Negro in the United States to capture the imagination of the masses . . .'.⁴⁹ The rise of Garvey and his newspaper mirrored Du Bois' own rise to success at the beginning of the decade. After weathering the storm of its early financial losses, Garvey biographer Colin Grant noted that *Negro World* 'circulation figures steadily climbed towards 10,000 by the end of its first year'.⁵⁰ By June 1921, some claimed that the *Negro World* reached as many as 200,000 readers, and even the most conservative estimates contended that Garvey's newspaper claimed as many subscribers as Du Bois' established monthly.⁵¹ Whereas post-World War I editorials contributed to a nearly fifty per cent bump in *The Crisis*' circulation, numbers that receded to their pre-war levels (approximately 70,000) by the beginning of 1920, and declined an additional twenty-five per cent over the next

⁴⁸ Garvey's tactics and accusations, ironically, are similar to those Du Bois applied at the turn of the century to undermine the authority and legitimacy of Booker T. Washington and again the mid-1920s, to discredit Charles S. Johnson, Alain Locke and young New Negro writers. The rivalries between Du Bois and Washington, then Garvey, parallel his denunciation of Johnson/Locke/New Negro artists because Du Bois appeared to feel entitled to have the lone authoritative voice for shaping his vision of political and cultural advancement for people of colour at home and around the world.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 64.

⁵⁰ Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 138. Grant noted that the circulation estimates at the end of 10,000, were made by Hubert Harrison, who accepted a position as an associate editor with *Negro World* in 1920.

⁵¹ Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 44. Cronon, citing estimates made by Claude McKay, Burgit Aron, Arnold Bontemps, and Jack Conroy, stated: 'The circulation of the paper has been variously estimated at from 60,000 to 200,000 during its most prosperous years'. Cronon acknowledged that *Negro World's* own estimates (in August, 1920) were much more moderate and 'claimed a guaranteed circulation of 50,000 "reaching the mass of Negroes throughout the world"'.

twelve months, Garvey's publication boom has been frequently attributed his shift in cultural ideology that both captivated and spoke to the spirit of the New Negro.⁵²

By 1920 Garvey had renounced his support of socialism and turned his criticisms of Du Bois from political debates that portrayed him as a race traitor toward contrasts centred ideological differences, racial and ethnic. Garvey recognized that the vehement rhetoric that infused individual pride appealed more to the masses than nit-picking obscure political differences. He differentiated himself from Du Bois by sanctifying racial identity, and 'derided Du Bois as a mulatto ashamed of his black ancestry, surrounded by pale-skinned associates and close friends, harping on his European ancestry while cultivating an aristocratic manner far removed from the life of the masses'.⁵³ Fabre and Feith argued that Garvey broadened his mass appeal by labelling Du Bois an elitist, at least in part because Garvey's pan-Africanism and the UNIA's cultural program competed with Du Bois' vision for readers and for influence, but also implied an intellectual between current and future rivals by suggesting 'Garvey's insistence on race pride and assertiveness tied in with Du Bois's notion of art as propaganda and even with Locke's aesthetic project of race rehabilitation through artistic achievement'.⁵⁴

The spring publication of Du Bois', Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil, offered a resounding rebuttal of Garvey's claims of racial self-hatred. Comprised of original

⁵² A broader economic and publishing trend also presented new challenges to Du Bois and the NAACP in retaining its readership. Rampersad (143) pointed out that the evolution and expansion of the Negro press, particularly the rise of the 'colored weeklies' made black monthly newspapers obsolete. Rampersad attributed the rapid decline of monthlies exclusively to market forces and credited Du Bois with ensuring the magazine's survival long after it should have been extinct: '*The Crisis*, once a pioneer, was by the mid-twenties only one of many journals competing for the black readership and was indispensable only to those faithful to the ideas of its editor. His ideas, because they often took a line independent of both the NAACP and rival black newspapers and magazines, and because he argued them so skillfully and passionately, gave the *Crisis* life long after other publications had altered its general role and sealed its fate as a popular paper'.

⁵³ Rampersad, The Art and Imagination, 148.

⁵⁴ Genevieve Fabre and Michel Feith (eds.). Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 10. Like many Harlem Renaissance scholars, they miscalculate the time line of Du Bois' views on the role of art and propaganda, which stood opposed to Garvey's position until after 1925, when Garvey had become a disreputable and insignificant public figure.

and revised articles, fiction, poetry, and an autobiographical essay, Du Bois' collection of ten pieces, introduced by a 'Credo', received widespread critical acclaim and unexpected commercial success. His publishers promoted Du Bois as the chief spokesman of 'two hundred million men and women of African blood', and Darkwater was praised as a textbook for the New Negro, a manual that 'uncannily suited to his/her new needs . . . in which past, present, and future experiences of the group seemed to be invested with luminous meaning and shrewd perception . . .'.⁵⁵ That critics and intellectuals, white and black, praised Darkwater, surprised no one; that common folk purchased the treatise by the hundreds shocked many, including those critics of Du Bois who cast him as a man out to touch with the ordinary citizen.

Darkwater articulated two revolutionary motifs: The promotion of multiculturalism, as both an identity and ideology, to secure the salvation of humanity; and, the critical analysis of white identity and the meaning of whiteness found in his essay, 'The Souls of White Folk'. Intellectually, the broad public appeal of this collection of essays, what Lewis called 'the unprecedented interest of southern farmers, sharecroppers, northern domestics, and janitors in buying Darkwater',⁵⁶ could be traced to the opening 'Credo'. His preamble championed the equality of all people in both spirit and potential for development as well as his belief in the Negro race, 'the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul, and the strength in that meekness which shall yet inherit this turbulent earth'.⁵⁷ Du Bois situated his pluralism next to an unabashed criticism of racist whites, the arrogance of their perspective, their hatred of people of colour reflected in their actions, and their failure to live up to their Christian principles and faith in democracy.

⁵⁵ Lewis, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 23, 21.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois. Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil. (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State Electronic Series Classic Publication, 2007), 5. See also Joe Feagin's, 'Introduction' in Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003). Du Bois' 'Credo' had been first published in 1904 and re-printed twice in 1905; 'The Souls of White Folk' first appeared in Darkwater.

Darkwater's promotion of multiculturalism founded upon the essential equality of all humanity as the righteous replacement for pointed and poignant criticism of white racism found a receptive and diverse audience; however, Garvey's brash vision of separatism, his celebration of blackness as superior and extraordinary grew increasingly popular and resonated with those imbued with the anger and resentment that resulted from an unceasing history of racial oppression.⁵⁸ Throughout the early 1920s Garvey repeatedly charged that Du Bois 'arrogated the privilege of condemning and criticizing other people, but held himself up as "the social 'unapproachable' and the great 'I am' of the Negro race'.'⁵⁹ As opposed to the aloof, untouchable relic who dared to speak on behalf of millions, Garvey positioned himself as a leader ascending from the people and in touch with the plights and the promise of the masses. Accordingly, his popularity exploded and his improbable rise to national and international prominence proved a legitimate threat to the profitability of *The Crisis* and the relevance of Du Bois. Although he had dismissed Garvey personally during their first encounter in 1916 and written off his relevance at the peak of his own editorial success in 1919, Garvey's rise to prominence forced Du Bois forced to respond to the effective racial criticisms Garvey levied upon him.

Ironically, both Du Bois' political dismissal of Garvey and his cultural adaptation of his chief rivals' concept of 'black pride' appeared in print simultaneously. The June 1921 issue of *The Crisis* embodied the strategy of his counter attack: at once

⁵⁸ In October 1921, President Warren G. Harding offered Garvey further evidence to support his admonition of Du Bois' racial politics. Speaking to an audience in Birmingham, Alabama, Harding condemned Du Bois' controversial November 1920 essay, 'The Social Equality of Whites and Blacks' which defended the legal right to interracial marriage, even though Du Bois' essay did not condone or endorse it. Garvey claimed Harding's excoriating denunciation of racial amalgamation proved that Du Bois' approach to racial justice for black America had no support within the US government. Garvey argued that the NAACP's endorsement of cooperation between whites and blacks as the only possible solution to the race problem in the United States continued to be absurd and offered no hope for the ordinary citizen. Subsequently, Garvey seized every opportunity to 'proclaim that the only authentic value shared by blacks and whites was their determination to remain apart and in parallel and mutually indifferent cultural and political commonwealths . . .' (Lewis 72). Harding's vehement reaction against his essay would be a harbinger for Du Bois' doubts about an unimpeded representation of Negro life. No one could reasonably predict or control how an audience might use artistic truth and beauty to make political hay and curry favour with segregationists.

⁵⁹ Lewis, The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 82.

discounting Garvey's political relevance, without naming him, while proposing a new cultural aesthetic that glorified the lives of common folk who had increasingly identified with Garvey and supported him, financially. In 'The Class Struggle', Du Bois responded to detractors who now accused the NAACP of 'not being a "revolutionary" body'. Unabashed, Du Bois confirmed their criticisms. 'This is quite true. We do not believe in revolution. We expect revolutionary changes to come mainly through reason, human sympathy and the education of children, and not by murder'.⁶⁰ Equating ideological insurgency with inevitable violence, Du Bois acknowledged: 'We know that there have been times when organized murder seemed the only way out of wrong, but we believe those times have been very few, the cost of the remedy excessive, the results as terrible as beneficent, and we gravely doubt if in the future there will be any real recurrent necessity for such upheaval'.⁶¹ Resituating the political ideology of the NAACP, Du Bois now defined its role 'to agitate, to investigate, to expose, to defend, to reason, to appeal. This is our program and this is the whole of our program. What human reform demands today is light, more light; clear thought, accurate knowledge, careful distinctions'.⁶² Du Bois' argument claimed that the radicalism of Garvey and others justified and condoned death and destruction to secure progress; however, the NAACP, with respect for human life, would lead change and seek justice through measured diplomacy. The human devastation of the Great War, the loss of thousands of African American lives he had encouraged to serve, may well have been the most significant factor in shaping Du Bois' view; however, preventing the human devastation of war as a sole motivator would require disregarding the fiery rhetoric of his 1919 editorials, some of his most militant, revolutionary writing that ever appeared in the pages of his magazine. The extent to which his new political and cultural views reflected Du Bois' diminished autonomy within *The Crisis* or a genuine concern to present a

⁶⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'The Class Struggle'. *The Crisis* 22 (June 1921): 55-56. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from *The Crisis*, Volume 1, 1911-1925. (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983), 303.

⁶¹ Ibid., 303.

⁶² Ibid., 303.

moderate alternative to the Garvey extremism that proclaimed race wars in America were inevitable is unclear. Regardless of his motives for mitigating his militancy, Du Bois admonished Garvey's politics of separation, while embracing and elevating the cultural ethos of ethnic and racial pride that had triggered Garvey's rise to prominence.⁶³

One key question about Du Bois' relationship with Garvey has been left unaddressed by scholars of the period: How much does his political and intellectual rivalry with Garvey carry over into his developing views of the Black Aesthetic? Historians traditionally have only examined Du Bois' intellectual evolution, cursorily and ideologically, and underestimated Garvey's influence on the development of his 1921 aesthetic treatise. Darkwater's prevailing themes of multiculturalism, pluralism, and its nuanced intellectual analysis of 'whiteness' confront Garvey directly; however, his essay on 'Negro Art' was a less direct response, albeit subtly and simultaneously both a counter to and co-opting of the Jamaican's increasingly popular political and cultural beliefs.

⁶³ Some doubt exists regarding the extent to which the content of the June issue expressed Du Bois' genuine beliefs. By April 1921 *Crisis* subscribers had declined by nearly half (53,000) from its circulation peak in the summer of 1919. Overhead costs (paper, staff increases, and ensuing effects of economic depression) exacerbated the loss of revenue and compelled the Board to reduce his staff. Du Bois refused to share fees he generated on regular speaking tours with the organization, while researching and writing books frequently distracted him from his editorial duties. (Lewis 34-35) A scandal involving assistant literary editor Madeline Allison, combined with chronic disputes about editorial oversight and financial discrepancies finally forced the NAACP board to impose its will upon Du Bois. In July, the Board allowed Du Bois to retain his position but only by agreeing to be held accountable to the same standards and supervision of other executives. The unfettered autonomy and numerous special privileges Du Bois had enjoyed for nearly a decade ceased, and the June issue, arguably, represented Du Bois' attempt to placate the Board by denouncing his chief competitors who contributed to eroding the magazine's market share, while also adopting prevailing sentiments espoused by Garvey that might appeal broadly and curtail declining sales. The magazine's circulation numbers remained in free fall throughout the 1920s, and without the ability to edit the magazine independently of the NAACP board, the premise of this argument would conclude that in 1926, Du Bois returned to his core beliefs about the role of the exceptional few in securing racial uplift. He no longer believed that celebrating the common man could produce tangible benefits (increased subscriptions and thus, increased control of *The Crisis*) would promote his return to the role African America's most influential cultural leader, or repair his public image as prescient editor of African America's most relevant and esteemed publication.

The backlash to his World War I editorials had taught Du Bois a valuable lesson about the power of public sentiment, and ‘Negro Art’ reflected a deep respect for the ‘other 90 percent’ and the potential for ordinary life to inspire and unleash the power of artists to raise Negro culture to new heights. In 1920, Du Bois dismissed Garvey’s vitriolic lambasting of the coercive nature of white hegemonic culture;⁶⁴ however, a year later, the effectiveness of Garvey’s unadulterated message of black pride through white denunciation had emboldened millions of African Americans and led Du Bois to confront Garvey in order to rehabilitate his reputation as an elitist and effete unconcerned and out of touch with the ordinary African American living in economic insecurity.

Historically, the disparity between Du Bois’ civilizing mission of black middle class and his exultation in the primitive folkloric values that were the raw material of the Talented Tenth’s raison d’etre raised doubts about his intellectual motives for encouraging artists to present a realistic version of Negro life and ‘not ignore everything which is not as perfect as we would wish it to be’.⁶⁵ With *The Crisis* circulation in steady decline, Du Bois became more willing to separate and distinguish himself from Garvey, even if the intellectual positions he had promoted for decades had to be compromised. Du Bois most important aesthetic modification would be his position regarding the relationship of art and propaganda. While Garvey’s debates on the role of politics in literature almost always sided with art as

⁶⁴ See Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 148, who claimed Garvey’s *Negro World* discredited *The Crisis* by identifying it with white philanthropy, white political power, and black servility. Ironically, Du Bois used a similar tactic against Alain Locke and the New Negro movement in 1926. See concluding chapter of this thesis for the historical significance.

⁶⁵ Adolph Reed, Jr. *Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58. Reed deconstructed this important inconsistency accurately and precisely: ‘First, there is the racial defensiveness that takes the form of self-conscious exaltation of those values and behaviors that are generally considered by whites to be unacceptable. Second, Du Bois retained into the 1920s at least vestiges of two Victorian commitments—a presumption of a nature/culture axis as a mechanism for characterizing human populations and a belief in the existence of inherent group temperaments or ideals. . . . the civilizing mission lay not in extirpating the primitive, folkish qualities that marked the race’s specific contribution to the world, but in refining and cultivating them. Finally, and in a similar vein, postulation of an exotic black particularity emphasizes the role for the black elite as keepers and translators of the culture. That role buttresses the latter’s centrality within the black community; in that sense, then, the aesthetic-folkloric celebration was an ideology of the elite’s spokespersons’.

necessarily propaganda, Du Bois' 1921 essay set forth an alternative view of art and politics that was inconsistent with his own history of political activism integrated with cultural agendas.⁶⁶ In 1926, Du Bois reversed these ideas about art and propaganda once Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke adopted his 1921 positions to encourage New Negroes to approach art and literature without a preoccupation with politics, motivated by the necessity of emerging rivals whose ideologies and popularity left Du Bois vulnerable.

Du Bois' focus in the 1910s had been to create an idealized medium that would deliver a comprehensive and accurate view of Negro life and a Black Aesthetic to ten million African Americans. By the end of the decade, Du Bois had accepted the challenge of defining the principles and values of those aesthetics and hoped that he alone would nurture and patronize young artists whose work would embrace the fundamental elements of beauty and truth in their daily lives that he felt were apparent but had yet been exploited. The Black Aesthetic proposed in his June 1921 essay, 'Negro Art', represented a direct response to Marcus Garvey's unremitting claims that Du Bois preferred the company of whites, hated himself, and loathed other blacks who he believed to be ugly and vile. After two years of being repeatedly ridiculed as an elitist increasingly out of touch the common person, Du Bois endorsed the need for a separate and indigenous aesthetic that condoned unadulterated praise of all aspects of the black experience; a strategy that both undermined and incorporated the beliefs of his chief rival and proved effective. Du Bois could propose a cultural revolution without disengaging himself from moderate, interracial approaches to solving political and economic problems. The denunciation condemned the radicalism of Garvey's separatist ideology, but the aesthetic treatise could utilize a similar sentiment that appealed to the newly empowered masses energized by racial pride and the increasing militancy of the post-war New Negro.

⁶⁶ For a detailed examination of Garvey's positions on the role of art in politics, see Tony Martin's, Race First Race First: Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976).

Nearly five years after the end of the Great War, American society had failed to recognize the sacrifices made by African Americans during World War I, both ignoring and suppressing violently demands for social equality and full citizenship in a concerted effort to return the country to 'normalcy; as Du Bois' optimism for leading a cultural revolution diminished, so too did his belief that an indigenous Black Aesthetic void of propaganda could be achieved. Du Bois had missed his opportunity to exert far-reaching control of the burgeoning arts movement. As a result, within two years he chose to lead the charge to undermine the legitimacy of a new generation of Negro artists and intellectuals eager to implement the very aesthetic he had defined. While he never commented or wrote about his ideological evolution, the roots of Du Bois' radical, inexplicable reversal of aesthetic values during the 1920s can be traced directly to his volatile early history (1910-1924) as editor of *The Crisis*; his explosive, racially charged confrontations with NAACP board members; his choice to prioritize self-interest over objective service to the African American public during World War I; and his desperate, futile attempts to retain pre-eminence as a singular political and intellectual leader. As new media rivals and would-be mentors strived to supplant Du Bois' political and cultural authority, his marginalized role in the New Negro movement motivated yet another change in Du Bois' aesthetic philosophy that proved reactionary against artistic innovation, contradictory toward an ideology he had proselytized, and ineffective in both its efficacy to stem the tide of his magazine's declining circulation and preserve his standing as the most important African American cultural voice in the early 20th century.

Du Bois had endorsed an indigenous aesthetic, whose design had been moulded by political rivalry and Garvey's rapid rise to prominence. Du Bois' successful aesthetic adaptation of racial pride would persuade New Negro artists to produce representations that exemplified the greatness of African American culture; however, when new rivals also encouraged young writers to create according to his ethos, Du Bois' self-righteousness, his false assurance that, like all previous threats to his

omnipotence, could be summarily suppressed, compelled him to stand against his own aesthetic and condemn a cultural renaissance he had hoped to lead. Du Bois was no longer the lone pre-eminent voice of New Negro wisdom and overbearing personality and disdain for collaboration made him ill-equipped to adapt to the rapidly changing and expanding publishing landscape of the 1920s.

By 1924, Garvey's reputation as a leader had been tarnished, and his influence irrevocably diminished; however, that same year, Charles S. Johnson would assume the roles of Du Bois' perceived rival, mentor to New Negro writers, and cultural authority of the artistic productions that embody the emerging Black Aesthetic. While Du Bois' personal scandals allowed the NAACP to constrain his editorial autonomy and compromise his fifteen year pursuit of crafting *The Crisis* as the voice of Negro America, Du Bois had little remaining motivation to accommodate his beliefs about the sanctity of the 'Talented Tenth' in order to secure the approval and support of the other 90 per cent. His pride and refusal to embrace the greater benefits of collaboration should be considered significant factors that contributed to his forthcoming resistance to Johnson, Alain Locke's The New Negro, and the rapidly emerging renaissance credited to their efforts; a renaissance Du Bois himself had declared was needed in 1913, one he had promised to marshal six years earlier, and now one whose realization had been credited to his chief publishing rival. Despite two decades of conceptualizing and building a medium that he believed could educate and empower the masses, invoke and mobilize an army of professionals, labourers, and children to celebrate racial pride and Negro cultural achievement, Du Bois found himself no longer the sole decision maker or prime mover of the New Negro movement.

Chapter Four: *Opportunity Seized, Opportunity Missed: Charles S. Johnson Announces the New Negro Renaissance*

On 11 January 1933, Alain Locke, distinguished professor at Howard University, received an unexpected correspondence from Jessie Fauset, a noted African American novelist who had served as literary editor for *The Crisis* from 1919-1926. Fauset wrote to take issue with Locke over his recent criticisms of both her latest novel, Comedy, American Style, as well as Claude McKay's Banana Bottom, that appeared in Locke's annual review of books by Negro writers published every January in *Opportunity* magazine.¹ On first appearance, Fauset's letter appeared to be little more than the bitter reaction of a fragile ego, an author rushing to the defence of herself and a friend whose work she respected; however, her underlying motivations for excoriating Locke in early 1933 had been simmering for nearly a decade. Fauset confessed: 'I have always disliked your attitude toward my work dating from the five years ago when you went out of your way to tell my brother that the dinner given at the Civic Club [in 1924] for "There Is Confusion" wasn't for me'.² Fauset, however, had quite correctly believed that the dinner's primary purpose was to celebrate the publication of her book by Boni and Liveright, only the fifth African American novel published by a major white publisher since 1900. In recounting the circumstances of the dinner's conception, she not only disputed his callous assumption, but revealed how deeply his efforts to commandeer her moment had affected her.

Incidentally, I may tell you now how that idea originated with Regina Anderson and Gwendolyn Bennett, both members of a little library club with which I was then associated. [How you and one or two others sought to

¹ Alain Locke. 'The Saving Grace of Realism'. *Opportunity* 11 (January 1933): 8. Although Locke's review of Fauset's novel is flattering, Fauset seemed to take issue with his proclivity for condescension in his assessment, qualifying praise of her work, which he called 'slowly maturing', with thinly veiled critiques that her approaches were outdated ('too mid-Victorian for moving power today') and her artistic achievement limited by 'sentimental hazard'. See also, Harris and Molesworth, Alain Locke: Biography of a Philosopher: 271, 279, for an overview of the review.

² Jessie Fauset to Alain Locke, 9 January 1933. Series 164, Box 26, Folder 41 (Subsequently abbreviated 164/26/41). Alain Locke Papers. Moorland-Spingarn Collection, Howard University (ALP/M-SC).

distant the idea and veil its original graciousness in common with one or two others have known for years.] And still I remember the consummate cleverness with which you had that night as toastmaster strove to keep speech and comment away from the person for whom the occasion was meant.³

Her dismay over Locke's arrogance in supplanting her significance at the dinner had finally been unleashed in order to right the historical record. Locke had risen to fame on the evening of 21 March 1924, proclaimed as the presumptive dean of an emerging Negro Renaissance who would mentor young writers and usher forth a cultural revolution. Fauset, whom Langston Hughes famously credited, along with Locke and Charles S. Johnson, as being one of the 'midwives of the Harlem Renaissance', had never publically attacked the man who supplanted her as the most influential African American literary editor of the 1920s; however, by 1933, her contempt for Locke had reached critical mass and flowed freely, concluding with a supreme accusation: racial traitor. 'No dear Alain, your malice, your lack of true discrimination and above all your tendency to play safe with the grand white folks renders you anything but a reliable critic. Better stick to your own field and let us writers alone. At least I can tell a story convincingly'.⁴

Fauset's letter revealed the lasting and painful depths of their fractured relationship as intellectuals and literary editors of principal magazine rivals. Her accusations hurled toward him, the personal slights, distorter of history, hack critic accommodating to whites at the expense of black writers, revealed a deeper significance to the events surrounding 'The Civic Club Dinner'. While some scholars have made passing mention of Fauset's letter, none have explored its significance in recalibrating the level of animosity that the 1924 event ignited, not only between literary editors Locke and Fauset, but also the chief editors of newly rivalled magazines, Charles S. Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois. At the moment when Jessie Fauset rightfully expected to be championed as a novelist and editor of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

exceeding excellence and celebrated as a symbol of *The Crisis*' success in ushering forth its long promised renaissance of Negro culture, Locke and Johnson seemingly seized control of the event and the direction of a pivotal juncture in African American intellectual history. The dinner intended to honour a literary star that represented the pinnacle of *The Crisis*' success, became, in fact, the public introduction of new leadership at the dawn of the nascent New Negro Renaissance.

The Civic Club Dinner, in fact, represented a paradigm shift of cultural power and intellectual influence and introduced Alain Locke to influential New York publishers and magazine editors as the 'Dean' of a movement that would define a new era in Negro cultural production, a new aesthetic by which talented young writers, artists, and musicians could create original and representative works that expressed an authentic Negro experience.⁵ Charles S. Johnson, barely a full year into his role as editor of *Opportunity*, assumed Du Bois' place as leading intellectual and moved forward swiftly after the dinner to define an aesthetic ideology for the magazine that was strikingly similar to the one cultivated by Du Bois over the previous five years. The rivalry that grew steadily as a result of this event, one that produced a legitimate challenge to the predominance of *The Crisis*, shaped the significance of the Black Aesthetic in a manner for which previous histories have failed to account. While many scholars have analysed the importance of white-black collaborations that formed as a result of this event, few have assessed the impact of the personal and professional conflicts, between Locke and Fauset, Johnson and Du Bois, *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, that the dinner ignited. Nine years later, Fauset had grown embittered by the rapid decline of both her career and her influence over young authors that coincided with the ascendancy of both Locke and *Opportunity*.

⁵ A number of scholarly works have recounted the particulars of The Civic Club Dinner, including Ethel Ray Nance, 'The New York Arts Renaissance, 1924-1926'. *Negro History Bulletin* 31 (April 1968): 15-19; Patrick Gilpin, 'Charles S. Johnson: Entrepreneur of the Harlem Renaissance'. In Arna Bontemps (ed.). *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered*. (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1972), 224-225; David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue*. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 93-95; and George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 89-93. A detailed description of the evening, and of the planning and negotiation that preceded it, from Charles S. Johnson's point of view, appears later in this chapter.

This chapter seeks to understand the significance of this event as a catalyst for divisions that would, by 1926, come to represent two divergent schools of thought that defined the debate over the role of art and propaganda in New Negro literature. Ironically, the aesthetic principles that Du Bois articulated early in the 1920s mirrored the ideology that guided Johnson's leadership of *Opportunity* and the literary output that gave rise to both Locke's own career as renaissance leader and the most important work of the movement, The New Negro.⁶ The reasons why Du Bois came to oppose ideas that others co-opted reveal a greater understanding of the divisions and the competition that gave rise to both the New Negro Renaissance and the fundamental principles of and debates surrounding the Black Aesthetic. Despite the formulation of an aesthetic manifesto in 1921, Du Bois failed to follow up on promoting the artistic agenda he set forth, thus missing an opportunity to fill a cultural vacuum he had recognized had existed since 1905. Johnson's magazine, however, and not Du Bois', would soon embody what Du Bois had always wanted *The Crisis* to be—a medium that captured an honest and authentic representation of black life.

Too frequently, scholars have allowed Du Bois' opinion of Johnson, his agitation over The Civic Club Dinner, and the events surrounding the rival magazines' literary competitions to dominate historical discourse simply because Du Bois left behind a significant documentary archive and a towering legacy as African America's most important intellectual. Johnson's dearth of personal papers, to some extent, explains why Du Bois' rivalry narrative, one which viewed Locke and Johnson synonymously as co-conspirators plotting to undermine his magazine and his authority and interpreted Johnson's commitment to Negro art as 'entrepreneurial' and willingly compromised to white commercial interests, has dominated Harlem Renaissance scholarship. Little critical attention has been given to the aesthetic values and race priorities that Johnson articulated in his personal letters and on the editorial pages of his magazine; all of which are viable evidence of his well-meaning intentions to

⁶ Both Locke and his anthology are examined and discussed at length in Chapter Five.

utilize inter-racial collaboration to ignite and develop a national renaissance that served the best interests of Negro artists.

Letters exchanged with Alain Locke reveal Johnson wanted to assume control over The Civic Club dinner, but not solely for personal gain nor only to thrust his magazine into the cultural vacuum that *The Crisis* had yet to fill. Because *Opportunity* aspired to advance Negro arts via inter-racial collaborations, Johnson could have both personal and cultural goals in mind, and his editorials reveal a larger racial objective with apparent links to his history with the Chicago Commission on Race Relations. Harlem Renaissance scholarship has typically used the same archival evidence to cast Johnson as a conniving opportunist, swooping in to overshadow Fauset's moment and redirect the purpose of the dinner to serve his own interests. Du Bois' scepticism towards Johnson's devious schemes and what he viewed as compromised alliances with whites has not been substantiated with evidence beyond Du Bois' own writings; however, Johnson's editorials can be analysed as support for his straightforward and transparent approach to fulfilling his vision of inter-racial collaboration. By examining these under-appreciated sources, this chapter investigates how arguments that Johnson makes in his own editorials presents an important counter-narrative to his perceived intentions in overshadowing Fauset at the Civic Club Dinner and his malicious motives as magazine editor that re-situates the emerging rivalry between *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* as one largely exaggerated by Du Bois, and one which has altered how white influence has been represented in the historiography of the renaissance.

In the fall of 1919, Du Bois named Fauset the magazine's first literary editor. Driven by the optimism and financial windfall of the magazine's circulation soaring past 100,000, Du Bois increased *The Crisis* staff to twelve, and brought Fauset on board full-time to increase the stature of the arts and literature. Hired at the pinnacle of the magazine's success and at a time when Du Bois' attentions had increasingly turned

more to international political concerns, Fauset seemingly possessed the autonomy to define the cultural and aesthetic direction of the magazine. By 1920, she began to utilize her position, and the lack of direct supervision provided by Du Bois' frequent absences from the New York offices, to cultivate relationships with young unknown Negro writers whose publications would define the most ambitious and daring work of the Harlem Renaissance. For example, Fauset was first to identify the talent of Langston Hughes and 'had captured Hughes for the *The Brownies' Book* as early as 1921, even persuading him to dedicate "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," one of his more enduringly popular poems, to Du Bois'.⁷ Until 1924, *The Crisis* remained the most influential and widely-read national publication targeting African American audiences that committed substantial space in each monthly number to the creative arts; and Fauset seized this competitive advantage, and the dearth of publications available to aspiring Negro artists, to foster important literary relationships that benefited the magazine. Not only had she first published poems by Hughes and Arna Bontemps, Fauset also featured stories and poems written by Jean Toomer, excerpts from his experimental novel *Cane* which many have credited for triggering public awareness of the creative production possible among Negro writers.

Even though she retained the appearance of some autonomy over *The Crisis'* literary pursuits, Du Bois remained the final arbiter in all *Crisis*-related decisions, compelling Fauset to balance her own ideals and editorial agenda with those of Du Bois. Some contemporary scholars, including Du Bois' biographer David Levering Lewis and George Hutchinson, have claimed that Fauset's aesthetic sensibilities genuinely aligned with those of Du Bois, her attitudes about white middle class values naturally coalescing with the bourgeois 'Talented Tenth' ideology to which he had long adhered. Others, most notably Fauset biographer Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, have suggested that her aesthetics were much less conventional and

⁷ Lewis, David Levering Lewis. *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 154.

Victorian than those of her mentor.⁸ This contested perception of aesthetic values is remarkably important to understanding both the unsettled dynamics of Fauset's relationship with Du Bois, his unwillingness to support her unequivocally as Charles S. Johnson would Alain Locke, but also how those writers she mentored and edited before 1924 perceived her ineffectiveness as an advocate.

Much of Fauset's diminishing influence over New Negro writers has been attributed to her compliant relationship with Du Bois. Hutchinson has argued that Du Bois' insistence that *The Crisis* reflect his point of view 'may have worked to Fauset's own detriment in the long run, as younger authors frequently carped at what they unsympathetically considered her "prim" and bourgeois preferences'.⁹ Letters written to Langston Hughes validated this perspective, revealing Fauset's concerns about both his poetry (his use of vernacular and free verse) as well as his choice of mentors (his 'troubling' association with Carl Van Vechten in particular).¹⁰ How much Du Bois was responsible for directing her to share these concerns to Hughes remains uncertain; however, scholars have too frequently interpreted Fauset's aesthetics, as reflected in her writings and in her career as a *Crisis* editor, as intrinsically tied to Du Bois' conservatism, a view that might have explained his desire to mitigate the radical aesthetic sensibilities of New Negro artists.

Du Bois' writings about art and literature during this period, particularly his 1921 essay and his 1924 review of Jean Toomer's *Cane* (discussed at length in Chapter Five) further complicate the extent to which Du Bois moderated Fauset's actual aesthetic views, or the degree to which she radicalized him. Her motivations to discourage young writers away from experimenting with colloquial language and

⁸ Ibid., 153; Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 156; See also Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, *Jessie Redmond Fauset, Black American Writer*. (Troy, NY: Whitston Press, 1981).

⁹ Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 156.

¹⁰ 'Jessie Fauset to Langston Hughes' Undated, Folder 71. Langston Hughes Papers. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; George Hutchinson provides an excellent overview of some of these correspondences as well. Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 156.

visceral subject matter that tapped into an authentic black experience contradicted the aesthetics reflected in her own fiction, as recent literary scholars have increasingly considered her novels, particularly those published after her 1926 split with Du Bois, exemplary of the renaissance avant-garde. Traditionally, critics had argued that while Fauset's own novels acknowledged the unique experience of blacks and asserted the universality of their human emotion, 'she still insisted on the essential similarity of blacks and whites, by which she meant the similarity between educated, cultured blacks, like herself, and their white counterparts'.¹¹ However, these interpretations of Fauset willingly adhering to Du Bois' bourgeois aesthetics did not account for the reality that he was not proselytizing conservative aesthetic values, publically, in his writings before 1926.

Moreover, recent historical scholarship further muddles the nature and context of influence in Du Bois and Fauset's intellectual relationship. While Hutchinson hypothesized that Du Bois' frequent and unpredictable interventions in her handling of literary affairs 'had virtually alienated all the promising young writers' with whom Fauset had spent years cultivating relationships,¹² Wilkerson and Zamir have argued that to some extent, Fauset served effectively as Du Bois' handler, particularly when dealing with the young writers. She sought out and discovered literary talent; she introduced Du Bois to writers as a means of facilitating their inclusion in the pages of *The Crisis*; and most significantly, 'was a buffer between Du Bois's egotism and their pride'.¹³ Others viewed her as merely a buffer between Du Bois' 'bent toward propagandistic art . . . and the younger writers who respected, even revered his accomplishments but feared his manner'.¹⁴ Most Renaissance scholars have insisted that Du Bois and his conservative, middle class aesthetics influenced both Fauset's artistic values, as well as her editorial principles; however,

¹¹ Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 187.

¹² Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 157.

¹³ Carmiele Y. Wilkerson and Shamoan Zamir. 'Du Bois and the "New Negro"'. In Shamoan Zamir (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁴ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 187.

what these interpretations have not explained are both the progressive aesthetic agenda Du Bois articulated between 1919-1924, or the importance of *The Crisis* in publishing the Harlem Renaissance writers who would soon be lionized for their experimentation and innovation.¹⁵

The Crisis, for an important five year period, tacitly endorsed a radical aesthetic agenda. Certainly, Du Bois' political preoccupations between 1919-1924, particularly his leadership of the Pan-African Congresses, compelled him to rely more heavily upon Fauset to uphold his standards¹⁶ and to continue his decade long effort 'to promote literary activity and to foster racial pride through literature'.¹⁷ To what extent was Fauset a greater influence over Du Bois than other scholars have imagined? His writings on the subject are far different than those reflected in historical accounts who position him antithetically to New Negro writers. By 1926, the influence of his rivalry with Charles S. Johnson and *Opportunity* and the demise of his relationship with Fauset led Du Bois to recalibrate his aesthetic ideology.¹⁸

Due largely to Fauset's work and the magazine's virtual monopoly among African American cultural publications, *The Crisis* made some strides in providing a public platform for Negro creativity during the early 1920s. Du Bois' long absences had afforded Fauset some degree of editorial autonomy; however, the Civic Club Dinner led Du Bois to intervene with cultural affairs more aggressively, marginalizing

¹⁵ Most of these writers, such as McKay, Hughes, Cullen, even Fauset, distanced themselves from the magazine that first published them by the end of the 1920s.

¹⁶ Emily Bernard. 'Renaissance and the Vogue'. In George Hutchinson (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35.

¹⁷ Darwin T. Turner. 'W. E. B. DuBois and the Theory of a Black Aesthetic'. In Victor A. Kramer (ed.). *The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined*. (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 11.

¹⁸ Davis summarized Fauset's career after the Civic Club dinner as filled with disenchantment: 'In the fall of 1924, seemingly disillusioned with both the turn of events and her mentor Du Bois, Fauset left for a year of study in France. Then, in 1926, she resigned from the literary editorship of *Crisis*'. . . . 'There is, in addition, no way of estimating what her subsequent novels might have been like had she been able to remain in the forefront of the movement and in more active association with younger writers, or had she been able to obtain the type of publishing work that would have kept her in literary arts' (xxiv). Because of racial discrimination, Fauset could not secure work at a traditional publishing house as a reader, as a social secretary or foundation's employee. Her attitudes exhibited in her letter to Locke in 1933 did not reflect any remaining affection for or influence of Du Bois. She hated that Locke labelled her work 'Victorian' and sentimental.

Fauset and lessening her editorial authority after the spring of 1924. Relegated to a lesser role and her previous contributions to cultivating the art stymied by Du Bois, Fauset retained neither the authority nor the mandate to match the speed and scale of Johnson's pursuit of a cultural and aesthetic agenda. Whatever dissonance that existed between Fauset and Du Bois, and their respective ideologies, *The Crisis* lacked a clear, cohesive and commanding cultural mission and editorial agenda for promoting art and literature throughout the 1920s.¹⁹ Du Bois' inability to relinquish editorial control to Fauset as his attention to cultural matters waned; her burden to arbitrate between the egos of brash young artists and her distinguished employer; the pressure to move the magazine forward to reflect the revolutionary artistic movement that celebrated common folk and eschewed tradition and blind faith in 'Talented Tenth' conservatism; their incongruent approaches to these issues defined their professional and intellectual relationship and left the magazine stagnant, its potential to realize Du Bois dream as an ideal black medium, unrealized. Charles S. Johnson and *Opportunity* appeared immune to the ideological inconsistencies and disarray that plagued Du Bois and Fauset throughout her seven-year tenure as literary editor. In the void left by their lack of realized conviction, Johnson conceived of a clear and ambitious cultural agenda that aspired to facilitate social progress, and he executed his carefully conceived plan through partnerships and inter-racial cooperation with such overwhelming success, Du Bois and *The Crisis* would never recover.

¹⁹ Fauset's torrid and tormented romantic relationship with Du Bois had obscured the ability of scholars to assess to extent of her influence upon her mentor. Publically, Du Bois' published essays that were complicit with Fauset's recognition of cultural trends and his intellectual deference revealed some respect for her literary editorship and artistic talents. Privately, Fauset remained just another one of Du Bois' not-so-secret mistresses that he eventually dismissed. According to Lewis, that Fauset and Du Bois carried on an extra-marital affair from before 1921 until at least 1925 has not been disputed or refuted. Du Bois maintained numerous adulterous affairs throughout his lifetime, and Fauset, not unlike any other woman with whom he entered into a sexual liaison, found herself cast aside eventually, and certainly by 1926, when she, in increasingly poor health, sought the help of Joel Spingarn to recoup a \$2500 loan she and her sisters had made to Du Bois that he refused to repay (Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 49-50; 188-189).

When University of Chicago sociologist Charles S. Johnson arrived in Harlem in 1922 to serve as founding editor of the National Urban League's journal, *Opportunity*, *The Crisis* had been the most important magazine of the African American literary intelligentsia for over a decade. Yet, within two years of assuming his editorial duties, Johnson exerted such vast influence upon New Negro authors that he, not Du Bois, had assumed leadership of the emerging literary avant-garde. Johnson built a reputation as a relentless advocate for aspiring black artists, one who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to identify creative talent throughout the country, arranged for their transportation to New York, secured temporary housing and employment, and orchestrated social situations for them to become acquainted with white patronage. And while Johnson shared with Du Bois a passion 'to redeem, through art, the standing of his people', he did not share Du Bois' genteel sense of decorum in dealing with white cultural elites; Johnson was aggressive in his manipulation of New York luminaries and eager to challenge Du Bois' omnipotence as African America's pre-eminent literary mentor.²⁰ This forceful, even antagonistic characterization of Johnson that permeates most historical interpretations of his renaissance contributions miscasts his primary motivations and limits the complexity of his rivalry with Du Bois and his leadership in promoting a new black aesthetic.

The race riots in Springfield, Illinois in 1908 had led directly to the formation of the NAACP and forged a militant political agenda for *The Crisis*. Similarly, the 1919 riots in Chicago prompted the National Urban League to recognize the need for a different kind of magazine and a different understanding of how black media might promote social change. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations had concluded that newspapers, both white and black, whose editorials and reporting included direct protest and racial agitation flamed the intensity of the riots. They called upon the media that had fanned racial animosity to 'step back from these practices and to

²⁰ Eric King Watts. 'Cultivating a Black Public Voice: W.E.B. Du Bois and the "Criteria of Negro Art"'. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, Volume 4, Number 2 (Summer 2001): 183.

instead serve as a source of information that might help ease tension between black and white Americans and encourage interracial cooperation'.²¹

The commission determined that in an effort to gain an advantage against their competitors and increase circulation, editorial boards had intentionally fanned the flames of racial tension and rivalries among publications to dangerous levels. In the aftermath of the riots, the commission recommended that in the interest of public welfare, editors should respect their power to impeded social progress, facilitate violence and destruction, and called upon the media 'to serve as a source of information that might help ease tensions between black and white Americans and encourage racial cooperation'.²² Johnson had served as the primary researcher and leading member of the Chicago Commission, and his contributions to the committee's investigation and hearings resulted in the recommendation for building a new relationship between media and those citizens and organizations interested in achieving economic and social progress for African Americans.

When the National Urban League called upon Johnson to serve as founding editor of its new magazine, he embraced the opportunity to put the committee's recommendations into action. As Anne Carroll observed, 'When Johnson and the National Urban League (NUL) began to publish this monthly magazine in 1923, they left out the fiery protests that characterized *The Crisis* in the previous decade. They emphasized *Opportunity's* role in providing more apparently realistic and objective texts . . . to provide readers with information about and understanding of African Americans'.²³ In an effort to serve the NUL's mission to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights and to eliminate racial and class discrimination, Johnson relied heavily upon his own intellectual

²¹ Anne Elizabeth Carroll. Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 55.

²² Ibid., 55. Carroll also noted: 'The commission advised that if similar violence was to be avoided in the future, better understanding and attitudes between black and white Americans were necessary, and it argued that the press had to play a major role in promoting those changes'. The Opportunity Dinner that Johnson hosted in 1924 represented just such an activity that might promote an understanding of races via art/culture.

²³ Ibid., 15-16.

background as a sociologist to solicit and publish expository essays on subjects that investigated the causes of inequality. By 1923, the NUL had spent 12 years researching migration and urban conditions, training social workers, and improving African American employment.²⁴ Naturally, Johnson's initial editorial philosophy coincided with the Chicago Committee's recommendations and perpetuated the NUL's economic focus through social science research on topics as varied as public health, recreation, and housing; however, over the course of its first eighteen months, *Opportunity* unexpectedly transformed into the principal organ for the New Negro artists. While his own research explored the social and economic challenges of ordinary life, 'Johnson came to see the arts as particularly important in the struggle against racism and oppression, and by 1925, expository texts had a less important role in *Opportunity* than literature and arts'.²⁵ His interest in the 'other 90 percent' persisted throughout the pages of the political organ; but gradually, Johnson's literary and artistic endeavours propelled *Opportunity* into national prominence.

Although he had gained a national reputation as an authority on race relations and the impact of the Great Migration on northern urban life through the 1922 publication of his book The Negro in Chicago: A Story of Race Relations and a Race Riot, Johnson decided to lead the magazine on its foray into the arts by seizing an opportunity created by circumstance and a leadership vacuum.²⁶ Johnson began to allocate most of *Opportunity's* pages and financial resources toward supporting New Negro artists while Du Bois spent almost five months out of the country organizing the third Pan-African Congress in London, and travelling throughout Africa. Lewis rationalized that 'the care and feeding of artists and writers had been pushed to the side lines of Du Bois's urgent concerns' which included last minute anxieties about the third Pan-African Congress, his mission to Liberia, and the

²⁴ Nancy J. Weiss. The National Urban League: 1910-1940. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 44-45.

²⁵ Carroll, Word, Image, and the New Negro, 56.

²⁶ Patrick J. Gilpin. 'Charles S. Johnson: Entrepreneur of the Harlem Renaissance'. In Arna Bontemps (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Remembered. (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1972), 220.

continuing conflicts with Marcus Garvey and his political allies.²⁷ Johnson's decision to make culture rather than politics *Opportunity's* primary focus proved to be prescient. Drawing upon his Chicago Commission experiences with successful interracial collaboration, Johnson poured his time, energy, and money into building and extending social and commercial networks between New Negro writers and white publishers, patrons, critics, and intellectuals, and did so with the support of his magazine's political agenda. From its inception, the National Urban League had encouraged interracial cooperation as a fundamental cornerstone of its organization, as mutually beneficial in 'the development of a common civilization and the "moral progress" of the nation'.²⁸ While Du Bois quarrelled with NAACP board members over the editorial direction of *The Crisis* and how its agenda regarding conventional politics was and, more often, was not accurately represented in the pages of its own publication, Johnson and *Opportunity* downplayed conventional politics and steered away from confronting discrimination and racism through direct confrontation and condemnation. *Opportunity*, as Gilpin recognized, found its forte 'in reporting and promoting black *culture* in the United States and the world at large.'²⁹ Both Johnson and Du Bois recognized the potential of promoting Negro culture as an avenue to achieve social and political change and to cultivate a sense of nationality through celebrating the artistic achievements of the New Negro. As Du Bois shifted his attentions to international initiatives and the promotion of pan-Africanism, Johnson pursued his new editorial objectives with unfettered focus and the support of his parent organization. His rapid and overwhelming success at achieving this goal and filling the void left by Du Bois would soon be apparent to his peers as well as his competitors.

The 1924 Civic Club Dinner, often identified as an event conceived by Charles S. Johnson as an occasion to introduce talented Negro writers to influential white publishers and magazine editors, has long symbolized the public launching of the

²⁷ Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 154.

²⁸ Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, 171.

²⁹ Gilpin, 'Charles S. Johnson', 223.

Harlem Renaissance and held numerous and contested meanings for both historians and literary scholars. Early major histories of the Harlem Renaissance did not consider the Civic Club dinner at all, much less identify the event as a the catalyst for the renaissance and the trigger to a black aesthetic controversy that would carry on throughout the decade. Harold Cruse's study made no direct mention of *Opportunity* or of Charles S. Johnson, while Nathan Huggins devoted less than a full page of his landmark study that provided only an overview of the magazine. More recently, scholars have focused on the significance of the event itself, particularly the inter-racial collaborations that were formed at the event and the special *Survey Graphic* number on Harlem that the evening purportedly inspired.

David Levering Lewis', When Harlem Was In Vogue, was the first to acknowledge the significance of the 21 March dinner, and thus, his characterization of the moment and, particularly, its principal actors, has carried tremendous sway over how the event has been perceived. Lewis portrayed Charles S. Johnson as a master manipulator 'whose passion for dominion expressed itself through secrecy . . .' and only half-heartedly rationalized his deceptions for having a meaningful purpose: 'to redeem through art the standing of his people'.³⁰ Lewis was particularly sympathetic to Du Bois and while he never stated unequivocally that Johnson stole Du Bois well-laid plans for launching a black cultural renaissance, Lewis proclaimed Johnson sought to control the 'wave of white discovery' and to forge 'the conditions of compensation'.³¹

George Hutchinson's cultural history a decade later offered greater nuance and balance to his interpretations of the dinner, as well as introduced the thesis of rivalry between Johnson and Du Bois. More than just a ploy for Johnson to assert cultural

³⁰ Lewis, When Harlem Was In Vogue, 90. His thesis, in which he cast Du Bois as duped by Johnson's deft maneuvers, almost certainly drew heavily upon Gilpin's essay, 'Charles S. Johnson'. As one of the first critical works to explore Johnson's role and influence, Gilpin likened Johnson to a shrewd businessman, calculating, and with commercial interests (fostering relationships with white publisher and editors) at the forefront of his actions. My argument depends heavily upon diminishing this interpretation of Johnson's motives and realigning him with his Chicago Race Commission conclusions about race and the role of media.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 94, 98

and commercial control, Hutchinson acknowledged these rifts, explaining the moment ‘prophesized a shift (in the relative power of *The Crisis*) that Du Bois deeply resented’.³² His account rehabilitated Lewis’ projected image of Johnson by discrediting Fauset’s (and subsequently Du Bois’) view of the dinner. Hutchinson argued that Johnson would have never planned such a large event simply to celebrate the publication of There Is Confusion or to praise a *Crisis* editor.³³ What Hutchinson and other recent scholars have not yet explored are the aesthetic and political values at the heart of the growing competition between Johnson and Du Bois, *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*. Recent scholarship has yet to assess the extent to which Johnson utilized his editorship to conduct a media experiment to test his own research findings as a part of the Chicago Race Commission. Could print media step away from direct racial protest, mitigate black-white animosity, ease racial tensions, and encourage inter-racial cooperation? Could *Opportunity*, by focusing on cultural achievement that presented authentic representations of black life, become the new medium the commission had envisioned, one that fostered constructive relationships with those interested in economic and social progress for African Americans? Due in part to the generosity of the Carnegie Foundation, Johnson had little concern for the economic viability of *Opportunity* and showed little concern to taking credit for ushering forth a new black aesthetic.³⁴ He willingly allowed and actively encouraged others, particularly Alain Locke, to embrace the public spotlight and accept credit for whatever recognition their approach might achieve. Free of concerns over declining circulation figures, an opinionated Board of Directors, or the personal desire to receive credit as the facilitator and figurehead of the burgeoning renaissance, Johnson crafted an ingenuous plan to move New Negro culture and arts to the forefront of public consciousness and take significant steps toward achieving

³² Hutchinson, The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White, 167.

³³ *Ibid.*, 390.

³⁴ In 1922, the NUL received an \$8000 annual grant from the Carnegie Corporation that helped the organization establish *Opportunity*. Carnegie discontinued funding in 1927, which, in part, prompted Johnson to resign his post and accept a faculty appointment at Nashville’s Fisk University in 1928. *Opportunity* was never financially self-sufficient, and Johnson never pursued economic independence for the magazine as vigorously as Du Bois had throughout his tenure at *The Crisis*.

black equality. His meticulous planning and carefully crafted editorials on the contributions that could be made by Negro artists in 1924 revealed more about his commitment to pursue racial harmony and mutual understanding than it did about his ruthless ambition to challenge a rival magazine.

As early as the fall of the 1923, Johnson had taken significant steps, privately, to explore ways in which white publishers might help talented writers and artists secure greater public recognition and reach a broader intellectual audience than those who subscribed to *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. Paul Kellogg, long-time editor of *Survey Graphic*, proved both an obvious and most unlikely partner to introduce America to the artistic talents of African Americans. Like Johnson, Kellogg was a sociologist whose editorship of *The Survey* (the earlier iteration of *Survey Graphic*) had long been committed to principles of efficiency and progressivism. Using social science as a tool to confront the ills of society, *Survey Graphic*, under Kellogg's leadership, had introduced its readers to a variety of subjects, including nationalistic uprisings in Mexico and Ireland, the plight of the American Farmer, and the role of women in society, through special numbers he considered worthy of serious study and under-reported in popular American political press.³⁵ *Survey Graphic* had evolved from *The Survey*, a journal heavily influenced by the social-work movement of the early 20th century that published studies targeted for professional social workers. Kellogg wanted *Survey Graphic* to reach a wider, more socially conscious audience and compete directly with political stalwarts such as the *New Republic* and *The Nation*, 'which incorporated analysis of art, literature and the budding field of psychology into discussions of public issues'.³⁶ Kellogg also believed that his new journal should be fundamentally different from his competitors and 'wanted his new

³⁵ Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth. [Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher](#). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 188-189.

³⁶ Cara Finnegan. [Social Welfare and Visual Politics: The Story of Survey Graphic](http://newdeal.feri.org/sg/essay.htm). New Deal Network. <http://newdeal.feri.org/sg/essay.htm>. For a detailed analysis of Kellogg's editorial career and the significance of the journal, see also Clarke Chambers. [Paul U. Kellogg and The Survey: Voices for Social Welfare and Social Justice](#). (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971).

publication to represent itself as a journal of "social fact". He did not want to tell people what they should think, but to "provoke citizens everywhere into an awareness of new programs for social reform," to get citizens to see for themselves the necessity for particular social changes'.³⁷

In December, 1923, after Johnson had introduced them via letter, Kellogg and Locke began a correspondence that would continue steadily through 1925, resulting not only in their collaboration on the special 'Harlem' number of *Survey Graphic*, but also Locke's decision to feature Kellogg's essay 'The Negro Pioneers' in The New Negro. While Locke's personal archives only contained two letters from Kellogg written before The Civic Club Dinner on 21 March, one January note requested, from Locke, a list of potential topics to be considered for a special number.³⁸ While no record exists regarding Locke's suggestions, the significance of the timing of this discussion sheds new light on the meaning and evolution of the Civic Club Dinner, which has been viewed by many scholars as Kellogg's fountain of inspiration. Offering Locke the opportunity to edit a special issue at the evening's end was neither an organic nor spontaneous revelation, but the culmination of a carefully crafted plan at least five months in the making.

Johnson's pre-existing relationship with Kellogg and his efforts to introduce him to Locke before the end of 1923 warrants deeper consideration. By reconsidering the catalyst for Johnson's impetus to expand the dinner's motif, whether to convince Kellogg to publish the special number or to organize the ideal occasion to announce the joint venture with optimal fanfare, the history of the moment and the nature of Johnson's rivalry with Du Bois is altered. The dinner served as an optimal venue to unveil inter-racial efforts to utilize Negro culture as a vehicle for social change, the genesis of a promise of media collaboration; a moment for Johnson to show other

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Richard A. Long. 'The Genesis of Locke's *The New Negro*'. *Black World* 25 (February 1976): 15. Long was the first scholar to note the exchange of ideas for a special issue of *Survey Graphic* before March, and noted that '(b)y May 1924, the collection of articles was in process, some had already been read by Locke and Kellogg, and the decision was made to have illustrations done by Winold Reiss. . . .'

influential publishers that Kellogg's initiative was prescient and an example to be followed by all. While his actions generated resentment from Fauset and eventually animosity from Du Bois, Johnson's insistence upon expanding the scope of the dinner benefited far too many others beyond himself or his magazine to be reduced to a power play for cultural authority that launched an aesthetic controversy that defined the renaissance.

Although Alain Locke would play a starring role as master of ceremonies at The Civic Club Dinner, Johnson had made no direct reference to him about the event three weeks before the evening. A 29 February letter only alluded to 'another matter' . . . 'being planned by {Eric} Walrond, {Countee} Cullen, Gwendolyn Bennett, myself, and some others, which hopes to interest and include you' but promised more details to follow.³⁹ A second letter to Locke dated 29 February mentioned the upcoming dinner and revealed the extent to which Johnson had already considered expanding the dinner's purpose. Johnson asked him to review the lists of potential guests, explaining: 'There are two classes of guests it develops of necessity: The "honorary" and "supporting"—entirely a mental classification'.⁴⁰ To this point, Johnson had hesitated to share his plans with Locke almost certainly because he had yet to discuss the matter further with his 'Books and Things' cohort, the small group of Washington D.C. residents, including Eric Walrond, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Bennett, Jessie Fauset, Eloise Bibb Thompson, Regina Anderson, and Harold Jackman, who had first broached the idea of a special celebration at their January meeting.

Johnson's March 5th letter to Locke revealed that at the last meeting of the book club 'it was proposed that something be done to mark the growing self-consciousness of the newer school of writers and as a desirable theme the date of the appearance of Jessie Fauset's book was selected, that is around the twentieth of March'.⁴¹ Johnson

³⁹ Johnson to Locke, 29 February 1924 164/40/25. ALP/M-SC.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Johnson to Locke 5 March 1924 164/40/25. ALP/M-SC.

confessed that '(t)he idea has grown somewhat and it is the present purpose to include as many of the newer school of writers as possible' though he failed to reveal that the original suggestion was to celebrate Fauset's publication. Johnson proceeded to confess his hopes for Locke's contribution to the event, a proposal that would forever change Locke's significance as a cultural and intellectual leader: 'We want you to take a certain role in the movement. . . . You were thought of as a sort of master of ceremonies for the "movement".'⁴² Johnson's use of the word 'movement' could not have been an accident; neither in his own awareness of what he hoped the event might launch (or at least make 'public'), nor in its function to tantalize Locke to accept a prominent and featured role in what would be unveiled later in the month.

Johnson's series of letters over the course of the following week revealed much about the transition of The Civic Club Dinner from an intimate gathering to toast Fauset's new book into a formal gala introducing dozens of young writers of a would-be renaissance to influential white publishers, magazine editors, and to the public at-large. Clearly, Johnson counted the novelist Eric Walrond and poets Countee Cullen and Gwendolyn Bennett as allies in his efforts to transform Fauset's moment into something that might serve a greater purpose. On 7 March, Johnson confessed that '(t)he matter has never rested in my mind as something exclusively for Miss Fauset or anybody else. The real motive for getting this group together is to present this newer school of writers. There seems to be insistence on getting you to assume the leading role for the movement. I regard you as a sort of "Dean" of this younger group'.⁴³ While the real motive for the gathering and the undefined 'insistence' on Locke's role were predominantly his own perspectives, Johnson's letter conveyed consensus and outlined a new identity and agenda for evening. Locke's ever-expanding responsibilities, from M.C. of the evening to mentor of a new generation of artists, addressed, indirectly, the resistance he had within the group about the emphasis of the event. Six days before the dinner that would come

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Johnson to Locke, 7 March 1924, 164/40/25. ALP/M-SC.

to represent the birth of the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson acknowledged to Locke that ‘No accident can afford to happen now. The idea has gone “big”’.⁴⁴ Proud and anxious, Johnson had set into motion a carefully conceived plan, one punctuated by the announcement of an offer from Paul Kellogg, an offer that, in all likelihood, had already been made or in the least seemed to Johnson to be inevitable, that permanently shifted the balance of power and authority among African American intelligentsia.

Confident that his idea would go ‘big’, Johnson had already begun to lay the aesthetic foundation for what a new approach to Negro art should be and what it might achieve. In an *Opportunity* editorial that appeared just weeks before the dinner, Johnson wrote that the subject of the Negro had witnessed ‘the stripping off of the veil within the last two years’ and credited the ‘stern consistency of our modernistic trend in literature and life for making discussions of Negro life more acceptable in polite circles’.⁴⁵ He attributed partial responsibility for ‘this new and generally distributed curiosity’ to ‘the numerous formal inter-racial bodies, with their discussions and study groups’.⁴⁶ Aware that interest in Negro life by book clubs, public lectures, and civic organizations may have served as a ‘stamp of liberal-mindedness’, Johnson shared the credit for this heightened intellectual interest with ‘the new group of young Negro writers who have dragged themselves out of the deadening slough of the race’s historical inferiority complex. . .’.⁴⁷ Exhibiting what he called ‘an unconquerable audacity’, Johnson insisted these writers were ‘leaving to the old school its labored lamentations and protests, read only by those who agree with them, and are writing about life’.⁴⁸ Indirectly, Johnson’s claims about New Negro writers reflected their commitment to and potential to achieve a Black Aesthetic reiterated what Du Bois had already challenged them to pursue in 1921: Create truthful portraits of all aspects of Negro life without fear of criticism from the

⁴⁴ Johnson to Locke 15 March 1924, 164/40/25. ALP/M-SC.

⁴⁵ Charles S. Johnson. ‘Editorials: The New Generation’. *Opportunity* 2 (March 1924): 68.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

black intellectual concerned with how the Negro is portrayed in art.⁴⁹ Johnson concluded his editorial by acknowledging that ‘literary America’ (by which he almost assuredly meant dominant white culture) had begun to accept these artists and their works as literature ‘where these bold strokes emancipate their message from the miasma of race’.⁵⁰ Johnson’s treatise, when viewed historically, was particularly prescient, simply because he realized that his vision for the Civic Club Dinner—a public revelation of white ‘literary America’ celebrating talented young Negro writers’, culminating in a tangible offer of acceptance and cultural endorsement from Paul Kellogg—was already headed toward its inevitable reality.

Johnson’s account of the dinner, ‘The Debut of the Younger School of Negro Writers’ not only allowed him to control the message and meaning of the 21 March occasion, but also afforded his reporting the chance to affirm the assertions he made in his March editorial. By validating the evening as an expression of the ‘(i)nterest among the literati of New York in the emerging group of younger Negro writers’, Johnson’s portraits exemplified precision, not necessarily of reporting accuracy but of deftness in managing the message he hoped to publicize and promote. Calling the occasion a “‘coming out party”” and held on a date ‘selected around the appearance of the novel “There Is Confusion” by Jessie Fauset’ Johnson claimed that ‘(a)lthough there was no formal, prearranged program, the occasion provoked a surprising spontaneity of expression both from the members of the writer’s group and from the distinguished visitors present’.⁵¹ Johnson subtly countered the potential criticisms about Fauset’s marginalization by crediting her as a coincidental catalyst of the evening. More significantly, he managed to confer an aura of organic sincerity and unexpected, unsolicited expressions of praise, admiration, and mutual respect; a

⁴⁹ W.E.B Du Bois. ‘Negro Art’. *The Crisis* 22 (June 1921): 55-56. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from *The Crisis*, Volume 1, 1911-1925. (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983).

⁵⁰ Johnson, ‘Editorials: The New Generation’, 68.

⁵¹ Charles S. Johnson. ‘The Debut of the Younger School of Negro Writers’. *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): 143.

moment of pure epiphany that many scholars, based on Johnson's account have adopted without further investigation.

Whether his humility was genuine or another carefully fabricated aspect of his persona, Johnson only mentioned his role briefly, as offering a 'brief interpretation of the object of the Guild'; his most significant contribution to the evening, he claimed, was introducing Locke, 'who had been selected to act as Master of Ceremonies and to interpret the new currents manifest in the literature of this younger school'.⁵² Identifying him as 'virtual dean of the movement', Johnson recognized that Locke had been 'one of the most resolute stimulators of this group, and although he has been writing longer than most of them, he is distinctly a part of the movement'.⁵³ By early 1924, Locke was nearly a generation older than the group of the writers with whom Johnson claimed Locke as a peer. Locke's efforts to assist and mentor young writers and artists to this point paled in comparison to the influence of Fauset, the original focal point of the evening and the person who had generated more opportunities and who had actually crafted fiction that exemplified the very movement Johnson had announced would be led by Locke.

Johnson also used his May account to re-affirm the accuracy of aesthetic values he had documented two months earlier. Drawing on remarks made by respected white publisher Horace Liverlight, Johnson confirmed that publishers themselves recognized the dangers of young artists who remained too dependent upon writing laboured lamentations and protests to satisfy the old school. According to Johnson, literary America and, in Liverlight's case, those who offered the commercial opportunity to reach a wider, multi-racial readership, required something new from Negro literature:

In his exhortations to the younger group he {Liverlight} warned against the danger of reflecting in one's writings the "inferiority complex" which is so insistently and frequently apparent in an overbalanced emphasis on

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

“impossibly good” fiction types. He felt that to do the best writing it was necessary to give a rounded picture which included bad types as well as good ones since both of these go to make up life.⁵⁴

Johnson had the foresight to validate his own aesthetic beliefs, not only by including the ideological similarities he shared with one of New York’s leading publishers (and ironically the publisher of Fauset’s novel), but also by printing in its entirety, the text of a speech given by Carl Van Doren. A Columbia University professor, Van Doren was widely regarded as America’s premier chronicler of American literary history and leading expert on assessing its contemporary cultural significance.⁵⁵ His proclamation, ‘The Younger Generation of Negro Writers’, confirmed Johnson’s view that a new movement was well underway. Van Doren expressed considerable faith in ‘the future of imaginative writing among Negroes in the United States . . . due to a feeling that the Negroes of the country are in a remarkable strategic position with reference to the new literary age which seems to be impending’.⁵⁶ Inferring the promise of a forthcoming renaissance and echoing Johnson’s March praise for the ‘unconquerable audacity’ and ‘bold strokes’ of young Negro writers, Van Doren assured his audience that, in his expert opinion:

Once they find a voice, they will bring a fresh and fierce sense of reality to their vision of human life on this continent, a vision seen from a novel angle by a part of the population which cannot be duped by the bland optimism of the majority. . . . They will look at the same world that the white poets and novelists and dramatists look at, yet, arrainging or enjoying it, will keep in

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ At the time, Van Doren was held in high intellectual regard for his 1921 work of criticism, The American Novel. By re-assessing the significance of American Literature, particularly the contributions and originality of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain, Van Doren had re-calibrated the significance of romanticism, realism and naturalism in both the development of an American literature and authors’ impact on validating the cultural legitimacy of America and moving cultural achievements of the 19th century out of the shadows of and perceived dependence upon European traditions and aesthetics. As an authority of ‘literary America’, Van Doren provided Johnson with a bona fide expert whose opinion held great influence among intellectuals, black and white.

⁵⁶ Carl Van Doren. ‘The Younger Generation of Negro Writers’ *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): 144.

their modes of utterance the sympathies, the memories, the rhythms of their ancient stock.⁵⁷

Van Doren's belief in the power of young Negro authors to write with authenticity and originality did not ignore the unique racial burden placed upon them by their circumstances. While admitting these young writers 'must long continue to be propagandists' because the 'wrongs of their people are too close to them to be overlooked', Van Doren insisted that 'the vulgar forms of propaganda are all unnecessary', and '(t)he facts about Negroes in the United States are themselves propaganda—devastating and unanswerable'.⁵⁸ In much the same manner as Du Bois had argued in 1921, confronting myopic attitudes toward the relationship between propaganda and art must be of principal concern. What Du Bois had called 'justifiable propaganda'—the right for audiences to insist artist promise the some of the best in human character while not demanding that artists ignore the imperfect—Van Doren now propagated as the writer's need to balance the self-evident truth of 'facts' about the Negro's condition, with how an artist is influenced by the 'facts' of his life; a realization that, in fact, was an essential part of artistic inspiration and originality.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 144-145.

⁵⁹ Du Bois would have condemned or, in the very least, been highly suspicious of Van Doren's remarks. While acknowledging the promise of young writers, Van Doren's rationales for their potential achievements were, at times, blatantly paternalistic and subtly racist attitudes. He claimed that 'as a race' Negroes were 'not given to self-destroying bitterness' a racial characteristic that he believed would allow writers to 'strike a happy balance between rage and complacency—that balance in which passion and humor are somehow united in the best of all possible amalgams for the creative artist' (144). Much of the promise Van Doren recognized in the potential of Negro writing relied heavily upon a broader modernist reaction against post-war devastation and doubts about the viability and infallibility of European civilization. 'What American literature decidedly needs at the moment', Van Doren exhorted, 'is color, music, gusto, the free expression of gay and desperate moods. If the Negroes are not in a position to contribute these items, I do not know what Americans are' (144). In 1915, Du Bois had recognized the power of redemption Negro culture could offer Western Civilization at the onset of the war (see Chapter Two), but the possibility of salvation articulated by white critics, like Van Doren, at this particular moment in history, would have escalated doubts about the exploitation of black authors and artists by white commerce to which Du Bois would hinge his own aesthetic metamorphosis between 1924-1926.

Johnson's inclusion of Van Doren's speech as a compliment to his article reporting the Civic Club Dinner was a brilliant editorial manoeuvre if Johnson's highest priority remained showing others the potential of inter-racial cooperation and collaboration in media. By acknowledging Liverlight and Van Doren's perspectives in print, Johnson vindicated his own beliefs about the movement. What Johnson failed to mention, either intentionally or not, was the striking resemblance of Liverlight's advice and Van Doren's judgments to the recommendations Du Bois had published three years earlier; however, on this evening Johnson seemed intent to identify Du Bois and, by association, his literary editor and magazine, as relics of the past.

Celebrating the potential embodied by younger writers and the swell of hopefulness would shape Johnson's vision for the Civic Club dinner and influenced how he reported Du Bois' contributions to the program. Making his first public appearance in the United States since his four month trip to Africa, Du Bois 'was introduced by the chairman (Locke) with soft seriousness as a representative of the "older school"' .⁶⁰ Locke and Johnson's curious words appeared to be chosen carefully; if not strategically describing Du Bois with grandfatherly respect afforded to an important, less relevant, elder that Johnson distinguished from those younger individuals who would usher forth a new era and relevance of Negro culture. In documenting Du Bois' remarks, Johnson situated him squarely in the past, only noting: 'Dr. Du Bois explained that the Negro writers of a few years back were of necessity pioneers, and much of their style was forced upon them by the barriers against publication of literature about Negroes of any sort'.⁶¹ Whatever commentary Du Bois offered about the meaning of the evening or the future possibilities for young writers remained accounted for only by those present.

Johnson's interpretation of Fauset's prominence also varied dramatically from the one she would articulate in her letter to Locke nine years later. Johnson insisted that

⁶⁰ Doren, 'The Younger Generation of Negro Writers', 145.

⁶¹ Johnson, 'The Debut of the Younger School of Negro Writers', 143.

'Miss Jessie Fauset was given a place of distinction on the program. She paid her respects to those friends who had contributed to her accomplishments, acknowledging a particular debt to her "best friend and severest critic," Dr. Du Bois'.⁶² Johnson provided no additional details about her remarks and conveniently ignored the fact that her 'place of distinction on the program' according to Thadieous Davis, was '(l)ost in the attention paid to Locke' and her allotted time to address the audience buried deep in the evening's program; in effect, making her remarks 'peripheral'.⁶³ Scholars like Davis, have attributed this as a pernicious and calculated manoeuvre that 'undermined Fauset's position among the authors, many of whom she had mentored' and have noted the evening as the tipping point of her career and relevancy in shaping the forthcoming renaissance.⁶⁴ The extent to which Johnson and/or Locke plotted with the intent to ensure Fauset's demise cannot be measured. What can be gauged, however, is the extent to which Johnson (and ultimately Locke) sought to align both Du Bois and Fauset, by commenting on her indebtedness to Du Bois, with the older school of black aesthetics. Although many of the writers who comprised Johnson's 'younger generation' had initially been identified by Fauset and first published in *The Crisis*, Johnson's primary concern may well have been, not with ensuring that his magazine ascended to a place of cultural significance at the expense of a more powerful rival, but with ensuring that someone assumed a clear, direct, and focused leadership of the cultural renaissance; a responsibility and opportunity that Du Bois and *The Crisis* had failed to fully embrace or capitalize on their advantage.

Some historians have highlighted Du Bois and Fauset's marginalization at the dinner as proof that Johnson's event had less to do with cultivating a renaissance and more with fostering a rivalry to overtake the *The Crisis*' prominence as a cultural organ.

⁶² Ibid., 143.

⁶³ Thadieous M. Davis. 'Foreword'. In Jessie Fauset's, *There Is Confusion*. (Northeastern University Press, 1989), xxiii-xxiv.

⁶⁴ Davis has also suggested that sexism was a key motivator in her marginalization, and the consequences of the evening may have permanently derailed her career. She hypothesized that 'it further meant that in the next three dynamic years, the influential leaders in the movement were all males, some of whom, like Locke, were not only male chauvinists but misogynists' (xxiii-xxiv).

David Levering Lewis noted that ‘three of the brightest stars in what was already being called the New Negro Arts movement’, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and Claude McKay, were out of the country and absent from the event. Lewis, drawing a sympathetic portrait of a long absent Du Bois, argued that Johnson integrated Du Bois’ colleagues (and rivals) in the NAACP, such as Oswald Villard, Arthur Spingarn and Mary Ovington, with his own network of contacts including the publisher Horace Liveright, Urban League chairman L. Hollingsworth Wood, and Survey Graphic editor Paul Kellogg.⁶⁵ Obviously, the absence of Hughes, Toomer, and McKay, none of whom would have self-identified as *Crisis* or Du Bois protégés, was coincidental, given the haste with which the event had been planned. That Johnson worked to integrate key leaders of the NAACP, the National Urban League, and New York publishers and editors only served to strengthen the argument that Johnson’s primary purpose for orchestrating the Civic Club Dinner was not to supplant Du Bois and *The Crisis* and challenge their monopoly on black cultural authority; his intent could just as easily have been to prove the research of the Chicago Race Commission had merit; that media cooperation, not rivalries that fostered divisiveness and racial animosity, could be achieved if properly guided. The dominant historical narratives surrounding 21 March that claimed Johnson ‘wrested away from the *Crisis* its leadership of the cultural movement’,⁶⁶ and ‘assumed the role of principal architect in building a civil rights arts movement . . . through the production of exemplary racial images in collaboration with liberal white philanthropy, the culture industry centered in Manhattan, and artists from white bohemia’⁶⁷ revealed only a portion of the story. Scholars who have perpetuated the characterization of Johnson as ‘entrepreneur’ and calculated manipulator throughout the past thirty years have failed to account for Johnson’s actions as answering the call of the Chicago Commission, and not commercially compromised exploitation to

⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 157.

⁶⁶ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 193.

⁶⁷ Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 156.

serve himself, the interests of his magazine, and those of white publishers who sought to manipulate young writers for profit.

Historians have acknowledged that Johnson believed that interracial collaboration was necessary to fulfil his ambition for cultural achievement that fostered racial progress and justifications for equality that would make it ‘increasingly harder for influential whites to deny full social and civil rights to blacks’;⁶⁸ however, the prevalent characterization of Johnson as entrepreneur and antagonist has been overstated. In so much as historians have been too trusting of Johnson’s account of the spontaneity of the Civic Club Dinner and Paul Kellogg’s ‘epiphany’, many have been too eager to interpret his planning as ‘plotting’ meant to disenfranchise Du Bois and Fauset and challenge *The Crisis*’ cultural omnipotence. Certainly, Johnson realized his efforts to organize the dinner in his own vision would generate disapproval; however, the larger historical question remains: Was the alienation of Du Bois and Fauset, in fact, his primary objective? To what extent was Johnson’s acting purposely and hypocritically to estrange *The Crisis* family while promoting inter-racial collaboration and pursuing a less vitriolic, more cooperative media approach to social change? Du Bois’ responses to the events that followed the Civic Club Dinner left no question that a full-fledged rivalry existed after March 1924. But the extent to which Du Bois’ reaction to *Opportunity*’s meteoric rise was primarily responsible for the lack of cooperation between *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* has been largely overlooked.

‘Contested’ Reaction: Du Bois’ Response to the Threat of Literary Competition

By April, 1924, NAACP board members had already begun to worry aloud that the declining circulation of *The Crisis* was due, in part, to Du Bois spreading himself too thin and focusing too much on personal concerns, pan-African pursuits, book contracts, outside lecturing and writing, and paying less attention to the association’s

⁶⁸ Ibid., 156.

agenda.⁶⁹ When board members suggested that a fundamental overhauling of the magazine was needed, Mary White Ovington wrote, ‘The State of *The Crisis*’ which declared: ‘The magazine now in the ascendant is *Opportunity*. . .’ and pronounced that its most recent issue was the best number ‘of any colored magazine that had been printed since we have existed as an Association’.⁷⁰ Du Bois’ offered no public or written reaction to Ovington’s unfavourable comparison of him and his magazine to Johnson and *Opportunity*. Moreover, Ovington’s act of openly doubting Du Bois’ implied that, in spite of his fame and once robust circulation figures, Johnson had supplanted Du Bois and *The Crisis* from centre stage, or, at the very least, presented the first credible challenge to the organization’s decade-long monopoly as the primary purveyor of African American culture.⁷¹ Even as one of Du Bois’ few long-standing allies within the NAACP, Ovington admitted publicly what others already understood: Johnson’s committed interest in black cultural expression as a pathway to social and political progress far exceeded that of Du Bois; and her pronouncement left no room to debate the view of the organization’s leadership: An important opportunity for the NAACP to lead change was being lost.

Du Bois appeared unfazed by Ovington’s criticisms and unaffected by Johnson’s public relations triumph. By July, *Opportunity* capitalized on its growing momentum by announcing an ambitious new plan to promote Negro cultural activity. *Opportunity* announced its first annual literary contest in the August 1924, and by September’s issue, Johnson articulated both an aesthetic vision for his magazine and outlined new cultural opportunities that were now awaiting young writers. He proclaimed: ‘There is an opportunity now for Negroes themselves to replace their worn-out representations in fiction faithfully and incidentally to make themselves

⁶⁹ In 1924, reprimands from the Board, personal scandals and extra-marital affairs deteriorated Du Bois’ authority within the NAACP.

⁷⁰ Mary White Ovington. ‘The State of *The Crisis*’. 12 May 1924. The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois, Special Collections, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

⁷¹ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 193.

better understood'.⁷² Johnson envisioned the listless, happy-go-lucky Negro characters depicted by the likes of Thomas Page and Octavius Roy Cohen that fuelled white America's reinforcement of the Negro caricature through fiction, made irrelevant by the realistic portrayals of black life. A young literary guild, properly supported and mentored, could use their liberation from white characterizations of African Americans to represent the individual and life in a more honest, realistic light than America had ever known. Johnson predicted that '(a) new period in creative expression among Negroes is foreshadowed in the notable, even if fugitive and disconnected success of certain of the generation of Negro writers now emerging'.⁷³ Reiterating much of Du Bois' principles conveyed three years earlier in 'Negro Art', Johnson urged that these writers would not gain recognition and cultural validation by abiding to the genteel tradition of Negro literary propaganda encouraged by political operatives; they must aspire to shake themselves free of a literary criteria which demanded deliberate political protest as its main function in order to produce literature whose primary purpose was to weave and pattern words to express their thoughts, feelings, and impressions inspired by real, everyday life.

The success of the Civic Club Dinner and the forthcoming *Survey Graphic* number had inspired Johnson and proved that '(t)he body of experience and public opinion seem ripe for the development of some new and perhaps distinctive contribution to art, literature, and life'.⁷⁴ Johnson was convinced more than ever that sufficient talent and material existed to produce a cultural renaissance; however, he acknowledged that in order to tap this potential 'these contributions demand incentives'.⁷⁵ Johnson justified *Opportunity's* new efforts as one approach that might channel '(t)he random and obviously inadequate methods of casual inquiry' that he believed had 'disclosed an unexpected amount and degree of writing ability

⁷² Charles S. Johnson, 'Editorial: An Opportunity for Negro Writers'. *Opportunity* 2 (September 1924): 258.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

among Negroes which gives promise of further development on a large scale'.⁷⁶ A contest, like the one he proposed, would provide a new medium for writers already known primarily because of what Johnson called an 'accident of locality' to converge with the 'undoubtedly others to be discovered'.⁷⁷ And much in the same manner that the Civic Club Dinner brought Negro artists together with influential white publishers, Johnson envisioned the contest as yet another example of the 'extreme usefulness for the cause of inter-racial good-will . . . in interpreting the life and longings and emotional experiences of the Negro people to their shrinking and spiritually alien neighbors; of flushing old festers of hate and disgruntlement by becoming triumphantly articulate; of forcing the interest and kindred feeling of the rest of the world by sheer force of the humanness and beauty of one's own story'.⁷⁸ Explicitly, Johnson now declared 'inter-racial goodwill' as a modern substitute for the 'old festers of hate and disgruntlement', essential for Negro writers to achieve artistic authenticity and to become 'triumphantly articulate'. Much as Johnson had relegated Du Bois to spokesman of the 'older school' of protest literature at the Civic Club Dinner, his September editorial now implicitly reaffirmed the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches to alleviating racial strife. The fervent protests against racial discrimination that filled the pages of magazines like *The Crisis* for well over a decade had become, in Johnson's mind, passé. 'Old school', the approach of Du Bois and *The Crisis* fostered animosity, escalated racial violence and impeded social progress. Johnson, possibly ignorant of Du Bois' multi-faceted intellectual approaches to politics and culture, affiliated the antiquated approaches that had failed politically automatically with the inability to create art; a distinction that Du Bois appeared to grasp in his writings about art and culture from 1921-1924. Whether or not Johnson understood, in 1924, that Du Bois' attitudes toward Negro aesthetics coincided closely with his own is unclear; however, the effect of Johnson's ascendancy to cultural authority, and the association artists and the public at-large

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

developed between him and an artistic ideology that mirrored Du Bois' beliefs created an unnatural and inaccurate segregation that left Johnson on black culture's cutting edge and Du Bois a relic of the past whose beliefs and approaches were no longer effective.

In conclusion, Johnson articulated a clear and ambitious mission for *Opportunity's* new contest that served as blueprint for the goals and direction his magazine would lead an ambitious cultural agenda:

It hopes to stimulate and encourage creative literary effort among Negroes; to locate and orient Negro writers of ability; to stimulate and encourage interest in the serious development of a body of literature about Negro life, drawing deeply upon these tremendously rich sources; to encourage the reading of literature both by Negro authors and about Negro life, not merely because they are Negro authors but because the literature is interesting; to foster a market for Negro writers and for literature by and about Negroes; to bring these writers into contact with the general world of letters to which they have been for the most part timid and inarticulate strangers; to stimulate and foster a type of writing by Negroes which shakes itself free of deliberate propaganda and protest.⁷⁹

Johnson's fundamental belief of what the contest might achieve by encouraging literary talent, educating reading audiences, and fostering a new Black Aesthetic was strikingly similar to the ideology Du Bois had introduced in 1921; however, by late 1924, the public admiration and commercial interest in Negro artists inspired Johnson to intensify his efforts to cultivate a renaissance. Johnson's practical application of Du Bois' aesthetics acknowledged the cultural progress of black art through publication and critical acclaim, rather than signifying artistic advancement simply by moving closer to a true representation of Negro life. Within six months, Johnson had implemented an aggressive plan to facilitate a New Negro Renaissance,

⁷⁹ Ibid.

a plan whose identity had borrowed heavily from Du Bois' own beliefs; a plan that *Opportunity* had been able to implement, only because Du Bois and *The Crisis* had failed to seize its opportunity to lead.

Throughout the summer of 1924, Du Bois had underestimated Johnson's growing reputation and responded slowly to Ovington's concern. *Opportunity's* September manifesto left him little choice but to act, however haphazardly. Johnson had laid the foundation for *Opportunity's* role in the renaissance ideologically and practically by proclaiming political magazines and protest literature as anathema to New Negro creativity. Subsequently, Du Bois' reactions seemed more intent on reminding his readers of his previous contributions rather than acknowledging a shared, even familiar appreciation for Johnson's aesthetics and a common alliance to the goals *Opportunity* sought to achieve. Du Bois' primary concern was giving credit where credit was due, especially if the result discredited Johnson, since he interpreted *Opportunity's* prize announcement as a personal affront and 'thought he saw an unscrupulous end run by his fellow editor'.⁸⁰

Du Bois' inadequate response to the Civic Club Dinner and *Opportunity's* literary contest and his subsequent reactions to Johnson's 'end run' revealed both a complex dynamic surrounding Du Bois' perception of their rivalry, and a familiar manifestation of his personality that had resurfaced when he felt his predominance had been threatened. The NAACP released a press statement on 22 August announcing their intention to underwrite several prizes for fiction and nonfiction, though specific details about the awards were noticeably absent. After Mary Ovington had indirectly admonished Du Bois in April after *Opportunity's* successful Civic Club Dinner, the NAACP, according to Lewis, was '(a)nxious to preclude another public relations triumph by the Urban League editor'; therefore, 'the board

⁸⁰ Lewis, *The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, 160.

of directors authorized Du Bois in late September to offer *Crisis* prizes in five categories: short stories, drama, illustrations, poetry, and essays'.⁸¹

Du Bois offered only a few details about *The Crisis*' competition in the October issue, notably that their contest would offer exactly \$100 more in prize money than *Opportunity*. The complete contest guidelines finally appeared in the November number, and revealed the extent to which Du Bois had become defensive, reactionary, and preoccupied with resuming control of the cultural phenomenon Johnson had brought to light. The editorial that accompanied the contest guidelines, 'To Encourage Negro Art' referred extensively to an editorial he had published in April, 1920 entitled, 'Negro Writers'.⁸² Quoting from his earlier work, Du Bois appeared to contest the originality of *Opportunity*'s initiatives to promote Negro art and cultivate undiscovered talent:

Since its founding, *The Crisis* has been eager to discover ability in Negroes, especially in literature and art . . . it helped to discover the poetry of Roscoe Jamison, Georgia Johnson, Fenton Johnson, Lucian Watkins and Otto Bohanan; and the prose of Jessie Fauset and Mary Effle Lee. Indeed, *The Crisis* has always preferred the strong matter of unknown names, to the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Du Bois had written 'Negro Writers' in 1920 to defend *The Crisis* against Claude McKay's claims that 'colored editors, in general, defer to white editors' opinions', a claim Du Bois dismissed as 'arrogant non-sense' (298). Du Bois, however, acknowledged that McKay's criticism 'does call our attention to the need of encouraging Negro writers' (298). Du Bois constant referencing of this essay unwittingly calls attention to his own failures to encourage artists. In 1924, Du Bois re-casted *The Crisis* efforts as his own assertions, and not the product of Negro authors like McKay pointing out that magazines like *The Crisis* needed to do more to support their own and to act independently of white opinion; editorially, Du Bois indirectly admitted he was not doing enough and *Opportunity* had simply filled the gap that Du Bois had been aware of for at least four years and had failed to close. 'Negro Writers' was a curious choice that expressed Du Bois' interest in proving that he had been the first to call for a renaissance, showing *The Crisis* as a leader in supporting Negro artists before *Opportunity* had been founded, but revealing that four years of recognizing a problem had done little to close the gap Johnson now attempted to bridge.

platitudes of well-known writers; and by its Education and Children numbers, it has shown faith in the young.⁸³

Du Bois offered proof of his continued devotion to ‘discover’ writers by listing 20 authors published in his magazine since 1920, including renaissance stalwarts Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Walter White, and Alain Locke, most of whom Jessie Fauset had introduced to him. Yet Du Bois harkened back to 1920 time and again, implying that *Opportunity’s* cultural efforts were derivative of what his magazine had already done, promising nothing original that he had not already conceived. Du Bois did, however, acknowledge what he had declared in 1920 was still true today:

We have today all too few writers, for the reason that there is {sic} small market for their ideas among whites, and their energies are being called to other and more lucrative ways of earning a living. Nevertheless, we have literary ability and the race needs it. A renaissance of American Negro literature is due; the material about us in the strange, heart-rendering race tangle is rich beyond dream and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart.⁸⁴

Johnson’s exhaustive efforts in 1924 had, in fact, expanded the commercial publishing market available to Negro writers, and his contest certainly would increase public exposure for Negro writers throughout the 1920s. Du Bois reminder of his 1920 comments appeared to insist that *The Crisis* should be the rightful leader of any renaissance that might take place, simply because he had called for it first for years earlier. He noted with surprise, and not so subtle dismay, that another organization or person might attempt to supersede his efforts and consider his place as leaders of a Negro renaissance as anything other than *fait accompli*:

⁸³ W.E.B Du Bois. ‘To Encourage Negro Art’. *The Crisis* 29 (November 1924): 11. Re-printed from W.E.B. Du Bois. ‘Negro Writers’. *The Crisis* 19 (April 1920): 298.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

Today and suddenly \$1,100 are offered in prizes to Negro writers and artists. Without either knowing the other's plans or intentions, both *The Crisis* and the magazine published by the Urban League, *Opportunity*, have offered a series of prizes. Mrs. Spingarn's (Amy) offer was made to us in July, but *Opportunity* first gave publicity to its prize offer. In order, therefore, to give young authors every chance we have put the date of our competition well on in the spring so that there will be no unnecessary rivalry and all can have the full benefit of this great generosity and foresight on the part of friends.⁸⁵

Publically, Du Bois feigned a commitment to cooperate as 'friends' for the benefit of artists. But his passive aggressiveness toward his rival permeated his announcement of *The Crisis* competition; not only had Du Bois called for a renaissance four years earlier, but he had also been surprised to learn of *Opportunity's* publicity after Amy Spingarn had agreed to fund a similar prize scheme.⁸⁶ Any deference he might have expressed to *Opportunity* for initiating the contests seemed insincere coming at the end of a full-throated defence of his magazine's place as rightful heir to proclaim and lead a Negro cultural renaissance.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁶ Du Bois' history with manipulating the chronology of events to suit his needs and benefit his reputation has several precedents, including his distortion of timelines surrounding the publication of 'Close Ranks' (see Chapter Two). Johnson would have had to plan the contest months in advance of Du Bois' July confirmation of Amy Spingarn's support. By the end of July, when the August edition would have been at press, Johnson would have already secured funding for the prizes and received board approval to proceed with announcing the competition. That Johnson had published a detailed overview of the contest scheme and mission in September, two months before Du Bois, indicates that the idea of *The Crisis* contest had likely remained a concept considered but never pursued actively until July, 1924. The question of when, precisely, Du Bois secured Spingarn's commitment remains unknown. Even if Du Bois actually had secured Spingarn's financial commitment in July, at best the magazines were pursuing the idea of literary contests simultaneously, with Johnson pursuing the endeavour more aggressively.

Opportunity's September issue would have already been at press when the NAACP issued its press release. More consistent with Johnson's collaborative approach, the brief announcement about the contest printed in the August edition might well have been a 'heads up' both to Johnson's readers and other interested parties. If his true intention was to spring the contest 'suddenly' upon Du Bois primarily to gain a competitive advantage, Johnson would have waited and made no announcement until September in order to steal Du Bois' thunder in announcing *The Crisis* competition. Johnson would have been no more likely to know of Du Bois' prize plans with the Spingarn's for prizes than Du Bois was of Johnson's efforts.

Du Bois viewed *Opportunity's* actions as insulting and as a challenge to *The Crisis's* preordained right to lead a renaissance. Threatened, Du Bois held no reservations about instigating controversy as a means to undermine Johnson, privately, in months before the appearance of his November editorial. Writing to Alain Locke on 8 August 1924, Johnson confessed:

(I)t hurts me to the quick and I cannot shake off the suggestion that the young writers are being exploited by us. After all, we have carried [published in *Opportunity*] but few things from them in spite of the fact that we have definitely presumed to bring them into the public eye. Much of it has passed through our hands but it has gone on to the publications with a wider circulation and greater ability to pay. With our boost and blessings . . . I do not feel that they are being exploited.⁸⁷

The Crisis triumvirate of Walter White, Jessie Fauset, and Du Bois were among those who whispered doubts about Johnson's motives and suggested his exploitation of artists for personal gain within days of the contest announcement. His letter to Locke, however, was significant beyond confirming Johnson's genuine commitment to advancing Negro arts and helping young writers secure financial support for their work without regard for how his efforts might have impacted his magazine. Historians have frequently viewed the rivalry primarily from Du Bois' perspective, focusing on the commercial threat *Opportunity* created: by trumping the cultural pre-eminence of *The Crisis*, commandeering the Civic Club Dinner, initiating a literary contest, and utilizing inter-racial collaborations that opened the doors of white publishing houses and magazines to New Negro authors. Johnson's historical identity as renaissance entrepreneur and manipulator has often been crafted to mirror and contend with the shrewd, combative Du Bois who confronted and conquered rivals throughout his tenure as *Crisis* editor. Casting Johnson as a Du Bois doppelgänger—ruthless, calculating and capable of supplanting the impervious editor—is miscasting Johnson, or in the very least ignoring the image of conciliatory

⁸⁷ Johnson to Locke 8 August 1924, 164/40/25. ALP/M-SC.

collaborator reflected in his letters to Locke and disregarding the influence that his research on the 1919 Chicago race riots had upon his editorship of *Opportunity*.

Du Bois' unwillingness to acknowledge a mutually beneficial purpose in working with *Opportunity* to shape a Black Aesthetic, and his insistence on the righteousness of his exceptional leadership proved to be integral reasons why *The Crisis* could not maintain its stranglehold on black literary capital. Even as he spread himself dangerously thin, Du Bois resisted delegating authority, even to literary editor Jessie Fauset, to make decisions, employ the magazine's significant influence, and define its cultural priorities. Ten years earlier, Du Bois had ignored Joel Spingarn's concern about his insistence upon acting autonomously and his warning about the alienating effect of his autocratic leadership style.⁸⁸ Until the mid-1920s, he had ignored Spingarn's advice and suffered no apparent or lasting consequences. Du Bois had reigned supreme at the NAACP, triumphed through even his most controversial miscalculations, and witnessed his reputation as an eminent scholar and political leader extend to all corners of the world. What Du Bois failed to recognize was, like Icarus, his omnipotence and his personal sovereignty was not impervious to the cultural climate that changed even without his attention or permission.⁸⁹

Few scholars have expanded upon the interpretations of Patrick Gilpin and Arnold Rampersad regarding the ascendancy of Johnson as cultural leader in the early 1920s and his influence upon Du Bois' dramatic recalibration of his aesthetic ideology in 1926. One question, however, remains a significant point of contention: How much of Du Bois' doubts about Johnson's interpretation of the Black Aesthetic,

⁸⁸ See the exchange of October, 1914 letters exchanged between Du Bois and Spingarn discussed at length in Chapter One.

⁸⁹ At times, Du Bois could be disingenuous about what he actually believed, unpredictable because he could often be reactionary in how he dealt with cultural evolution and shifts in public opinion. His volatility hindered his professional relationship with Fauset and her ability to lead the magazine toward a dominant and clearly defined role in the literary renaissance. Johnson was much clearer about his intent and beliefs, far more direct and on task with how he mentored and empowered Alain Locke to capture the cultural capital necessary to lead a renaissance. Fauset witnessed how Johnson and Locke worked together and could have resented Du Bois for having so little regard for assisting her in reaching her editorial potential. Du Bois rarely cultivated relationships to promote cooperation; he acquired allies to support his singular efforts and often insisted on absolute control.

particularly his concern about the motives of white allies and patrons, are a question of ideological differences and/or evolution versus Du Bois' own recognition that Johnson had assumed command of a movement he had envisioned as early as 1913? *Opportunity* had seized the moment *The Crisis* had missed; Johnson did not diffuse his editorial focus too widely, and his publication gained market share and credibility as a cultural organ by betting big on the potential of New Negro writers to fuel a burgeoning arts movement. Du Bois, instead of conceding ground and encouraging Johnson, who had exhibited the energy and focus to pick up the essential mission of creating an authentic black literature, resisted cooperating with those who had diminished his authority, status, and influence. By refusing to concede control of the New Negro Renaissance, Du Bois reasserted *The Crisis*' legitimacy as the rightful cultural sovereign. Ultimately, this decision forced him to face a contradictory dilemma: either distance himself from the literary renaissance and focus his attention on other concerns, or dispute Johnson's aesthetic values and methods for promoting the black artist and attack his credibility as a mentor and leader.

Scholars such as Lewis and Gilpin and have interpreted their rivalry as predominantly an individual struggle for pre-eminence and cultural authority, fuelled by commercial competitiveness and protecting/asserting the influence of their magazines; however, this 'ego-centric' analysis has dominated discourse at the expense of examining the significance of their nearly indistinguishable aesthetic ideologies. The artistic principles which Johnson co-opted heavily from Du Bois yet reaped acclaim and recognition for promoting, forged the divisive relationship that marred any hope of intra-racial cooperation toward goals both Johnson and Du Bois had hoped to achieve. The rise of Charles S. Johnson and *Opportunity* was as much about the fall of *The Crisis*, or in the very least, its failure to maximize the social capital and economic advantages it enjoyed the first half of the 1920s. Du Bois had a powerful cultural mechanism at his disposal and the authority to utilize it as he wished; however, his attention to the arts as a force to spark social change had waned throughout the decade, and he held little capacity or interest as an editor-in-chief to

delegate any real authority to his literary editor, who might have helped him achieve his vision of creating the ideal black cultural organ. The historical reality and achievements of Charles S. Johnson and *Opportunity* embodied the consequences of an opportunity Du Bois and *The Crisis* had missed. Johnson's growing influence among young Negro writers and the authority he wielded through his literary and commercial coups diminished Du Bois' intellectual clout, and left him with a simple choice: Follow the artistic aesthetic he had introduced that was now being heralded by others; or chart an entirely new course of action that might re-establish his role as the pre-eminent African American cultural icon of his time.

Chapter Five: Du Bois' Anxiety of Influence: Alain Locke's The New Negro as Catalyst for Alienation and Evolving Aesthetics

Less than two months after Albert and Charles Boni published The New Negro, W.E.B. Du Bois' penned the first review of the ground-breaking anthology to appear in any national monthly magazine; eight hundred words, almost none of which actually discussed the contents of the collection. Although his opening sentence called it an 'extraordinary book that in many ways marks an epoch', Du Bois immediately hedged his praise, suggesting in the very next sentence that Locke's work was 'sprawling, illogical, with an open and unashamed lack of unity and continuity'.¹ The publication of Locke's anthology provoked Du Bois into publically compromising his former positions on Negro art that appeared eerily similar to those he now criticized Locke for promoting. Although he would reject Locke's aesthetics completely by the end of 1926, in January, Du Bois claimed only one, albeit major, disagreement to Locke's position: His insistence that beauty rather than propaganda be the object of Negro literature and art. Du Bois' warning, however, revealed that his deepest concern rested in how others admired Locke and to what extent these aesthetics, guided by Locke, would hold sway over the renaissance. He did not discredit his thesis entirely, cautioning that decadence would occur only if it was insisted upon 'too much'. Du Bois countered that the political struggle for racial equality, what he called 'the fight or Life and Liberty', was and should be the genuine catalyst for Negro art. With the movement now clearly being shepherded by someone else, he feared the catastrophic consequences of black aesthetics not driven by political propaganda: Artists losing sight of the larger social and economic struggles in order to produce 'pretty things' that impressed 'really unimportant critics and publishers'.² Du Bois' review offered perfunctory credit to his editorial work, but functioned more to warn others that following Locke might

¹ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Our Bookshelf'. *The Crisis* 31 (January 1926): 140.

² Ibid.

lead the renaissance toward perilous immoderation intent on satisfying the tastes of whites instead of serving to uplift the race.

Curiously, in the same issue of *The Crisis* that Du Bois reviewed The New Negro and began to realign his attitudes toward the relationship between art and propaganda, he also managed to contradict himself, or in the very least, muddle the contexts in which artists should and should not use propaganda. Announcing *The Crisis*' second annual literary competition, he continued his assault on Locke, misinterpreting him when he proclaimed: 'We want especially to stress the fact that while we believe in Negro art we do not believe in any art simply for art's sake. . . . On the other hand do not fear the Truth. . . . Use propaganda if you want. Discard it and laugh if you will. But be true, be sincere, be thorough, and do a beautiful job'.³ After undermining esoteric notions of Beauty and Truth in his review, Du Bois now revisited his 1921 essay on aesthetics and implored Negro artists to focus upon the material aspects of their lives (that they 'stress the things and not the beauty') and recognize propaganda, which he believed to be synonymous with Truth. Du Bois 'emphasized both his belief that Negro art must act as propaganda and his willingness to accept reflections of all avenues of Afro-American life'.⁴ Du Bois distinguished *The Crisis*' politically conscious artistic agenda from Locke's ethereal approaches to art and literature in two ways. First, by actively encouraging propaganda: 'We want Negro writers to produce beautiful things but we stress the things rather than beauty'; and, second, by misinterpreting and stigmatizing Locke's aesthetics as apolitical, expressing belief in promise and power of Negro art, but not 'in any art simply for art's sake'.⁵ His statements in January, 1926 regarding the relationship between art and propaganda were full of contradiction and uncertainty.

³ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Editorial: Krigwa, 1926'. *The Crisis* 31 (January 1926): 115.

⁴ Darwin T. Turner. 'W. E. B. DuBois and the Theory of a Black Aesthetic'. In Victor A. Kramer (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 17. Du Bois encouraged potential applicants to '(w)rite about things as you know them', reassuring them that '(i)n *The Crisis*, at least you do not have to confine your writings to portrayal of beggars, scoundrels and prostitutes; you can write about ordinary decent colored people if you want. On the other hand do not fear the Truth. . . . If you want to paint Crime and Destitution and Evil paint it'. (115).

⁵ Du Bois, 'Editorial: Krigwa, 1926', 115.

They revealed the extent to which Du Bois struggled to understand what he thought art should be and to accept that others, particularly Alain Locke, would now lead a cultural renaissance.

Locke earned public acclaim and recognition by promoting a New Negro aesthetic that borrowed liberally from Du Bois; however, he never confronted Locke for the ‘unacknowledged reformulation of his ideas’.⁶ Curiously, Du Bois’ strategy to discredit Locke appeared to focus more on re-gaining control of the movement rather than discrediting Locke’s aesthetics, which principally, bore great resemblance to his own. Du Bois had to remain distinct from Locke, even if it meant denouncing aesthetic principles that he had once promoted publically. The philosophical disagreements that emerged between Du Bois and Locke transformed rapidly into a clear power struggle over whose leadership and aesthetics would define the New Negro movement.

This chapter explores the series of events that take place throughout 1925 that triggered Du Bois’ break from old ideas, and argues that his reconsiderations of early aesthetic principles were driven less by extenuating, pessimistic political realities facing African Americans, and more by the erosion of his cultural authority and the marginalization of *The Crisis* staff in the production of Alain Locke’s, The New Negro. As Du Bois recognized that his influence among young artists had declined sharply, he began to differentiate his position vis-à-vis the role of culture in legitimizing the black experience and utilize his political power to undermine the efforts of Locke, *Opportunity*, and the younger writers that Du Bois identified as the catalysts for the New Negro movement. Unfortunately, Du Bois misinterpreted Locke’s power in two key areas: Firstly, he overestimated the extent to which New Negro stalwarts, such as Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, were influenced by

⁶ Wilkerson, Carmiele, Y., and Shamoan Zamir. ‘Du Bois and the “New Negro”’. In Shamoan Zamir (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65. These historians argue that Locke’s ‘manifesto of the Harlem Renaissance’ was shaped by Du Bois’ The Souls of Black Folk; and thus, the ‘true intellectual and aesthetic origins of the New Negro movement can be found in Du Bois’ work from 1903’ (65).

Locke's mentorship and acted with little regard for the independence young writers and artists sought from their older, more conservative editors who hoped to guide their development. Their keen distrust had been reserved not only for Du Bois, but also for those he viewed as his rivals, like Alain Locke, whose actual influence as Negro America's new cultural leader remained limited despite his rapid rise as a public figure.⁷

Secondly, Du Bois also underestimated the independence Locke exercised from the white magazine editors and book publishers who collaborated with him on both the production and promotion of The New Negro. As Locke intentionally ignored the advice of *The Crisis* staff and minimized their presence and influence over the anthology, Du Bois increasingly viewed Locke's treatment of his protégés Walter White and Jessie Fauset with disdain; a continuation of the intentional marginalization of those associated with his magazine spanning nearly two years, beginning with The Civic Club Dinner. Locke's 'freeze out' became the most influential force driving Du Bois to challenge and, ultimately, reject Locke's aesthetics, situating his new pro-propaganda ideologies as antagonistic to his older ideas now being implemented by New Negro writers at the urging of Locke. Instead of directing his wrath at Locke, however, Du Bois cast his blame for the corruption of young writers and authentic black aesthetics at white commercial interests. In lieu of criticizing Locke directly and making public an intra-racial conflict over ideology, Du Bois would spend much of the remainder of the 1920s accusing whites, like Carl Van Vechten, of exerting control over the New Negro Renaissance. Even though no actual proof existed that white editors, publishers, and magazine editors exerted overt influence that was either pernicious or deleterious, Du Bois' misinterpretation of the inter-racial power dynamics that had generated both Charles S. Johnson's and Alain Locke's rise to prominence may have afforded him an excuse to avoid attacking Locke directly for his dismissive treatment of *The Crisis*. Nevertheless, the evolution of his aesthetic principles that resulted had shaped both his role as primary

⁷ The strained relationship between Locke and the New Negro writers and its impact upon reorienting the history of Du Bois and the Black Aesthetic will be addressed extensively in the conclusion.

antagonist of the New Negro Renaissance, as well as distorted the true significance of his intellectual contributions to those artists who, at the pinnacle of the movement, would view him as their most dangerous adversary.

1925: A Year of Opportunity and Crisis

In January, Charles S. Johnson had every reason to set forth an optimistic and opportunistic agenda for his magazine. His first editorial of 1925, 'We Begin a New Year', continued to promote his theories about the role of media outlined in The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot. He insisted the magazine's purpose would remain 'to create more light with no more heat than is necessary for warmth'.⁸ 'The repetition of this emphasis on exposing and illuminating, but not inflaming,' Johnson reiterated, 'reveals the continuing focus of *Opportunity* on providing information, rather than stirring up emotions, and it reassures readers that the magazine will help ease tensions—even when its focus might be on problems'.⁹ By some measure, Johnson's assurances about his commitment to cooperation had been motivated to neutralize criticisms launched at him immediately after the successful Civic Club Dinner in March, 1924; however, his January statement also foreshadowed the increased tensions that would escalate throughout 1925, particularly as his literary projects that involved inter-racial collaboration now came to fruition and created a public relations coup for his magazine and his hand-picked protégé, Alain Locke.

When the March 1925 edition of *Survey Graphic*, guest edited by Locke, published a special number of collected articles, prose and poetry written by and about the younger generation of Negro writers entitled, 'Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro', the public's fascination with Negro art in both the black and white communities reached new heights. The special issue was such a critical and commercial (over 42,000 issues sold, three times higher than normal) success, publishers Charles and Albert Boni reiterated their desire to expand the volume into an anthology. Johnson

⁸ Charles S. Johnson. 'Editorial. We Begin a New Year'. *Opportunity* 3 (February 1925): 2.

⁹ Ibid.

also dedicated time to replicating the success of the 1924 Civic Club Dinner by planning a grand celebration to honour prize winners of the first annual *Opportunity* literary contest. Writing to Locke in April, Johnson made it abundantly clear that he wanted the dinner to signify something greater. ‘The occasion will be perhaps a bit more significant than the mere holding of a meeting and awarding of prizes. It will introduce that group of Negro writers now dealing with the sparkling materials of their own group life, about whose work all of our judges have expressed a surprise delight’.¹⁰ Johnson believed the artists that *Opportunity* would recognize on 1 May were among the most talented and most promising and should be acknowledged as the cultural guild of the renaissance. Nine days later, Johnson made it clear that Locke might once again demonstrate both his leadership and expertise at a dinner honouring excellence in the arts, speaking to ‘. . . the general subject of this new awakening in literature on the part of Negroes. . . . Something no one could do better than you’.¹¹

Following a similar and successful strategy of the Civic Club Dinner, Johnson shaped the agenda of the 1925 *Opportunity* Contest Dinner privately, allowing Locke to speak for and assume external leadership of the movement, while Johnson shaped public perception he hoped to achieve through his editorials. Writing in late April about the contest, Johnson proudly acknowledged the 748 entries that had been submitted, and measured the success of the competition, not only by sheer volume, but also declaring that by exceeding ‘this journal’s interest in uncovering writers of ability and promise the results have been pleasing beyond expectation’.¹²

Johnson also made a significant aesthetic interpretation about the contest entries which advanced the ideological agenda he had announced in the previous year. Johnson, likely influenced by the scholarship and friendship of Carl Van Doren,

¹⁰ Letter from Charles S. Johnson to Alain Locke, 10 April 1924. 164/40/26, ALP/M-SC.

¹¹ Letter from Charles S. Johnson to Alain Locke 19 April 1924 164/40/26, ALP/M-SC.

¹² Charles S. Johnson. ‘Editorials: The Contest’. *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 131. Johnson also deftly incorporated the contest and the sheer volume of contestants, as a whole, into proof a renaissance was afoot, declaring: ‘The work of the contest is just beginning. We advise those of our contestants who are interested in this whole developing movement to *stand by*’.

associated the challenges facing previous Negro artists with those of all American writers in the 19th century. Johnson deduced: 'In avoiding their own life, they have been no different from the early American writers who looked to England for their patterns and with these patterns took much of their subject matter'.¹³ Johnson asserted that, like Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson, the moment for another type of American renaissance had arrived, one in which a people assumed command of their own, unique voice and experience:

The Negro writers, in large part, following the same path of evolution, have spent the greater portion of their freedom protesting against the dialect which they know perfectly well, the illiterate ones of their own group used, snubbing the spirituals, genuflecting themselves before remote and wholly irrelevant Egyptian altars, or painting white heroes black and black villains white. . . . The point is that in bending all efforts to prove that they are just like other people, they have ignored perhaps the only vital differences that can give prestige, which is, incidentally, the very object of most of the effort.¹⁴

To Johnson, assuming agency over black art and individual experience provided both a reflection of modernism influencing American artists and intellectuals, and a response to the political and racial climate confronting the New Negro in 1925. Adamant that readers expect art and literature now 'to reveal with some measure of faithfulness something of the life of a people; something of those subtle forces which sustain their hopes and joys, stiffens them in sorrow', Johnson concluded that the recent publishing successes of Jean Toomer, Walter White, and Jessie Fauset provided proof of his thesis.¹⁵ His optimism had been reaffirmed by what he believed 'the new writers represented in *Opportunity's* Contest will show. They and others like them will be heard, and what they have to say, we are courageous enough

¹³ Charles S. Johnson. 'Editorials: Out of the Shadow'. *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 131.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

to believe, will make the pictures by which Negroes of all strata of the society will hereafter be known'.¹⁶

While Johnson tantalized readers with news of *Opportunity's* contest with the publicity teasers printed month from August 1924 until a lengthy account of the contest dinner appeared in June 1925, Du Bois struggled to find a cohesive counter to Johnson's well-executed agenda. The public vote of no confidence exemplified by Mary Ovington's 1924 report, 'The State of The Crisis' had raised doubts about Du Bois' stature within the NAACP and demanded a shift the editorial direction of the magazine in order to offset the meteoric rise of Johnson's *Opportunity*. Du Bois had, in fact, spent much of 1924-1925 embroiled in controversy with the NAACP board, from increasing concerns about his personal indiscretions, particularly his affairs with several *Crisis* staff members, including Jessie Fauset, to questions about financial discrepancies in the magazine's accounting. Du Bois' unilateral authority over the magazine's editorial policy eroded as sharply as its circulation figures declined. Even with his long-standing propensity to view potential collaborators as threats, Ovington's report, which had identified Johnson's magazine specifically as the one 'now in ascendent' intensified his view that Johnson and Alain Locke were legitimate rivals that threatened his public standing. Ovington and others wished to see Du Bois draw ideas and inspiration from Johnson's success, and use their example to re-shape the direction of *The Crisis*, which some within the organization now viewed as stagnant and outdated. Rather than acquiesce, admit Johnson's editorial achievement, and lead *The Crisis* toward a similar model of emphasizing cultural achievement, Du Bois attacked using the editorial pages of his magazine.

¹⁶ Ibid. Although Johnson credited the new writers of his contest as affirming his faith in the renaissance, it should be noted that he selected two examples from 'The Crisis family' (White and Fauset) to serve as examples for establishing a precedent for the movement. If he had been intent on overtaking Du Bois and his magazine, Johnson would likely have excluded both and selected other examples, such as Langston Hughes, who had no direct affiliation with the NAACP's political organ. Johnson's inclusiveness here sharply contrasted Locke's dealings with White and Fauset, discussed later in this chapter.

In lieu of reaching out to Johnson, who according to his own media philosophy should have been receptive to greater collaboration between black journals, Du Bois resorted to veiled and ambiguous ideological challenges that served to distinguish and separate him and his magazine from Johnson's rising star. Initially, he had openly attacked the National Urban League in an April, 1925 editorial that Ovington had forced him to pull.¹⁷ Without the support of his long-time ally to undermine Johnson directly, Du Bois moved swiftly to reshape the editorial agenda and future direction of his magazine. 'The New Crisis' harkened readers back to the magazine's humble beginnings fifteen years earlier, when, as Du Bois reminded 'we set for the plan to make THE CRISIS (1) a newspaper, (2) a review of opinion, (3) a magazine with "a few short articles"'.¹⁸ Unexpectedly, a humbled Du Bois admitted a 'broad vagueness of our general policy' and used the remainder of his editorial to outline, thematically, the issues that would take priority moving forward.¹⁹ The pursuit of economic development, political independence, and education and talent would now take precedence in editorial objectives, but even in light of Johnson's recent success with transforming *Opportunity* into the premier journal for promoting Negro arts and culture, Du Bois insisted 'Art' would remain but a fourth priority. In an effort to reassert authority over the new arts movement, Du Bois announced a new policy for representing the arts in *The Crisis* that reiterated ideals he had first articulated in 1921, with one significant exception:

We shall stress Beauty—all Beauty, but especially the beauty of Negro life and character; its music, its dancing, its drawing and painting and the new birth of its literature. This growth which *The Crisis* long since predicted is sprouting and coming to flower. We shall encourage it in every way . . .

¹⁷ Arnold Rampersad. The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 137. Du Bois created a public relations controversy by criticizing the Urban League in an April 1925 editorial: '. . . Ovington instructed Du Bois to rewrite an editorial on Fisk University {where Charles S. Johnson taught for many years} so as to combine reason with emotion, and to omit a gratuitous slap at the Urban League'. Ovington's reprimand may explain his reluctance to attack Locke directly, in his review of The New Negro.

¹⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'Opinion: The New Crisis'. *The Crisis* 30 (May 1925): 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

keeping all the while a high standard of merit and never stooping to cheap flattery and misspent kindness.²⁰

Reaffirming both the pursuit of Beauty as essential to Negro art and *The Crisis*' place as first to predict the 'new birth of its literature', Du Bois at once reaffirmed custody of the aesthetic beliefs Johnson had adopted in order to reclaim the magazine's rightful place as the source of legitimate cultural authority, one unwilling to compromise its 'high standard of merit' or succumb to 'misspent kindness'. When compared to his 1921 essay, this additional comment is important, as it inferred both primacy and venerable superiority in supporting artistic endeavours when compared to those newly arrived, more naive rivals who might willingly compromise their standards and embrace inferior cultural productions for the sake of acceptance.

Du Bois, as he had in 1921, demanded that reading audiences accept and expect realistic portraits to avoid cultural stagnation: 'We are seriously crippling Negro art and literature by refusing to contemplate any but handsome heroes, unblemished heroines and flawless defenders; we insist on being always and everywhere all right and often we ruin our cause by claiming too much and admitting no faults'.²¹ The seventh editorial priority, 'Self-Criticism', focused exclusively on its absence and the deleterious effects in 'crippling' Negro culture. Surprisingly, Du Bois confessed in this regard, he, too, had 'sinned'. Moving forward, he promised 'to examine from time to time judicially the extraordinary number of very human faults among us'.²² Although historians and literary scholars have claimed Du Bois expressed grave doubts about the direction of the Negro renaissance in 1925, he continued to advocate ideology that expressed stark similarities to positions he had maintained throughout the first half of the decade, positions that now served as the liberating

²⁰ Ibid., 9.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

forces for New Negro writers.²³ Even when signalling the era of ‘The New Crisis’, he reinforced the aesthetic ideas now being endorsed by Johnson and Locke.

Although his aesthetics remained muddled by a failure to qualify his meaning of Beauty, perhaps the most perplexing issue remained the decline of Du Bois' faith in public objectivity and his growing concern that Americans would not interpret authentic artistic expression of Negro artists as accurately and as genuinely as he had perceived in 1921. However, this has been the predominant historical interpretation of Du Bois’ evolution. Du Bois’ distrust appears to have grown proportionately with the growing interest in the budding New Negro movement now being ushered forth by Johnson and Locke, and the emergence of publishing competitors and intellectual rivals who Du Bois might have believed held greater influence over the younger generation of Negro artists.

The erosion of Du Bois’ cultural authority, both within the NAACP and in the public eye, and his increasingly desperate attempts to re-establish the significance of his flailing magazine have not traditionally been viewed as factors that influenced his changing aesthetic ideologies. *The Crisis*’ circulation, after peaking at 100,000 in the summer of 1919, had already returned to 1918 levels (72,000) by February, 1920; and its annual circulation levels steadily declined throughout the first half of the

²³ For an example of prevailing scholarly interpretation, see David Levering Lewis. W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 174-175. Scholarship has focused, overwhelmingly, on how Johnson and Du Bois differed, which established an analytical foundation to justify Du Bois’ criticisms of Johnson and Locke. For example, Lewis deduced: ‘Although his disenchantment appeared to come on in a rush, in reality Du Bois had been wrestling with doubts about the Renaissance that only grew the more he tried to ignore them. He had always worried about what he saw as the inherent susceptibility of an artistic and literary enterprise to go off track, spinning in its own momentum away from what he deemed to be the central purpose. By temperament and politics, he was always inclined to take *The Crisis* in a different direction, one that Fauset, Johnson, and White found increasingly less appealing. He had gravely informed his readers in May 1925 that the magazine would soon begin to focus on issues such as economic development, political independence, educational policy, and international peace, as well as the arts; and he warned that *The Crisis* would become “more frankly critical of the Negro group.” Du Bois continued to be nagged by misgivings’. (Underlines are mine). Lewis’ account validated Du Bois’ vicious denunciations of the renaissance, accepted his assessment of the renaissance (that Johnson and Locke had ‘failed’), and affirmed that his marginalization from the movement was a conscious conspiracy. Scholars have often overlooked that Du Bois’ attacks against the New Negro movement were significantly motivated by the usurpation of his cultural authority and distrust of others who controlled a renaissance that he had always fully expected to lead.

decade—dropping 30 per cent by the end of 1921 (50,000) and another 30 per cent (35,000) by the end of 1924.²⁴ Whispers of adultery, financial discrepancies and plunging circulation figures were as much to blame for Du Bois' decline as Johnson's brilliant decision to build *Opportunity* as the cultural organ of the New Negro. The timing of Du Bois' recalibrated editorial agenda in 'The New Crisis' was significant, not only as a calculated manoeuvre to assuage NAACP concerns raised in Mary Ovington's 'State of *The Crisis*' memo, but also as a missive designed to separate his magazine from Johnson's. Recalibrating the magazine's agenda to emphasize economic development, political independence, and education signalled to the NAACP board Du Bois' willingness to acquiesce to their demands. His independence as editor, autonomy that he had battled fiercely to secure throughout his 15 years of service, had diminished. No longer an indispensable icon, Du Bois begrudgingly set forth a new direction that represented a collaborative vision for the NAACP's magazine, but one that would also continue to challenge his personal rivals. Du Bois viewed Johnson's efforts as antagonistic towards two decades spent proselytizing the beauty and promise of Negro culture, efforts that most New Negro writers and artists would have disregarded in the face of Du Bois' growing animosity towards their efforts. Even in May, 1925 Du Bois had not turned away from his 1921 aesthetics; he still promised to support the pursuit of capturing the Beauty of Negro life and character in art and the birth of new literature that now resulted in a naissance he had predicted as early as 1913. Without naming Johnson and Locke, he also warned against the motives and competency and credibility of new rivals, and consequently encouraged his readers to renew their faith in his leadership of the arts, the greying icon and sage whose legacy would legitimize the impending renaissance poised to flourish.

In March, 1926, Du Bois would cast the die that alienated him from the renaissance he had predicted; his 'ideal Negro journal' that he had hoped would cultivate and support the arts, became an anathema to those writers who sought to fulfil the very

²⁴ Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination*, 138.

principles Du Bois himself had first articulated. Du Bois' reasons for his abrupt break with the aesthetic principles had been brewing since the Civic Club Dinner in the form of new rivals whose popularity and achievements finally compelled him to denounce his own ideologies, now that others had achieved greater success and earned the spoils of public celebrity. Like his NAACP rivals of the 1910s, and much as he had by adapting his positions to praise (and regain the trust of) the common man after his 1918 editorial debacle and the popularity of Marcus Garvey, Du Bois had a long and successful history of undermining rivals who threatened his omnipotence by outflanking them, ideologically. Only now, he would be forced to recant positions that he had set forth, initially, as a means to counter Garvey's celebration of black pride and the other 90 per cent. Du Bois' final battle over aesthetics in the pursuit of controlling a cultural revolution was a battle, not only against rivals that he misconstrued as co-conspirators plotting his demise, but also an attack against himself and his beliefs he had held in some similar fashion for half a decade.

Du Bois' rationale for abandoning aesthetics centred around the pursuit of authentic beauty and truth in art for politically motivated, results-oriented propaganda appeared less than a year later, after the summer of 1925, when Alain Locke's editing of The New Negro aggressively and, in Du Bois' view, intentionally, marginalized him and his *Crisis* colleagues. Unlike Johnson, whose time as a senior researcher for the Chicago Commission on Race Relations had imbued a commitment to collaboration, Locke's ambition appeared personal and driven by personality qualities (supreme confidence, intellectual arrogance) not unlike those that had made Du Bois successful. His callous and sometimes duplicitous disregard for Du Bois, Jessie Fauset, and Walter White in editing The New Negro led Du Bois to view Locke with contempt and as a legitimate threat consciously angling to unseat him. More significantly, because Johnson had hand-picked Locke as the spokesperson for the emerging literary movement *Opportunity* actively promoted, Du Bois grew to view them as co-conspirators, disregarding the fact each man acted

with unique personal motives and cultural agendas with little actual evidence of ideological or political collaboration. In Du Bois' mind, Locke's alienation of well-known *Crisis* writers may well have been the frontal assault against his cultural organ and credibility, a fight Johnson had been waging against him in the press since the previous spring. While no records exist of Johnson and Locke consciously collaborating to undermine Du Bois and his associates, Locke's behaviour toward *The Crisis* throughout the summer of 1925 is well-documented and left little doubt that Locke intended to move the Negro Renaissance forward by leaving Du Bois and *The Crisis* behind.

The Crisis 'Freeze Out': Alain Locke's Leadership by Alienation

Locke's biographers, Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth, acknowledged that he had been keen to seize a moment to assert his authority and utilize his many intellectual gifts in the service of advancing the race, insisting that Locke 'had been preparing for the Renaissance for almost two decades'.²⁵ Seemingly, he shared with Du Bois both an ambition that had simmered since the turn of the century, and a similar belief that Negro art might have a significant and tangible impact on how African Americans viewed their lives and their history. 'Locke wanted to fashion a usable past for black people. This past, in the simplest sense, became a source of aesthetic material and, more complexly, a way to measure racial identity through historical gravity and social development'.²⁶ Unlike Du Bois, who had spent decades shaping the African American political and cultural agenda and achieved international acclaim, Locke had plied his trade in relative obscurity as a professor of philosophy at Howard University. By the time he approached the Civic Club dais in March, 1924, Locke had spent the last twenty years studying, first at Harvard and then, at Oxford as the first African American to win a Rhodes Scholarship; he had taught for twelve years, but had published little on any subject; and 'in spite of his

²⁵ Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth. Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 182.

²⁶ Ibid.

fine education and intellectual gifts, he was drifting until he found the Harlem Renaissance—or until the Harlem Renaissance found him’.²⁷ When Johnson offered him the opportunity to shepherd the movement, to announce its existence, and edit the two volumes that would define the renaissance, ‘he acted with the daring and vision of a man who had been awaiting his chance’.²⁸

Thirty-nine years old at his Civic Club debut that presented him as dean of the movement, Locke belonged neither to the older generation of intellectuals nor to the younger artists radicalized by World War I and its domestic aftermath. Locke’s impeccable academic bona fides insured that the old guard, Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Charles S. Johnson, were impressed with his achievements. What those other than Charles S. Johnson did not realize was the extent to which he had systematically built relationships with promising young artists, particularly the poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. Rampersad acknowledged that Locke ‘let neither difference in age nor social or professional standing keep him from making friends with artists . . . who were almost twenty years his junior. He would go virtually anywhere to meet anyone who might have anything to contribute’.²⁹

Locke’s extraordinary effort to cultivate these relationships appeared driven significantly by his desire to mentor and lead the renaissance, something he openly discussed with those writers he viewed a potential protégés. Langston Hughes had confirmed Locke’s perspective that a cultural revolution was afoot, and a May, 1923 letter highlighted a longing among artists both for a common context in which to come together, but also a desire for authenticity: ‘You are right that we have enough talent now to begin a movement. I wish we had some gathering place of our artists, some little Greenwich Village of our own. But would our artists have the pose of so many of the Villagers? I hate pose or pretension of any sort. And especially sham

²⁷ Arnold Rampersad. ‘Introduction’. In *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke. (New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1997), xi-xii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xii.

²⁹ *Ibid.* xii-xiii.

intellectuality. I prefer simple, stupid people to half-wise pretenders'.³⁰ While Harlem would soon become something akin to a 'little Greenwich Village of our own', Locke also recognized the potential of publishing New Negro artists to spur the movement forward. Harris and Molesworth revealed that throughout the early 1920s, 'Locke expanded his contacts with publishers and editors and continued to develop his ideas on values and culture. . .'.³¹ Combined with his tireless efforts at cultivating relationships with artists directly, Locke's aspirations exceeded his past achievements; however, his prominent contributions at The Civic Club Dinner, as well as his editorial accomplishments over the next eighteen months catapulted Locke from obscurity to renaissance leader.

Alain Locke proved difficult and demanding as an editor, insisting on unilateral control of both *Survey Graphic's* special Harlem number and its transformation into The New Negro. Even Locke's more sympathetic biographers acknowledged that his compulsive approach earned Locke 'a reputation as elitist and demanding', a stubborn even defiant redactor whose 'opinions about all the arts, their histories of development and their aesthetic values, were seldom equivocal'.³² The challenge of transforming the 'Harlem' number and expanding it three-fold in less than seven months only exacerbated Locke's proclivity for obstinance, his insistence on absolute authority. No one was more agitated by Locke's control issues than Du Bois and the *Crisis* writers he supported.

Jessie Fauset's marginalization at The Civic Club Dinner had perturbed her more than Du Bois. At the time, he had remained silent to avoid a confrontation. A year later, when Locke appeared poised to exclude her from contributing to an anthology meant to represent the best of New Negro writing and artistic achievement, Du Bois would not stand for such treatment from the upstart editor he likely believed had neither the editorial pedigree nor the public reputation to shepherd such an ambitious

³⁰ Letter from Langston Hughes to Alain Locke, May 1923. 164/38/5, ALP/M-SC

³¹ Harris and Molesworth, Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher, 154.

³² *Ibid.*, 200.

project. Even though Du Bois' and Locke's relationship had begun congenially, Du Bois sensed the younger Locke was primed to usurp his authority.³³ After a personal conversation in early May in which Du Bois inferred that Locke might not include Jessie Fauset in the anthology, Du Bois presented Locke with an ultimatum:

The more I think the matter over the more I am convinced that something by Miss Fauset should appear in the book which you are projecting. As I said before, a survey of Harlem {the focus of the *Survey Graphic* special number} would have many excuses for omitting a particular author; but a survey of the rise of the new Negro, particularly from the point of view of art and literature, which should omit Miss Fauset's work would be too glaring and would cause a great deal of criticism. Moreover, you must have a college bred woman there. I should not feel at all like contributing to a volume unless Miss Fauset was represented. I am enclosing one of her essays which I think would be peculiarly appropriate. There are, of course, others and as I suggested, abstracts from "There Is Confusion" might be used.³⁴

Du Bois' message to Locke was both confrontational and unquestionably clear: Include Fauset in the anthology or remove me from its contents. Du Bois most assuredly understood that he could leverage his redoubtable reputation to force Locke's hand and ensure the book included *Crisis* authors that Locke seemed intent on excluding; however, if Du Bois believed that his veiled threats would strike fear and force Locke to become more compliant with his demands, this letter and Locke's subsequent actions proved otherwise.

³³ Ibid., 206. Regarding the evolution of the Du Bois/Locke rivalry, Harris and Molesworth commented: 'The two men had started on a friendly basis, and Du Bois invited Locke to attend with him the Pan-African Congress in London in 1924 or the one in Lisbon in 1925, though Locke declined'. Du Bois and Locke had also collaborated on an important joint book review that appeared in *The Crisis* in February, 1924. 'The Younger Literary Movement' identified Jessie Fauset and Jean Toomer as prototypes of New Negro literature with Locke writing a glowing review of Fauset's, *There Is Confusion*. Less than two years later, Locke no longer viewed her as representative of the talented young artists who embodied the New Negro renaissance.

³⁴ Letter from W.E.B Du Bois to Alain Locke 13 May, 1925. 164/122/12, ALP/M-SC.

First, the sarcastic, handwritten marginalia in Du Bois' letter revealed Locke's reaction to be closer to amused bewilderment rather than intimidation: 'Isn't this rich!! Confidential Locke'.³⁵ To whom this secret note was written remains a mystery; what is evident, however, is that Locke presumed to be in complete control of the project and unfazed by Du Bois' threats to remove himself from inclusion. Second, Du Bois' insistence that omitting Fauset would lead to criticism was hardly a veiled or empty threat because Du Bois would certainly have led the charge to criticize the omission of his own literary editor. Locke's personal papers do not include the essay Du Bois sent along, which almost certainly was not Fauset's, 'The Gift of Laughter', the piece that Locke selected for inclusion.³⁶ More significantly, Locke ignored Du Bois' suggestion to include excerpts of her novel, There Is Confusion. This established the beginning of an important trend in Locke's editorial capacity—disregarding any and all suggestions made directly by members of *The Crisis*/NAACP leadership or indirectly by intermediaries representing their interests.

Locke addressed Du Bois' concern in an undated letter likely written no later than the end of May. He opened by placating Du Bois, reassuring him that the expanded version of his essay 'Colored Worlds' (which eventually became the final entry in the anthology 'The Negro Mind Reaches Out') 'strikes me as quite the thing we want and need,--and I am letting you know our appreciation and definite acceptance of this valued cooperation in the project'.³⁷ Locke generously granted Du Bois paragraph editing privileges in proof, and concluded the letter with this brief statement about the Fauset misunderstanding: 'Evidently, I did not sufficiently impress you in our last conversation of my agreement with your advice not to omit Miss Fauset from consideration. Your contingent reconsideration therefore offers no embarrassment further than that I cannot assure you quite definitively yet just what particular contribution of hers we shall request.'³⁸ On the surface, Locke appeared

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Locke's letter to Jessie Fauset regarding editorial notes for the essay infers that she sent the essay directly to Locke after the May incident with Du Bois had occurred. 164/28/40.

³⁷ Letter from Alain Locke to Du Bois undated (circa mid-May 1925). 164/122/12, ALP/M-SC.

³⁸ Ibid.

contrite, even apologetic; however, his statement should be viewed as patronizing, particularly when Locke's notes in the margins of Du Bois' letter are considered. Locke expressed condescension towards Du Bois for having the nerve to make threats, and thus, saving him from further embarrassment for his unnecessary and confrontational ultimatum. Indeed, he accepted some blame for the misunderstanding, but still positioned the incident as one in which an addled *Crisis* editor had not realized that he had agreed with Du Bois about including Fauset, only to have him provoke Locke without any reason. While Du Bois' letter suggested that Locke's decisions might instigate a menacing rivalry, Locke invoked a Johnsonesque 'valued cooperation in the project' reply to Du Bois' objection, one which, when examining Locke's subsequent behaviour appeared to be disingenuous; a mockery of both Du Bois, personally (his uncertainty about Fauset's inclusion in the anthology) and professionally, now that Du Bois had both no authority and no control over the most important cultural endeavour of the New Negro to date.

Even if his agreement to include Fauset had mitigated some of Du Bois' concerns about the younger Locke's brash editorial management, his treatment of Fauset throughout the editing of her work would have only exacerbated Du Bois' growing doubts about the decline of his cultural authority and the direction of the anthology. Locke made the curious decision to request an essay on Negro drama and not an excerpt from her critically acclaimed There Is Confusion, which Locke had lauded the previous year, calling it '(t)he novel that the Negro intelligenzia [sic] have been clamouring for. . .'.³⁹ In lieu of his gregarious public praise for Fauset, Locke's tone and approach to editing her essay was unsparingly acerbic, and offered an additional backhanded criticism of her revered mentor:

³⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke. 'The Younger Literary Movement'. *The Crisis* 27 (February 1924): 162. Literary scholars have never addressed the personal motives that might have motivated Locke's changing views of Fauset's fiction. George Hutchinson acknowledged that in the fiction and poetry sections, '(t)he most notable exclusion is of Jessie Fauset from the fiction section' and justified her omission on aesthetic grounds. Hutchinson cited that 'to Locke, Fauset seemed overly concerned with "guarded idealizations" and representativeness', a sharp contrast to 'the infusion of modernist form with "Negro temperament" and new methods of using vernacular forms as literary vehicles'. See Hutchinson's, The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White: 403.

‘The Gift of Laughter’ arrived,--and almost provoked tears. You certainly have been serious about it. Of course I could have given more of an idea of what I had in mind, but it was to be your essay. . . . You see a great many of us are joyous even if not socially happy, and even Dr. Du Bois regards this, rightly, I think,--and I apologize for the ‘even’—it is only his reputation that is bitter, not his personality—as our great instrument of survival,--our emotional salvator—and perhaps one of our most valuable and conquering contributions.⁴⁰

Locke’s biographers noted that his caustic tone reflected both a personal and intellectual dimension; that Locke ‘was not only chafing under Du Bois’s insistence that Fauset be included in the anthology, there was also the question of the aesthetic value and role of laughter in black art, since not only Du Bois but many others had identified it as one of the chief stylistic markers of black art’.⁴¹ However, Locke’s notes offer no exact explanation of his aesthetic disagreements, other than his suggestions for her to be less serious. Locke’s criticisms appeared more intent on asserting editorial authority, mocking Du Bois as ‘our emotional salvator’ and ‘one of our most valuable and conquering contributions’ and diminishing the first draft of Fauset’s essay as too dour.⁴²

Locke also insisted that Fauset delete negative commentary about the artist Winold Reiss, who would have sketches published in the anthology. Locke concluded his editorial notes with a half-hearted apology for his tone, half-hearted because of its condescending mixed message: ‘I didn’t want to intrude a school-masterish note into the peace of your vacation . . . But do give us a smile in the next Gift of

⁴⁰ Letter from Alain Locke to Jessie Fauset, undated (circa late-June 1925). 164/28/40, ALP/M-SC.

⁴¹ Harris and Molesworth, *Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher*, 199.

⁴² Most scholars accepted Locke’s reverence as genuine. His choice of the word ‘salvator’ instead of ‘saviour’ to describe Du Bois may have held multiple means that indicated his true opinion of the ageing intellectual. Salvator was also an American race horse revered by many as the best of the late 19th Century. Lionized by a famous Currier and Ives portrait, his death in 1909 may have also symbolized Locke’s attitudes toward Du Bois’ role in African American intellectual life in 1925—once an American legend whose time had expired.

Laughter. Just send additions—I will tack them on’.⁴³ Again, Locke’s word choice (school-masterish) signalled his personal irritations in editing Fauset’s essay. As a long-time Washington D.C. school teacher, Locke capitalized on his power as editor to demand Fauset ‘give us smile’ and requested that she just send along the changes he has suggested, without any opportunity for further discussion on the issue. Du Bois may have demanded that Fauset be included in the anthology, but Locke made it abundantly clear that he held all the cards and would shape the book as he saw fit, without intrusions from the would-be rivals that Locke may have aspired to usurp.

When direct suggestions to Locke were either ignored or discarded, Du Bois and his *Crisis* cohorts worked through publishing back channels to assert their influence over The New Negro. Lewis Baer, a senior editor at Boni who liaised with Locke, remained in close contact with NAACP literati, including Walter White, James Weldon Johnson, and Du Bois throughout the summer of 1925. His letters to Locke revealed his role as an intermediary between Locke and Walter White who, like Du Bois, had hoped to assert additional editorial influence over a project in which Locke had claimed to value cooperation. On 19 May 1925, less than one week after Du Bois has fired off his ultimatum regarding Fauset, Baer conveyed detailed recommendations about the contents of the book on behalf of the NAACP’s assistant secretary.

Yesterday, I had lunch with Walter White and he made the following suggestions for our book which seem very good to me, and I’d like to know how you feel about them. He thought that for the article on The Sorrow Songs, which you were going to do, to save you this trouble, if you had not yet written anything on it, we might use an address made last year by Harry Burleigh in Philadelphia, I believe, on The Negro in Music.’ . . . ‘Then, you have down Braithwaite’s name for The Negro in American Literature, and as you probably know there is an article on this in *The Crisis* for September, 1924. Would this serve, do you think? As for illustrations, *The Crisis*

⁴³ Letter from Alain Locke to Jessie Fauset, 164/28/40, ALP/M-SC.

recently had a contest for interesting drawing [sic] by negroes, and I saw some very interesting ones over there which we could use. Almost everyone seems to think the Covarrubias things . . . would go very well in the book, and I shall get in touch with him very shortly to find what arrangements we can make'.⁴⁴

Locke exercised his editorial independence by categorically ignoring all of Baer's advice, no matter how prescient or wise. Locke authored the article on 'The Sorrow Songs', entitled 'The Negro Spirituals', and declined to include Burleigh's address on Negro music. The preeminent African American musical composer of his time, Burleigh's 'Deep River' had popularized the performance of spirituals in concert settings in 1917 and throughout the next decade, he had been widely acclaimed for his adaptations of African American spirituals and for establishing the tradition of concluding concerts with a set of spirituals.⁴⁵ By comparison, Locke would have been woefully under-qualified to write on the subject, and Baer went so far as to enclose Burleigh's address in the letter ('Walter had a single copy of this in his files') in order to sway him. Because the suggestion and copy of Burleigh's speech came from Walter White, Locke would have been suspicious of granting him any reason to take credit for the success of The New Negro and dismissed the idea, perhaps to wipe clean any unnecessary traces of *The Crisis*' influence from the pages of his anthology and deter any further intrusions by White.⁴⁶ In all probability, Locke had been aware that within days of his *Survey Graphic* appearing on newsstands, Walter White had phoned Lewis Baer and declared that 'he would like to transform this "Special Negro Number" into a book'.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Letter from Lewis S. Baer to Alain Locke, 19 May 1925. 164/122/12, ALP/M-SC.

⁴⁵ H.T. Burleigh (1866-1949) [biography]. The Library of Congress. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200035730/default.html>.

⁴⁶ For more details about their rivalry and White's relationship with Lewis Baer, see Charles W. Scruggs, 'Alain Locke and Walter White: Their Struggle for Control of the Harlem Renaissance'. *Black American Literature Forum* 14 (Autumn, 1980): 91-99.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 93. Scruggs also pointed out that a personal letter revealed 'The next day, White had second thoughts', though the reasons for his reconsiderations are unknown. What White would not have known at the time is that on 15 January 1925, Paul Kellogg had written to Locke and explained Boni

William Braithwaite, an influential white critic and poet, and Locke had maintained a vibrant relationship for nearly twenty years; therefore, Locke likely held no reservations about refusing to consider supplanting his essay with the comparatively obscure Francis L. Broderick piece that had first appeared in Du Bois' magazine. Either out of loyalty to Charles S. Johnson or at his urging, Locke never seriously considered publishing art from *The Crisis* competition that had been created to compete with *Opportunity*; however, as an apparent token of appeasement, Locke did include one Covarrubias drawing. Nevertheless, the 11 sketches by Locke's handpicked protégée Aaron Douglass clearly provided the dominant motifs and influence of young visual artists in the final anthology.

Locke might have been sceptical of White's motives, even if, in actuality, many of the suggestions White made through Baer in the summer of 1925 may have been driven by concerns he and Du Bois shared over the racial make-up of The New Negro contributors. In Locke's insistence on including prominent white intellectuals, such as Paul Kellogg, Albert C. Barnes, and Melville Herskovits side-by-side with James Weldon Johnson and Walter White, Du Bois recognized the familiar, inter-racial strategy Charles S. Johnson had employed so successfully at *Opportunity*, one that had been touted throughout late 1924-early 1925 in promoting its literary competition, and one now that appeared to deny the voices of black artists and intellectuals for the sake of featuring prominent white intellectuals.⁴⁸ Both Du

was already 'asking if it would be possible to arrange for the republication of the materials in our Harlem number in book form, perhaps next fall.' See Letter from Paul Kellogg to Alain Locke 164/88/6, ALP/M-SC. If Locke had discovered the request White made to Lewis Baer (likely conveyed to the Boni brothers themselves, who, as his superiors, Baer would have contacted), Locke would have remained suspicious of any appearance of intrusion by White and others from the NAACP and interpreted even well-intentioned suggestions, like Harry Burleigh's involvement in the project, as encroachment on his editorial territory.

⁴⁸ Addell P. Austin. 'The *Opportunity* and *Crisis* Literary Contests, 1924-27'. *CLA Journal* 32 (December 1988): 235-246. Austin pointed out that for the 1925 competitions, 18 of 24 *Opportunity* judges were white; nine whites and seven blacks juried *The Crisis*. Austin suggested that the racial imbalance was due to Johnson's commercial motives, because 'The *Opportunity* editor wanted to take advantage of the current vogue for works on black life'. (239) Austin's interpretation is short-sighted, and drawn largely from Patrick J. Gilpin. 'Charles S. Johnson: Entrepreneur of the Harlem Renaissance'. In Arna Bontemps (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Remembered. (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1972), 229, who declared: 'Almost every month Johnson used the contest to

Bois and White would view the influence and prominent place of whites in the anthology more sceptically, not only because Locke consistently kept both men at arm's length, limiting their influence over the book's production, but also because White himself had been threatened to be supplanted in favour of one of Locke's white collaborators, a perception of exclusion based on race that likely did not account for Locke's real motives for manhandling White.

As Scruggs noted, Locke had recently published 'Color Lines', an essay authored by Walter White which analysed colour prejudice within the race in *The Survey Graphic* special Harlem number; however, Locke had asked White to incorporate new data published on the same subject by the white anthropologist Melville Herskovits in *The American Mercury* and sent along a copy of the article. Scruggs suggested that White 'was angry that the writing of another white "authority" was given precedence over his own work, and on June 3, 1925, he bluntly rejected Locke's "suggestion": "I have read his article and, frankly, I don't see that there is anything in it which would improve my Survey article. As a matter of fact, every one of us who is colored knows more instinctively about color lines within the race than almost any white man can ever know"' .⁴⁹ Declaring that he had 'never yet met a white person who thoroughly understood the psychology of race prejudice within the Negro race', White ended his letter with an ultimatum just as Du Bois had a few weeks earlier:

promote the mutual interest of the black literati and white patrons'. Commercial interests were among Johnson's many motives for including white jurors, but he was also generating the interest in Negro art, as much as he was responding to 'the current vogue'. This self-interested, entrepreneurial perspective of Johnson has dominated Harlem Renaissance scholarship for almost forty years and persists. For an example, see Emily Bernard. 'Renaissance and the Vogue'. In George Hutchinson (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35. Johnson's attitude toward and faith in interracial collaboration contrasted significantly with Du Bois, who believed Johnson to be powerless when working with whites. As I have discussed in previous chapters, Du Bois' power struggles with the NAACP and his betrayal by the US War Department provided ample reasons for him to distrust the possibility of just and equitable inter-racial collaboration. While Du Bois confessed to Joel Spingarn in great detail why inter-racial collaborations were inevitably ineffective (see Chapter Two), scholars have yet to consider how much a 'generation gap' played in both Johnson's and Du Bois' views of white involvement with and influence over Negro arts and artists. Twenty-one years younger, the New Negro writers were Johnson's peers, none of whom had yet to experience comparable disillusionment with inter-racial collations that failed to serve African American interests.

⁴⁹ Charles Scruggs. 'Alain Locke and Walter White: Their Struggle for Control of the Harlem Renaissance'. *Black American Literature Forum* 14 (Autumn 1980): 93.

‘take the article as it was, or leave it out of the anthology altogether’.⁵⁰ Ultimately, Locke included White’s unedited essay alongside Herskovits’ work in a section of the anthology entitled: ‘The Negro and the American Tradition’.

White continued his efforts to pressure Locke through Lewis Baer. A 4 June letter to Locke offered another recommendation: Paul Robeson, the one true African American Broadway star, might write a piece on acting for the collection. Again, Baer was not hesitant to reveal the source of his suggestion: ‘Walter says that if you intend writing him about this, he will certainly be glad to use all of his influence with Robeson to get him to comply. In fact, if you think it wise you might tell him to consult with Walter about it, unless you yourself are in New York soon’.⁵¹ Any consideration that Locke may have given to reaching out to Robeson may have been dismissed as soon as White attempted, via Baer, to inject influence; and similar to the case of Harry Burleigh, Locke disregarded an obvious opportunity to include one of most prominent young African American artists in a collection he hoped would become a cultural and commercial success.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid. Scruggs also acknowledge another motive for White’s indignant reaction to the fate of his article: ‘It was White who had suggested creating the anthology altogether’.

⁵¹ Letter from Lewis S. Baer to Alain Locke, 4 June 1925. 164/122/12, ALP/M-SC.

⁵² Locke’s omission of Robeson from the collection was particularly puzzling, considering that Locke attempted to use his relationship with Robeson to secure another book deal with Boni in November, 1925. Responding to a plea Locke made to the Boni brothers that he edit the book on Negro Blues they had hoped to publish, Charles Boni, Jr. wrote tersely: ‘Very much put out by your letter concerning the new book of Negro blues. This book is my suggestion and I do not like the way you are trying to preempt it’. (Letter from Charles Boni, Jr. to Locke, 6 November 1925, 164/10/7, ALP/M-SC) Locke sought royalties from Boni for editing this book and Boni only offered to pay a small fee for an introduction. Displeased with Boni’s tone and efforts to limit his financial stake in the project, Locke responded with a direct threat to undermine the project by leveraging his relationship with Robeson: ‘of course I reserve the right to show him {Robeson} the correspondence, for I value his friendship highly’. (Locke to Boni, Jr., 9 November 1925, 164/10/7, ALP/M-SC) Perhaps emboldened by the immediate success of The New Negro, Locke appeared intent to use his relationship with Paul Robeson to compel Boni to allow him a more prominent and lucrative role in the production of the proposed book.

A savvy businessman, Boni unequivocally objected Locke’s financial arrangement. ‘A book of blues selected and arranged by Robeson would have a good market. The market however would be due to Robeson’s name and reputation and to the songs. . . . To suggest therefore that Robeson should be allowed approximately 1/3 of the royalties and the other 2/3 should go to people who after all have been inessential as far as the commercial value of the book is concerned, is presumptuous’. (Charles Boni, Jr. to Locke, 11 November 1925 164/10/7, ALP/M-SC) Locke’s attempt to leverage his role as

Because of the intimate relationship he shared with his NAACP protégé, Du Bois would have almost assuredly been aware of White's literary ambitions as well as the treatment he had received from Locke throughout the summer of 1925.⁵³ Combined with his own uneasy dealings with Locke and the tension over Fauset's exclusion/inclusion in the anthology, Du Bois' suspicions about Locke grew, reaching their pinnacle immediately after the publication of The New Negro. The critical attention and acclaim for the book was extraordinary for a work focusing on African American life, culture, and the arts. No fewer than twenty one reviews appeared over the next six months, but two, in particular, are meaningful to understanding Du Bois' efforts to raise doubts about the legitimacy of Locke's work. The first reviews appeared on 20 December 1925, a 1500 word critique by Dorothy Scarborough in *The New York Times*, who proclaimed the book 'sets forth the facts that the negro in America is developing his own racial integrity and pride, is becoming self-dependent in a material way, as in arts, science and education';⁵⁴ and Carl Van Vechten's glowing account, which appeared in the Sunday edition of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Soon to become a lightning rod of controversy over the

an intermediary with Robeson who would produce content for what would become his book, failed miserably. Boni had likely tired of Locke's aggressive and unilateral approach to compiling The New Negro; however, more importantly, this event revealed Locke opportunistic attitude toward Robeson, his willingness to manipulate their relationship and Robeson's fame for the sake of economics and, in the case of White's suggestion to include him in the anthology, social capital.

⁵³ Scruggs, 'Alain Locke and Walter White', 91. Scruggs argued that White 'frequently came into conflict with Alain Locke over matters involving personal ambition. There was never an open declaration of war between White and Locke, but the unpublished correspondence of both reveals an uneasy tension between them. White was hostile to Locke because he felt that Locke had betrayed him, and Locke, in turn, was suspicious of White's motives vis-a-vis the Harlem Renaissance'. Scruggs also noted that, like Locke, White pursued his literary ambitions through tireless networking among white intellectuals, and 'made friendships with well-known authors, editors, publishers, and literary critics. Within a short time, he was on intimate terms with Alfred Knopf, Horace Liveright, Sinclair Lewis, Carl Van Vechten, Carl Van Doren, Heywood Broun, and others'. (92) Du Bois viewed White's relationships with influential whites, particularly with Van Vechten, Van Doren, and Alfred Knopf, with a double standard, as he sharply criticized Locke and many New Negro writers for falling victim to their influence.

⁵⁴ Dorothy Scarborough. 'From Cotton Field and Levee To the Streets of Harlem'. *The New York Times Book Review* (December 20, 1925): 20. Scarborough's review, like Van Vechten's and Seligmann's also critiqued R. Emmet Kennedy's, Mellows: Negro Work Songs, Street Cries and Spirituals.

publication of his novel Nigger Heaven in 1926,⁵⁵ Van Vechten, considered by many at the time the foremost white expert on African American literary and theatre culture, predicted The New Negro ‘will prove to be the most remarkable book that has yet appeared on the Negro’.⁵⁶ In his eyes, Locke ‘has done a superb job’ and ‘has put not merely the best foot of the new Negro forward; he has put *all* his feet forward’.⁵⁷ Van Vechten’s review ran over 3500 words, all but 400 devoted to the anthology. He gave precise evaluations of the fiction and poetry, which he believed ‘will amaze those who are cognizant only in a vague sort of way of what the Negro youth is doing’, highlighting Rudolph Fisher’s story, ‘The City of Refuge’, which Van Vechten called ‘the finest short story yet written by a man of Negro blood, except Pushkin. . .’⁵⁸ He criticized writers when warranted, calling Eric Walrond ‘an uneven writer’ and declaring that ‘a good deal of his work is actually bad’; and praised those he believed represented the best examples of promise and excellence: ‘Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes are the youngest and the best of the contemporary Negro poets’.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Throughout the 1920s, Van Vechten had written extensively about Negro arts and artists, secured publication for the works of rising New Negro literary talents, and promoted social contacts between Negro artists and their white counterparts, particularly through famous inter-racial parties he held in his midtown Manhattan apartment. By the end of 1926, Van Vechten, from Du Bois’ perspective, was the most dangerous and detrimental white influence to the New Negro writer and movement. Even though Van Vechten had been instrumental in publishing Walter White’s The Fire in the Flint with Knopf in 1924, Du Bois viewed Van Vechten warily, especially with regards to his influence upon Langston Hughes. In August, 1926, Knopf published Nigger Heaven, Van Vechten’s sensational and commercial blockbuster about Negro life in Harlem, and Du Bois’ famous December review cast the novel as a betrayal against the race. He categorically disapproved of representing what Van Vechten called ‘undesirables’ in his novel. Although Du Bois protested ‘I am one who likes stories and I do not insist that they be written solely for my point of view’, the devastating potential for the publication of Nigger Heaven to perpetuate stereotypes and undermine the political pursuit of racial equality led him to declare Van Vechten’s story had no ‘realistic or artistic merits’. See W. E. B. Du Bois. ‘Books’. *The Crisis* 33 (December 1926): 81-82; and Leon Coleman. ‘Carl Van Vechten Presents the New Negro’. In The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined. (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 110.

⁵⁶ Carl Van Vechten. ‘Uncle Tom’s Mansion’. *The New York Herald Tribune Books* (December 20, 1925): Section VI, 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The review could have disturbed Du Bois because Van Vechten reserved the most apparent disdain for Jessie Fauset and practically ignored Du Bois' and Walter White's contributions altogether. Claiming that he had been 'startled' Locke had selected her to write about the Negro theatre, Van Vechten lamented that had he been editor, 'she would have been about the last person I should have considered for the job'.⁶⁰ Van Vechten acknowledged his misjudgement and credited Locke for being 'wise in selecting her to write it', claiming what Fauset had to say 'is originally expressed and delightfully phrased' and 'the best discussion of the Negro in theatre which I am familiar'.⁶¹ After heaping praise upon Locke for overlooking her complete lack of credentials to choose her (and thus, from Du Bois' perspective, ignoring his advice to select excerpts of her fiction or other essays), Van Vechten spent two lengthy paragraphs pointing out his objections with her ideas without ever qualifying his praise of her work. Du Bois' own essay warranted two measly summary sentences, and the other key *Crisis* contributors, James Weldon Johnson and Walter White warranted only one.

Alone, Van Vechten's review may not stand as sufficient evidence to prove that Du Bois now viewed Locke as a mounting threat, supported by the white intelligentsia, that needed to be addressed via a coordinated attack; however, an unfavourable review, authored by NAACP publicity director Herbert Seligmann, appeared six days later in *The New York Sun*, possibly at the behest of Du Bois. Unlike Van Vechten's lengthy and nuanced critique, Seligmann wrote less than six hundred terse words that provided only a brief summary of a few contributors, while focusing his critical attention on Locke's shortcomings as an editor. Initially, Seligmann claims that the book's 'comprehensiveness and variety perhaps justify its occasional overlapping and repetitions', and that 'whatever its shortcomings', the collection 'testifies to the existence of realities know to too few Americans; it is an endeavour, in the right direction toward interpreting the negro as a fully endowed and full

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

functioning human being'.⁶² Much as Du Bois had in his review, Seligmann took great care to separate his criticisms of Locke and the book from the literary movement afoot, praising the artists and their contributions, as well as the symbolic meaning of their collective talent and achievement. Unlike Du Bois, however, Seligmann attacked Locke directly. Claiming the book's execution was 'uneven', Seligmann pointed out the intrusion of ego as a fatal flaw that undermined the spirit represented by the other contributors: 'Mr. Locke, not content with the opening flourish of a showman, finds it necessary to appear three times during the performance; and, like a few of its contributors, writes with more facility than authority'.⁶³ After criticizing Locke and some contributors for 'overvaluing' past Negro cultural achievements and its limitless potential, Seligmann insisted 'it is a pity that the book could not have been more carefully written, organized and supervised as to detail'.⁶⁴ He concluded by once again making clear that Locke's failures should not be taken as a reflection of the potential and promise of Negro culture: 'With all its faults "The New Negro" does suggest the scope and richness of the negro's activities in America, and assembles for consideration many separate elements not hitherto related in the public mind'.⁶⁵ In much the same manner as Du Bois had criticized *Opportunity* throughout 1925, Seligmann made a concerted effort to undermine the credibility of Alain Locke, but not at the expense of demoralizing the younger writers and artists who aspired to usher forth a renaissance.

Instead of delving deeper than Seligmann into an explication of his criticism of Locke's work, or justifying why, in spite of its many flaws, The New Negro 'probably expresses better than any book that has been published in the last ten years the present state of thought and culture among American Negroes', Du Bois used his review to chronicle his version of events that he believed marked the anthology's genesis and led directly to its publication. Du Bois' 'history' of The New Negro

⁶² Herbert L. Seligmann. 'Saturday Book Review: Achievements of the Negro: As a Writer, Artist and Maker of Song'. *The New York Sun* (26 December 1925).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

questioned the dubious role and agenda of Paul Kellogg's, *The Survey* (now *Survey Graphic*) in the book's publication, focusing specifically on two incidents. The first had occurred in 1914, in which he revealed his initial falling-out with Kellogg. Du Bois claimed that the magazine 'has always been afraid of the Negro problem' and insisted that twelve years earlier, *The Survey* had refused to publish an essay he authored outlining the political and social aims of the NAACP for the year 1914. His essay had contained a paragraph in which Du Bois exclaimed that 'the Negro must demand his social rights: His right to be treated as a gentleman, when he acts like one, to marry any sane, grown person who wants to marry him, and to meet and eat with his friends without being accused of undue assumption or unworthy ambition'.⁶⁶ Du Bois contended that after reading his controversial essay demanding social equality, *Survey* editors had 'telephoned frantically' directors at the NAACP, identified board members who disagreed with this position, and 'refused to publish my statement unless this particular paragraph were excised'.⁶⁷

Insisting that since then 'much water has flowed under the bridge', Du Bois' review moved forward ten years to imply that *Survey Graphic*'s March 1925 special number on the Negro in Harlem had been a '*Crisis*' suggestion shared with Kellogg at the 1924 Civic Club Dinner. Du Bois suggested that a conversation that Kellogg had with *Crisis* business manager, Mr. A. G. Dill, at the dinner was the catalyst for

⁶⁶ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Paul Kellogg's account of the circumstances surrounding this essay varied substantially. In a letter to Du Bois dated 17 December 1913, Kellogg confirmed Du Bois' claim about his statement regarding social rights raised concern; however, Kellogg pointed specifically to the clause "to marry any sane grown person who want to marry him" as the area he felt might be 'misconstrued and prove a boomerang', raising the concern as 'friends to you and the Association' without 'pretending to edit or underwrite the pronouncements. . . so that the attitude of The Survey in the matter is not involved'. Kellogg's letter stated that Du Bois 'suggested that the last three lines be struck out' so that 'the program would stand as your own' rather than appear to be an official NAACP position. Kellogg explained that this was not possible, as the purpose of the essay, to be published ten days later among essays written by twenty others, as 'organizational proposals rather than individual proposals'. Kellogg concluded the letter by stating that his individual proposal would be replaced by an official organizational statement prepared by Mary Childs Nerney, then national secretary of the NAACP, and reiterating that while his essay could not be used in 'this particular symposium', . . . 'our columns are open to you as an individual. . .' See 'Letter from Paul Kellogg to W.E.B. Du Bois' 17 December 1913. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers, Reel 4, Frame 546. Kellogg's intimate and essential involvement in the production of *The New Negro* most assuredly was the primary catalyst for Du Bois' concern about white influence over the New Negro movement.

Kellogg's idea to publish the special number. Citing that Kellogg still expressed hesitation and 'feared the "social uplifter"', Du Bois conveniently omitted details of the conversation and implied that Dill and others from *The Crisis* staff had coaxed a reluctant Kellogg to consider the idea of a special issue. Du Bois managed to credit the editor for at least one sound decision: Kellogg 'got a colored man to edit that number of the *Graphic*, Alain Locke' which Du Bois acknowledged had done a 'good job'.⁶⁸ Six paragraphs after his ambivalent introductory praise of the anthology, Du Bois finally returned to his review of The New Negro briefly, offering only a pallid two sentence evaluation of the work: 'Mr. Locke has done a fine piece of editing. The proofreading, the bibliographies and the general arrangement are all beyond criticism.'⁶⁹

Most Harlem Renaissance scholarship has focused significant attention on the final two paragraphs of Du Bois' review, which some have argued represented his official, literary break with both his old philosophies about Beauty and Truth as well as the purpose and function of political and racial propaganda in Negro art.⁷⁰ Without ever engaging the content of the book directly, Du Bois concluded his review by outlining what he viewed as a significant ideological difference with Locke's editorial approach, one that would ignite an aesthetic controversy that alienated Du Bois from New Negro writers and defined his place in the burgeoning renaissance:

With one point alone do I differ with the Editor. Mr. Locke has newly been seized with the idea that Beauty rather than Propaganda should be the object of Negro literature and art. . . . Of course this involves a controversy as old as the world and much too transcendental for practical purposes, and yet, if

⁶⁸ Du Bois, 'Our Bookshelf', 141.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Rampersad, The Art and Imagination, 194. Rampersad suggested that Du Bois' review was 'the first blow in what would be a five-year action to regain control of the movement he had helped start' (194). His claim about Du Bois' motives (re-gaining control) for opposing Locke aesthetically have been surprisingly under-analyzed. Historians have routinely de-emphasized the significance of Du Bois' evolving aesthetic ideologies in 1926, studying neither their historical origins or consequences upon his reputation and legitimacy as a cultural leader; literary scholars have critiqued Du Bois' new aesthetic positions and his intellectual influence as an adversary to New Negro writers without considering what events motivated him to oppose attitudes about art that he had held since 1921.

Mr. Locke's thesis is insisted on *too much* it is going to turn the Negro renaissance into decadence. It is the fight for Life and Liberty that is giving birth to Negro literature and art today and when, turning from this fight or ignoring it, the young Negro tries to do pretty things or things that catch the passing fancy of the really unimportant critics and publishers about him, he will find that he has killed the soul of Beauty in his Art.⁷¹

Du Bois claimed that Locke's book 'proves the falseness of this thesis' because the anthology was 'filled and bursting with propaganda . . . beautifully and painstakingly done'.⁷² Failing to qualify exactly what he believed to be exhibits of propaganda that Locke mistook for 'beauty', Du Bois warned that no renaissance could be built solely upon 'a search for disembodied beauty which is not really a passionate effort to do something tangible, accompanied and illumined and made holy by the vision of eternal beauty'.⁷³ Du Bois translated Locke's aesthetic sensibilities as too ethereal, too out of touch with the inequalities of Negro life in America. He feared that a renaissance interpreted predominantly by Locke's values would corrupt a noble pursuit. Du Bois' doubt about Locke's aesthetics promoting self-indulgent decadence can be read dualistically: First, as concern that Negro art might lose the unity of purpose associated with creating a self-determined, authentic Negro cultural identity; and, secondly, as a concern that too much misdirected artistic freedom might lead to an uncensored presentation of Negro life that could easily be misinterpreted and misappropriated by a misanthropic white audience eager to seek evidence to reinforce racial stereotypes and injustice. In 1921, Du Bois had expressed no such reservations about the relationship between Beauty and propaganda or about reading audiences' ability to discern truth from stereotype, in

⁷¹ Du Bois, 'Our Bookshelf', 141. The balance between art and politics Du Bois proposed was one he and *The Crisis* was better equipped to pursue. *Opportunity* did not have a 'protest' mission nor a 15 year history of political activism. Subtly, Du Bois appeared to shift his aesthetic beliefs toward a blend of cultural and political engagement that gave his magazine a distinct advantage that might curtail Locke's cultural authority and influence simply because, as a professor and intellectual, Locke had never exhibited an initiative towards politics.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

large part, because he would have certainly viewed himself as the presumptive leader of any forthcoming renaissance, shaping the aesthetic values and mentoring artistic pursuits of Beauty and Truth in the name of capturing the beauty of Negro life.

While the last two paragraphs of his review foreshadowed Du Bois' new aesthetic directions, his comments reconstructed his standards for propaganda that differed from his views of 1921 and appeared more self-serving than in service of the arts and Negro culture. Most critical interpretations of Du Bois' new aesthetics in 1926 have been apologetic for his ideological vagaries. Some scholars, however, such as Locke biographer Leonard Harris, have insisted that Du Bois' idea of propaganda 'involves promoting the importance of self respecting images and the need to promote a racial consciousness for the purpose of agitating against discrimination'.⁷⁴ Darwin Turner suggested that Du Bois failed to clarify his abstractions of Beauty, Truth, Art, Propaganda,

in relation to material, thought, or method—perhaps because he presumed his taste to be characteristic of all people, and because he based his critical judgment on abstractions which were concrete to him but not necessarily to all other black contemporaries, the application of his theory to particular works of black writers sometimes resulted in appraisals significantly different from those of younger black artists, who share their own perceptions of Beauty and Truth.⁷⁵

Conceivably, Du Bois rejected New Negro standards of beauty and truth, less because of genuine aesthetic differences (which he never clearly articulated) and more so because he feared the influence of others over them, namely Locke and white mentors such as Carl Van Vechten, who, Du Bois believed, did not share his beliefs about Beauty and Truth.

⁷⁴ Leonard Harris. 'The Great Debate: W.E.B. Du Bois vs. Alain Locke on the Aesthetic'. *Philosophia Africana* 7 (March 2004): 19.

⁷⁵ Turner, 'W.E.B. Du Bois', 19.

The New Negro embodied many of Du Bois' previous aesthetic values, only without his leadership to control the effect of its popularity and without reaping the effusive public praise heaped upon the anthology and its editor from an adoring white intellectual community.⁷⁶ After publication of the ground-breaking anthology, Du Bois had little choice but to recognize that Locke now controlled both the direction of the renaissance and its most significant source of social capital, by way of the influence of white editors and publishers. Power had shifted dramatically since their joint February, 1924 review which revealed a humbled Locke heaping praise upon Fauset and expressing deference toward the esteemed *Crisis* editor. His public knighting as 'dean of the movement' at the Civic Club Dinner, a successful turn as guest editor of *Survey Graphic*, then the phenomena that was The New Negro, emboldened Locke and accelerated the manifestation of his latent ambition. His arrogance and overt hostility toward Du Bois and his most prominent literary charges during production of the book that launched a renaissance fractured their relations and led directly to Du Bois' ambivalent review that reassessed the history of how The New Negro came be; and raised unfounded doubts regarding the disingenuous, even potentially sinister motives of whites, like Paul Kellogg, who he believed wished to follow an American tradition of manipulating the Negro for personal gain and profit .

Locke's 'freeze out' of *The Crisis* became, to Du Bois, a clear sign of a challenge to his authority and a function of Locke's conspiracy with Charles S. Johnson to utilize interracial cooperation to supplant *The Crisis* as the premier African American journal. Locke exacerbated their tenuous relationship by exhibiting contentious and

⁷⁶ To some extent, Du Bois' paranoia of and skepticism towards white influence was justified, particularly in how interracial collaborations that ensured a breadth and number of critical reviews in white publications rarely given to African American writers. The New Negro was vetted in *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and twice in V.F. Calverton's distinguished *The Modern Quarterly*. Calverton worked closely with Locke throughout the transformation of the *Survey Graphic* number and utilized his extensive network of publishing and literary contacts to promote the anthology and persuade influential journals to review it. Letters exchanged between Calverton and Locke do not indicate any premeditated efforts to compromise the objectivity of reviewers; however, Calverton's advocacy was the singular reason why an unprecedented number national journals catering to white audiences reviewed a work focusing on Negro life, culture, and the arts. See Alain Locke Papers: 164/19/21

uncooperative behaviour toward *The Crisis*' contributors to his book, acting out of character with, and very likely, outside of the authority and consent of Johnson. However, with Locke's tremendous success, Du Bois overreached in interpreting Johnson's motives as being the same; intent on marginalizing Du Bois and his magazine permanently. Privately, he washed his hands of Locke altogether, confessing to childhood friend Roscoe Conkling Bruce: 'Recently he has shown repeatedly a nasty attitude toward *The Crisis*, and I am through'.⁷⁷ Dated 15 days before Seligmann's review and certainly before the print deadline for January's edition of his magazine, Du Bois' contempt for Locke never reached public eyes. Instead of a direct attack against a shining example of the 'Talented Tenth' who had betrayed him, Du Bois shifted the blame for Locke and Johnson's actions toward the toxic influence of whites involved in their interracial partnerships. Du Bois continued to praise the virtue and spirit of Locke's collection, careful to avoid condemning the writers, artists, and intellectuals whose exceptional talents were still proof of the Negro Renaissance that Du Bois had long ago prophesized. He could be indirectly critical of Locke, but needed to raise doubts about the extent to which aesthetic principles in The New Negro had been compromised to assuage white influence that, Du Bois professed, now asserted power over the content, critical assessment, and future direction of a movement he had always believed he would lead.

Traditionally, historians have accepted Du Bois' scepticism regarding the dangers of white influence on the black aesthetic as valid. While some of his concerns had merit, Du Bois' objections to Locke's effort were motivated as much by personal rivalry and cultural power struggles, as they were genuine ideological differences over race and/or aesthetics. Du Bois grossly underestimated the degree to which Locke operated independently of Johnson. Locke's motives for the 'freeze out' may have been a simple misunderstanding by Du Bois, who had been more suspicious of utilizing the influence of whites to achieve racial and social equality ever since his

⁷⁷ 'Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Roscoe Conkling Bruce'. 11 December 1925. In Lewis, The Fight for Equality, 162.

experiences with the United State War Department, as he incorporated Johnson's values of interracial cooperation to advance Negro culture. Locke may well have 'ignored' *The Crisis* to be more inclusive and honour Johnson's mission; however, he just as well may have marginalized Du Bois intentionally in order to assume cultural authority and supplant him as premier Negro leader. In either case, Du Bois misunderstood Locke's relationship with Johnson.

Conclusion: Du Bois' Anxieties and the Irony of His Influence

The vast majority of historical and literary scholarship regarding Du Bois' opinions about the Black Aesthetic has focused primarily on events that occurred during and writings published in 1926. In the months after his ambivalent review of The New Negro, he proceeded to advance a carefully conceived plan to promote a new aesthetic ideology.¹ Distressed by the successes of Alain Locke and his white collaborators, Du Bois initiated a series of publications that alleged the pernicious influence of whites had corrupted the Negro Renaissance. Concerned that recent New Negro artistic interpretations of African American life had been compromised for white commercial interests, his perspective of art shifted dramatically, away from unfiltered presentations of authentic Negro life, and towards the political and social ramifications of cultural production. The lines of demarcation between beauty and propaganda that he had drawn so distinctly just a few years earlier now blurred and evolved, eventually, into the perimeters of a new manifesto that provided the defining moment of the conservative resistance to New Negro aesthetics. Scholars, however, have yet to consider that his motives, as with many of his ideological repositionings in the early 20th century, may have been driven by the desire to retain cultural relevance as much as by his response to an altering political reality.

Du Bois' ideological transformation became evident in February, 1926, when he announced the symposium on Negro Art that would appear in each edition of *The Crisis* until November.² He grew increasingly leery of realistic portraits of common Negro life, and worried that the truthful black art would be manipulated not only by Johnson and Locke, but also by white critics and publishers who coerced New Negro

¹ Du Bois' personal correspondences reveal that he had reached out to prospective contributors to his *Crisis* symposium on Negro Art as early as November, 1925, when Jessie Fauset wrote to Sinclair Lewis about participating in a national discussion regarding what Negro literature should be. See Apetheker, 'The Correspondences of W.E.B. Du Bois', 329-331 for the letters exchanged between Fauset, Lewis, and Du Bois.

² For a detailed discussion of Du Bois' symposium and his influence on young writers in asserting their aesthetic independence, see Jody Spooner. 'The Assertion of Self-Definition in New Negro Literature'. *Community College Humanities Review* 25 (Spring 2004): 60-73. My supervisors have granted permission to include ideas and content from this article in the following chapter.

artists to reinforce stereotypes that might suppress the social, political, and economic advancement of the race. Locke continued to champion the benefits and necessity of creating art unfettered by racial politics, while Du Bois fixated on the pitfalls of critical praise and cultural validation granted by white critics and audiences. Du Bois viewed whites with growing scepticism as he realized how the works of New Negro writers published and praised for their 'realistic' portraits of black life might be used as evidence to perpetuate stereotypes and promote a racist agenda. The greater the acclaim and white recognition bestowed upon New Negro artists, particularly those now mentored by Johnson and Locke, the more suspicious he became of the growing popularity of Negro art and the white critical hegemony that he had believed just five years earlier would objectively embrace true representations of Negro life.

The symposium, 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed' consisted of the responses to a series of questions Du Bois presented to writers, artists, publishers, and social leaders, and consisted of seven questions posed to evaluate the status of Negro in literature and under what circumstances should he be portrayed.

1. When the artist, black or white, portrays Negro characters is he under any obligations or limitations as to the sort of character he will portray?
2. Can any author be criticized for painting the worst or best characters of a group?
3. Can publishers be criticized for refusing to handle novels that portray Negroes of education and accomplishment, on the ground that these characters are no different from white folk and therefore not interesting?
4. What are Negroes to do when they are continually painted at their worst and judged by the public as they are painted?
5. Does the situation of the educated Negro in America with its pathos, humiliation and tragedy call for artistic treatment at least as sincere and sympathetic as 'Porgy' received?
6. Is not the continual portrayal of the sordid, foolish, and criminal among Negroes convincing the world that this alone is really and essentially Negroid, and preventing white artists from knowing any other types and preventing black artists from daring to paint them?

7. Is there not a real danger that young colored writers will be tempted to follow the popular trend in portraying the Negro character in the underworld rather than seeking to paint the truth about themselves and their social class?³

He argued that by analyzing the responses of the most influential American artists, black and white might justify a new set of literary guidelines that demanded political considerations in judging the artistic merits of Negro art. The questionnaire appears designed to ascertain: 1) By what criteria did others perceive and assess representative Negro art; 2) Under what constraints did writers over-represent negative aspects of Negro life?; and 3) To what extent did white critics and publishers influence artists to present the sordid realms of Negro life? Du Bois' line of inquiry presupposed that whites refused to publish novels about educated and accomplished Negroes in order to appease the public demand for portraits that reinforced stereotypes and perpetuated prejudice. The potential for a cultural conspiracy to utilize art to perpetuate racial oppression disturbed Du Bois deeply, and led him to question the motives of whites who patronized Negro art and artists, without proof that what he perceived had actually occurred.

On the matter of criteria and context for standards of Negro art, the responses he published from prominent white intellectuals did not dispel his fears of collusion. Responding to the questions collectively, Carl Van Vechten affirmed what Du Bois had interpreted as a vogueish infatuation with Negro life and art:

The squalor of Negro life, the vice of Negro life, offer a wealth of novel, exotic, picturesque material to the artist. On the other hand, there is very little difference if any between the life of a wealthy or cultured Negro and that of a white man of the same class. The question is: Are Negro writers going to write about this exotic material while it is still fresh or will they

³ W.E.B. Du Bois. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed, A Symposium'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 219.

continue to make a free gift of it to white authors who will exploit it until not a drop of vitality remains?⁴

By discrediting stories of cultured Negroes as uninteresting and identical to whites, Van Vechten suggested that the seedier elements of Negro life offered the greatest untapped resource for Negro artists. Endorsing a perspective that would not have allayed Du Bois' fears of exploitation, Van Vechten insisted that 'the reasons why Negroes are sensitive in regard to fiction which attempts to picture the lower strata of the race . . . is an attitude completely inimical to art'.⁵ He believed political constraints had no place in art (a position Du Bois shared in 1921), and proffered that by ignoring the lower strata of black life, Negro artists restrained themselves from achieving the highest degree of artistic achievement. Van Vechten, as well as most white respondents to the survey, remained adamant that political implications should not restrict the content or presentation of Negro art.

Throughout the next seven months, nearly two dozen distinguished intellectuals—H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, Alfred Knopf and Sherwood Anderson among others—responded to the symposium with insights about aesthetics that reaffirmed Du Bois' belief that political consciousness must now be integral to Negro art. Mencken denounced propaganda, saying that the 'remedy is to make works of art that pay off the white man in his own coin'.⁶ Du Bose Heyward reaffirmed this perspective from a practical stance: 'What publishers, at least the best, want today is art, not propaganda'.⁷ Essayist Julia Peterkin confessed, 'I write about Negroes because they represent human nature obscured by so little veneer; human nature groping among its instinctive impulses and in an environment which is tragically primitive

⁴ Carl Van Vechten. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 219.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ H. L. Mencken. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 220.

⁷ Du Bose Heyward. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 220.

and often unutterably pathetic. But I am no propagandist for or against any race'.⁸ The responses themselves likely did not surprise Du Bois, but they certainly strengthened his own conviction that intellectuals must fight for their race by any means available to them. He apparently believed that pathetic, inevitable defeat or exotic degeneracy would be the dominant images of black life unless writers corrected these images through their art.⁹

Although the first two symposium questions appear to represent the spirit of objective inquiry into the dilemmas faced by Negro authors, the third, which presumed a condition of white publishing that could not then and cannot now be proven, revealed what Turner called Du Bois' primary concern: 'Is the literary world conspiring to typify Negroes by sordid, foolish, and criminal characters? And if so, what can be done to prevent that?'¹⁰ The majority of respondents, however, did not share his view. Yale professor William Lyon Phelps declared that any publisher who 'takes the ground mentioned in this question . . . would be absurd'; Former Virginia Military Institute Professor Robert T. Kerlin insisted publishers 'could be censured only for commercial stupidity'; and Alfred A. Knopf, likely the most prominent publisher of Negro writers, dismissed Du Bois' probing altogether, proclaiming: 'This question seems to me to be senseless'.¹¹ Expectedly, Du Bois protégés Walter White and Jessie Fauset defended the assumptions of his question; Fauset, insisting 'white people should be the first to voice this criticism', and White,

⁸ Julia Peterkin. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (April 1926). In Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett (eds.). The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1925-1938. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 202. Scholars, such as Eric King Watts, argue that Peterkin's sort of thinking renders black life 'unproblematic, simple, and transparent to the observer, the truth-teller—the white artist. Importantly, because primitivism was seen to be authentic, these racist notions of the presumed "reality" of black life make up the materials of "pure art"'. See Eric King Watts. 'Cultivating a Black Public Voice: W.E.B. Du Bois and the "Criteria of Negro Art"'. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (Summer 2001): 183-185.

⁹ Darwin T. Turner. 'W.E.B. Du Bois and the Theory of a Black Aesthetic'. In Victor A. Karmner (Ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined. (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹ William Lyon Phelps, Robert T. Kerlin, and Alfred A. Knopf. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. In Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett (eds.). The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1925-1938. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 195; 198; 195.

qualifying his concurrence under the ambiguous condition, 'provided they have merit'.¹² None of the other participants confirmed or indulged Du Bois' scepticism, most likely, because no evidence of a vast publishing conspiracy existed.

Langston Hughes may have presented Du Bois with the most remarkable justification for his change in attitude toward art. Articulating a position that discredited the question of Negro artistic evaluation and its responsibility to society, he dismissed the entire premise of Du Bois' symposium. 'What's the use of saying anything—the true literary artist is going to write about what he chooses anyway regardless of outside opinions. . . . It's the way people look at things, not what they look at, that needs to be changed'.¹³ Hughes' insistence upon artistic independence from propaganda may have provided evidence to justify Du Bois' anxiety with the renaissance: New Negro artists, young and naïve, might willingly contribute to the political demise of the Negro through their anarchical pursuit artistic freedom. Charles Johnson, Alain Locke, and even Du Bois in 1921 had all encouraged artists to be truthful in their representations of all elements of Negro life. Negro artists like Hughes were now passionate about eliminating political constraints from the creative process and working beyond the guiding hands of politically conscious mentors. If the Negro was to continue utilizing art and culture to warrant equal standing in the broader American culture, the responses, collectively, to *The Crisis* symposium might have left Du Bois disenchanted with the apolitical priorities of most white respondents and some Negro writers. Unless, however, the symposium had been designed to elicit the responses he needed to justify denouncing the New Negro Aesthetic and articulating an entirely different approach to art.

By the summer of 1926, Du Bois' symposium inspired a national debate, and numerous critical responses to the state of Negro art appeared in prominent periodicals. Among the most significant were two essays written by New Negro

¹² Jessie Fauset and Walter White. In Gates, Jr. and Jarrett (eds.). 'The New Negro': 197, 194.

¹³ Langston Hughes. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (April 1926): 278.

artists published in consecutive issues of *The Nation*: George S. Schuyler's 'The Negro-Art Hokum', which dismissed the vogue of Negro art as nonsense and implored critics to evaluate Negro artists from a universal perspective without regard to political climate or condition; and Langston Hughes' controversial essay, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', which sent shock waves throughout the African American intellectual community because of its steadfast insistence upon individuality and its audacious defiance of the race-responsibility imposed upon Negro artists by politically-minded mentors. Hughes' essay exposed the racial dilemma facing all New Negro artists who were confronted with conflicting expectations for their art and implored: 'The Negro artist works against an undertow of sharp criticism and misunderstanding from his own group and unintentional bribes from the whites. "O, be respectable, write about nice people, show how good we are," say the Negroes. "Be stereotyped, don't go too far, don't shatter our illusions about you, don't amuse us too seriously. We will pay you," say the whites'.¹⁴ This dilemma, Hughes protested, restricted the Negro artist and offered no opportunity for the unification of artistic and political ideals. Hughes professed that the Negro artist must choose one of two diverging roads when creating art, each wrought with compromise and with its own detrimental impact on the artistic process. One choice appeased the elite of his own community at the expense ignoring a large faction of his immediate society (the lower classes), while the other painted a more in-depth picture of reality at the risk of reinforcing established white stereotypes of the African American.

This predicament of the New Negro artist accounted for almost every possible human reaction to Negro literature except for the one that was most viable to the work itself: The vision, motives, and values of the artist. Hughes felt that ignoring the lower classes in literature was not only a blatant waste of artistic material, but

¹⁴ Langston Hughes. 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain'. *The Nation* 122 (June 23, 1926): 693. This comment validates, to some extent, concerns Du Bois shared about the impact of white influence on Negro authors; however, Hughes contended that the artist must be responsible for rebuffing guidance from both whites and blacks that might lead him/her astray from the artist's vision.

also a bountiful alternative that should not be prohibited from artistic interpretation. As for the creative possibilities represented by the lower classes, Hughes declared:

But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common element, and they are the majority—may the Lord be praised! . . . They live on Seventh Street in Washington or State Street in Chicago and they do not particularly care whether they are like white folks or anyone else. . . . They furnish a wealth of colorful, instinctive material for any artist because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations.¹⁵

Hughes's desire to utilize the lower classes as artistic subjects paralleled the New Negro artists' wish to create art without the duty of uplifting the race. But more importantly, he defended the right to portray any and all aspects of Negro life by bringing attention to the source that motivates political propaganda.

Hughes claimed that for all Negroes 'the word white comes to be a symbol of all the virtues' persuading many people to believe they too want to be white.¹⁶ By not understanding the beauty of Negro life, Hughes deduced that Negroes were ashamed when their artistic images are not presented according to Caucasian standards. Agitprop, for Hughes, induced conformity of expression to meet standards that are both foreign and oppressive by cultural definition. Only through rebellion and contempt for art that functioned exclusively as propaganda can an artist interject his/her right of individual choice into the artistic decision-making process. For Hughes:

An artist must be free to choose what he does certainly but he must also never be afraid to do what he might choose. . . . Let the works of younger Negro artists cause the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

beauty. We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame.¹⁷

Hughes' assertion of literary privilege proved both a clear manifestation of the artistic liberties and entitlement Du Bois had once encouraged as well as a direct warning to him and other conservative intellectuals: New Negro artists would not be intimidated into abiding by the rules of racial propaganda disguised as aesthetics. Historically, Hughes' 1926 essay would come to represent a national announcement of the radical ideology that inspired a new movement of young black writers to create a purer form of artistic expression liberated from political ideology and racial agitprop. Hughes' manifesto provided both a rationale and a catalyst for an unbridled period of artistic creativity, and became a focal point of establishing the Black Aesthetic; one-half of two conflicting manifestos that defined the controversial roles of art and propaganda during the Harlem Renaissance. As New Negro artists exerted greater independence and rallied behind the aesthetics reflected in Hughes' essay, Du Bois responded, and announced a new aesthetic agenda to stem the tide of a Negro Renaissance he feared now held little regard for his authority and saw spiralling recklessly out of control.

In late June, Du Bois addressed the 1926 Annual Meeting of the NAACP in which he proclaimed a new vision for politically-cognizant aesthetics that produced acceptable presentations of Negro life.¹⁸ His speech, published in October as the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The timing of Du Bois' speech is significant. The 17th annual meeting was held June 23-29, 1926. Du Bois' speech was given just days after Hughes' article appeared in *The Nation* and less than a month after Knopf published Carl Van Vechten's, Nigger Heaven, the novel that exploded the controversy over art and propaganda. Du Bois' scathing review of Van Vechten's novel did not appear until October, an intriguing lapse of time, given that Van Vechten had contributed to Du Bois' symposium in March. Du Bois may have been blindsided by Van Vechten's novel; however, as likely, Du Bois had been aware of his book as early as 1925 (Walter White had a close relationship with Van Vechten, who had not kept his Harlem novel a secret). The symposium invitation, the timing of his NAACP speech, and the lengthy delay in reviewing the book may have been a carefully planned sequence meant to strengthen Du Bois' opposition to the dangers of a Black Aesthetic exhibited in Nigger Heaven.

landmark essay, 'Criteria of Negro Art', insisted upon the essential, inter-dependent relationship of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness.

For Du Bois, four things embodied beauty:

The Cathedral at Cologne, a forest in stone, set in light and changing shadow, echoing with sunlight and solemn song; a village in the Veys in West Africa, a little thing of mauve and purple, quiet, lying content and shining in the sun; a black and velvet room where on a throne rests, in old and yellowing marble, the broken curves of the Venus of Milo; a single phrase of music in the Southern South-utter melody, haunting and appealing, suddenly arising out of night and eternity, beneath the moon.¹⁹

His description of beauty was founded upon a distinct reaction to reality: tangible buildings, villages, and rooms that evoke emotion as represented by melody. Although art, Du Bois argued, may indirectly influence perceptions that evoke negative connotations, art must be a portrayal of beauty accurately, with feeling, emotion, and precision. He explained, 'The apostle of Beauty thus becomes the apostle of Truth and Right not by choice but by inner and outer compulsion'.²⁰ Du Bois' inner compulsions of Beauty (the Cologne Cathedral, a West African village, et al) were highly subjective. Nowhere in his speech, in previous or future writings, did Du Bois substantiate how his vision of Beauty should be translated into the creative process or define its components in concrete principles that could be implemented by others. As Darwin Turner noted, 'he based his critical judgment on abstractions which were concrete to him but not necessarily to all other black contemporaries'; therefore, making it difficult to apply his theory to particular works whose younger artists shared their own perceptions of Beauty and Truth that differed dramatically from his own.²¹

¹⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Criteria of Negro Art'. In W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings. (New York: Library of America, 1986), 995.

²⁰ Ibid., 1000.

²¹ Turner, 'W.E.B. Du Bois', 19.

Du Bois argued that propaganda's (outer compulsions) relationship to art was inherent. 'Goodness in all its aspects of justice, honor, and right' was 'the one true method of gaining sympathy and human interest', and the absence of justice in America must implore artists to speak Truth and recognize Justice.²² Du Bois' famous statement 'all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists' has often been analyzed myopically and stigmatized by scholars. Much of Du Bois' speech focused on the meaning of beauty, and its relationship to truth and goodness; however, his speech revealed the subjectivity and ambiguity of what he viewed as the inner compulsion of art; it also revealed that Du Bois believed he understood the one and true purpose of art: 'whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy'.²³ The sanctity of his purpose stood above all others because white publishers shared a commercial incentive to perpetuate stereotypes and racism, while New Negro writers, like Langston Hughes, now rejected the political responsibility to incorporate outer compulsions into art, in order to preserve their self-righteous and self-serving creative integrity. The young writers who ignored his sage advice, he felt, had simply become pawns of a white cultural institution that prioritized profit and appeasement of a racist public. His rejection was based less on principles of aesthetics as much as an objection to the deviant interests he felt dictated the standards of artistic production.

Unlike New Negro artists, Du Bois would not simply dismiss the pragmatic impact of capturing beauty or praise self-expression that sought only to preserve esoteric notions of art. As a political leader, Du Bois conveyed that he was compelled to consider the livelihoods of his constituents and could not completely ignore the pragmatic implications of art. In 'Criteria', Du Bois contended that Negro art must be part of the struggle for freedom. He acknowledged that African Americans expected and wanted the same rights as other citizens, but asked if Negroes should accept the standards and values imposed upon them by White America? Du Bois

²² Du Bois, 'Criteria of Negro Art', 1001.

²³ Ibid.

maintained that what artists produce must be genuine, authentic, and our own, and they must struggle to achieve it. 'We must come to the place where the work of art when it appears is reviewed and acclaimed by our own free and unfettered judgment'.²⁴

Du Bois worried that white critics and publishers manipulated young black artists to reinforce stereotypes by accepting only the sordid portraits of lower class Negro life for acclaim and publication. Where Du Bois once encouraged, actually insisted, that artists incorporate the all-inclusive Truth as the foundation of a Black Aesthetic, he now accused the white literary establishment of conspiring to limit the representation black life as a political tool of oppression. 'Perhaps I am naturally too suspicious. But I will say that there are today a surprising number of white people who are getting great satisfaction out of these younger Negro writers because they think it is going to stop agitation of the Negro question'.²⁵ Du Bois vowed that many artists were, 'weary of the internal struggle along the color line' and 'afraid to fight'; too eager to accept 'the money of philanthropists and the alluring publicity [that] are subtle and deadly bribes' and follow white advice to let Negro art speak for itself.²⁶

Without providing real-life examples to support his claims, Du Bois roused his audience with hypothetical scenarios to substantiate his warnings. He argued that Du Bose Heywood wrote 'Porgy' only because his 'beautiful descriptions of the Black Charleston [South Carolina] underworld' were acceptable to white audiences. Du Bois imagined that Heywood 'cannot do a similar thing for the white people of Charleston, or they would drum him out of town'.²⁷ He invented a scenario where Octavius Roy Cohen was rebutted by editors of the *Saturday Evening Post* when asking for permission to portray 'different colored folk than the monstrosities he

²⁴ Ibid., 1001.

²⁵ Ibid., 998.

²⁶ Ibid., 998.

²⁷ Ibid., 1001. Du Bois' example was ironic, as, in his 1921 essay, he used 'Porgy' as the ideal example of a white author's capacity to capture the authenticity of Negro folk life, a cornerstone of his argument that white artists had every right and ability to portray Negro life effectively.

created'.²⁸ These imaginings supported a fundamental precept of his new aesthetic: White publishers catering to white audiences do not want stories about 'people you know and like and imagine.' 'They want Uncle Toms, Topsyies, good "darkies" and clowns'.²⁹ Du Bois argued that publishers were at the mercy of their commercial interests, driven primarily by white audiences, who 'today demands from its artists, literary and pictorial, racial pre-judgment which deliberately distorts Truth and Justice, as far as the races are concerned, and it will pay for no other'.³⁰

The Negro Renaissance, he declared, was not a sign of aesthetic liberation. The movement was proof of his growing scepticism that white culture was utilizing Negro art as a weapon of corruption and oppression. Du Bois claimed: 'As it is now we are handing everything over to a white jury. If a colored man wants to publish a book, he has got to get a white publisher and a white newspaper to say it is great; and then you and I say so. We must come to a place where the work of art when it appears is reviewed and acclaimed by our own free and unfettered judgment'.³¹ To counter publishers' ploys to perpetuate racism, Du Bois called for a new criteria of art to truthfully and objectively evaluate and represent Negro life. He warned of the mounting influence of white mentors like Carl Van Vechten and white commercial publishing houses and magazines that had begun to undermine the true function of a Black Aesthetic. He perceived the dominant culture devising to maintain its control of Negro art and life, and was compelled to retaliate in self-defence. Thus, his ideological position radically and necessarily evolved from art void of agitprop to a position that 'all Art is propaganda and ever must be'; not to accommodate white criteria and institutions, but, by his measure, to defend the righteousness of Negro beauty and truth against them.

Du Bois' aesthetic values remained relatively consistent throughout the next decade, but his view of the implications of Negro art turned increasingly defeatist and

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 999.

³⁰ Ibid., 1001.

³¹ Ibid.

incredulous. If his earlier, more idealistic views of creating a Black Aesthetic had left him reluctantly aligned with the New Negroes ideologically, by the summer of 1926 his dramatically altered vision of art's practical applications cemented his place in history as chief adversary to writers like Langston Hughes, an aging icon vehemently opposed to unfettered self-expression, throughout the remainder of the 1920s.

Traditional scholarship has frequently considered Du Bois' symposium and writings about art in 1926 as genuine responses to legitimate concerns about artistic decadence and growing white influence, an appropriate aesthetic evolution to combat the exploitation of the lower elements of Negro life. Many have relied solely upon the integrity of Du Bois as an infallible and altruistic source; however, *The Crisis* symposium's true intent seems murky at best, particularly in light of the leading questions and presupposed conflicts of interest regarding aesthetic production Du Bois had accepted as integral to an inter-racial renaissance. Did Du Bois create the forum to secure broader intellectual support for his new point of view? Or, did Du Bois' carefully framed questionnaire, which he designed and distributed to precisely those he wanted to participate, actually seek to confirm Du Bois' suspicions about the sinister motives of whites and prove his point about the necessity of propaganda in art?

These questions become vitally important when examining Du Bois' long-term contributions to creating a Black Aesthetic and the pattern of his intellectual and cultural leadership that emerged over the first quarter of the 20th century. For two decades, from his proposal to Jacob Schiff to create 'an ideal Negro journal' in 1905 and throughout his tenure as editor of *The Crisis*, Du Bois' consistently expressed concern about financing black publications, resisted dependence upon white philanthropy, and worked tirelessly to become economically self-reliant. Du Bois' consistently prioritized economic independence in his editorials to ensure himself the freedom to shape the magazine's agenda autonomously. Until the early 1920s, Du Bois had confronted every financial challenge, every occasion of perceived white

intrusion successfully, always retaining his editorial authority and cultural omnipotence. The rise of the Negro Renaissance, led by Charles S. Johnson and Alain Locke, actively cultivated inter-racial coalitions to serve the artistic and financial interests of Negro artists. They executed a collaborative leadership strategy that Du Bois had resisted and denounced throughout his editorial career. Scholars have consistently accepted Du Bois' premise that white interests corrupted the renaissance as fact without considering his previous history with the NAACP or statements he made about the futility of blacks and whites working together constructively and equitably.³² Du Bois' problematic history with white collaboration, his betrayal by the US War Department and difficulties with the NAACP board who increasingly forced him to bend to its will, predisposed him to distrust.

These misgivings were not shared by those leading the renaissance. Johnson, in fact, persistently preached optimism about the power of art to bridge the racial divide and the necessity to encourage artists to pursue the creative process without restraint. 'Literature', Johnson extolled, 'has always been a great liaison between races, offering up out of the hidden depths of a spiritually aloof race the play of their emotions against life, the undeniably human touch which affirms brotherhood both in likenesses and in differences'.³³ Du Bois had never exhibited the same degree of devotion that Johnson expressed toward cultural mediums as a fruitful approach to

³² For a recent example, see Emily Bernard. 'Renaissance and the Vogue'. In George Hutchinson (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33. Bernard adopted an overview of white contributions heavily influenced by Du Bois: 'White interest in Harlem created the central paradox of the New Negro Movement. White financial support was essential to the success of the Harlem Renaissance, but it also forced restraints on black creative expression'. New Negro writers such as Hughes, Wallace Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay all acknowledged the pressures created by white interests, but they also confirmed that true artists would not and did not compromise their aesthetic values for commercial or political interests.

³³ Charles S. Johnson. 'Editorials: On Writing About Negroes'. *Opportunity* 3 (August 1925): 227-228. Johnson's message also sought to empower writers to write about whatever subject they wished, but to feel secure in telling their own stories: 'There is no contention that Negro writers should not attempt to treat anything but Negro themes; rather that it is important *now* that Negro themes should be treated competently and that Negro writers, knowing them best, should be the ones to do it'. One year later, Du Bois proclaimed unconditional artistic freedom was anathema to racial progress.

securing political and social equality. As a result, *The Crisis* never would compete effectively with *Opportunity* in this arena, but Du Bois' personality and his persistent quest to exert singular leadership prevented him from ceding the ground he had cultivated for almost two decades.

Since 1905, Du Bois had aspired to create a self-determined, self-sustaining media to support his political vision and cultural aesthetics. The greater the acclaim and recognition bestowed upon New Negro artists and the more credit Johnson and Locke received for the renaissance's success, the more suspicious Du Bois became of the relationship between Negro art and the white cultural hegemony that he had believed just five years earlier would not exploit authentic representations of Negro life. Having failed to launch a credible challenge and refusing to endorse Johnson and his efforts, Du Bois exercised the option to attack the credibility of Johnson's aesthetic approach to racial progress. In 'Criteria for Negro Art', Du Bois could only substantiate his suspicions hypothetically, and scholars have overlooked the significance of Du Bois' personal motives for altering his aesthetic values: To openly oppose what he viewed as corrupting white commercial forces required undermining Johnson, Locke, and New Negro artists on principle. Conveniently for Du Bois, they embraced the same ideological and economic forces that threatened the financial independence of *The Crisis*, whose circulation numbers remained stuck in a downward spiral. Attacking their aesthetic beliefs, which had once been his own, now benefited Du Bois economically, politically, and personally.

His disdain for inter-racial partnerships contributed to Du Bois miscalculating the influence that Johnson, Locke, and whites asserted over the most important authors of the Negro renaissance. While Du Bois steadfastly believed that whites could only work with blacks as subordinates, The Alain Locke papers reveal that a balanced relationship existed with key white benefactors, including Paul Kellogg and V.F. Calverton, who were instrumental in the creation and promotion of the *Survey Graphic's* Harlem number and The New Negro. Kellogg and Calverton solicited suggestions from Locke for publicity plans for the journal, and their letters

exchanged in 1924-1925 reveal how the three men collaborated closely to select potential reviewers for the anthology. If anything, his relationship with Calverton revealed the sway Locke held in determining which authors reviewed The New Negro and with which periodicals he hoped Calverton might intercede to ensure a review of his publication.³⁴ Du Bois continued to be sceptical of Locke and Johnson, even though both men retained more control throughout their inter-racial collaborations than Du Bois was willing to allow for. Du Bois, perhaps accustomed to the ‘politics’ of waging inter-racial battles for control of black cultural mediums (NAACP), underestimated the benign motives of Kellogg and Calverton, neither of whom forced Locke to compromise his vision for the publications they supported. Perhaps Du Bois scrutinized white critical involvement because he believed Johnson and Locke benefited too greatly from their collaborations, forcing him to re-orient his aesthetic values as a means to expose and oppose white involvement with Negro art.

This racial myopia also affected how Du Bois underestimated the autonomy and fierce independence of New Negro writers. He readily accused writers of conforming to white expectations by portraying only the seedier elements of Negro life in exchange for pay and their praise—a perception of their work contrasted sharply by their own intentions. Historians have frequently accepted the validity of Du Bois’ critical interpretation as an accurate reflection of consequences that justified why the artistic ‘intentions’ of New Negro authors had been compromised by their commercial ambitions and desires to appease white audiences.

Most writers wanted to explode stereotypes not profit from them. Artists’ may have inadvertently produced material that satisfied a white longing for the primitive; however, history shows that some key writers had no aspirations to appease a white

³⁴ See Letters exchanged between V.F. Calverton and Alain Locke between October-November 1925. ALP/M-SC, Box 19, Folder 21. A rich body of material exists in this fold that warrants deeper exploration of their complicated relationship, which reveals a carefully executed plan for reviewing The New Negro in a wide-range of journals and periodicals that would reach white intellectuals unaccustomed to reading about Negro life. Interestingly, their relationship ended abruptly in 1929, when Locke reviewed Calverton’s, Anthology of American Negro Literature, unfavorably.

audience, achieve commercial success, nor were they keen to embrace the heavy-handed guidance of well-meaning, politically-conscious African American mentors.³⁵ Writing to Locke in the fall of the 1927, Zora Neale Hurston suggested openly that what artists needed most was a forum to create and publish independent of black politics:

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 house organ 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. Mr. Johnson [Charles] is an excellent man and full of zeal but he has a great deal on his hands. The same is true of Dr. Du Bois. Don't you think too that it is not good that there should only be two outlets for Negro fire?³⁶

At the pinnacle of the Harlem Renaissance, New Negro writers had rebelled against the limitations of representing only those aspects of Negro life deemed appropriate by intellectuals like Du Bois for portrayal in art. Their discontent with conservatives who sought vindication of African Americans through cultural achievements led

³⁵ Claude McKay's contentious relationship with Alain Locke is an excellent example of how Du Bois misinterpreted and overestimated Locke's influence upon the most talented African American writers of the 1920s. McKay's contentious relationship with the Dean of the Negro Renaissance deteriorated over disagreements about editing/selecting McKay's poetry for anthologies. McKay biographer Wayne Cooper conveyed: 'McKay had originally sent "Mulatto" to Alain Locke for inclusion in his special Harlem edition of the Survey Graphic, which appeared in 1924, but Locke had declined because of its bitterly radical tone. This infuriated McKay, and he had hastened to condemn Locke for his timidity'. See Wayne F. Cooper. Rebel Sojourner of the Harlem Renaissance. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press), 225. A letter from McKay to Locke written dated 7 October 1924 articulated the disdain for he held for Locke, a feeling held by many New Negro writers. 'Your attitude is that of Booker T. Washington's in social reform Roscoe C. Bruce in politics and William Stanley Braithwaite in literature. It's a playing safe attitude—the ultimate reward of which are dry husks and ashes! . . . There are many white people who are longing and hoping for Negroes to show they have guts. I will show you by getting a white journal to take Mulatto. . . . No wonder the Negro movement is in such a bad way. No wonder Garvey remains strong despite his glaring defects. When Negro intellectuals like you take such a weak line. . . . Send me back all the things—and I do not care to be mentioned at all . . . in the special Negro number of the Survey. I am not seeking mere notoriety and publicity. Principles mean something to my life'. See ALP/M-SC, 164/67/9. Letters exchanged between April-June 1927 also reveal a relationship permanently fractured due to Locke's heavy-handed editing of McKay's poem 'The White House', which appeared, without his permission, as 'White Houses' in The New Negro.

³⁶ Letter from Zora Neale Hurston to Alain Locke. 11 October 1927. ALP/M-SC, 164/38/28.

young artists like Wallace Thurman and Claude McKay to prioritize individual authenticity over larger, political objectives. New Negro artists, especially Thurman, reacted vehemently against the conservative misconceptions that racial equality could be achieved through creating art that betrayed the integrity of artistic freedom. The writings of New Negroes ‘reflected an open hostility to patronizing attitudes from whites and blacks from the old guard’ in their unwillingness to ‘recoil from cultural assimilation’ and lay claim to the individual’s and community’s right for self-definition.³⁷ Du Bois witnessed the anarchy of the movement spiralling out of control and responded.

Historians have afforded Du Bois too much credit for the objectivity of his analysis and other writers too little credit for maintaining their artistic and aesthetic integrity in the face of cultural and commercial pressure. Their ideological contributions to and visions for a radical Black Aesthetic have often been historicized as naïve and ill-conceived, in part, because Du Bois’ iconic and irreproachable reputation has overshadowed alternative interpretations of the period. Scholarship centred upon his suspicions about the deleterious influence of whites and those Negro intellectuals who were compromising racial advancement for personal profit, thus often diminishing the attention given to the aspirations and actual achievements of New Negro artists and their advocates.

Daylanne English has attributed this critical bias to scholars’ willingness to accept the ‘self-conscious (albeit ambivalent) assessment of the Harlem Renaissance’, namely ‘interpretations, chronologies, and genealogies of the movement’, from a ‘handful of the editors and arbiters. . . especially W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Langston Hughes.’³⁸ The reliance on vested individuals to verify ‘truths’ has made renaissance historiography not only Harlem-centric but also overly dependent upon the credibility and trustworthiness of those who participated in the movement. Du

³⁷ Renoir W. Gaither. ‘The Moment of Revision: A Reappraisal of Wallace Thurman’s Aesthetics in *The Blacker the Berry* and *Infants of Spring*’. *CLA Journal* 37 (September 1993): 84.

³⁸ Daylanne K. English. ‘Selecting the Harlem Renaissance’. *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Summer 1999): 808.

Bois' narrative, based on his persuasive, eyewitness testimony, interpreted the renaissance as decadent, corrupted by whites who coerced stereotypical portrayals of Negro life, and, overall, an abject failure; a portrait that conveniently situated him and his prophecies as 'correct'.

Du Bois cemented this account in a 1933 essay, 'The Negro College', that revealed how utterly pessimistic he had become about the Negro Renaissance. Excerpted from a speech given at Fisk University's annual alumni reunion, Du Bois lamented:

Why was it that the Renaissance of literature which began among Negroes ten years ago, has never taken real and lasting root? It was because it was a transplanted and exotic thing. It was a literature written for the benefit of white people and at the behest of white readers, and started out primarily from the white point of view. It never had a real Negro constituency, and it did not grow out of the inmost heart and frank experience of Negroes.³⁹

Du Bois never recanted or amended this ultimatum on the period, and wrote sparingly over the next thirty years about his role in shaping the Black Aesthetic. This view, however, dominated the early and most influential histories of the period written by Cruse, Huggins, and Lewis. While historians have hesitated to incorporate the conflicting perspectives of New Negro authors themselves, Charles S. Johnson's more optimistic assessment of the period has been often overshadowed by Du Bois' translations. Speaking in 1955 at a Howard University conference assessing the history of the Negro Renaissance, Johnson surmised the motivating spirit quite differently: 'It was a period, not only of the quivering search for freedom but of a cultural, if not a social and racial emancipation. It was unabashedly self-conscious and race-conscious. But it was race-consciousness with an extraordinary facet in that it had virtues that could be incorporated into the cultural bloodstream of

³⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois. 'The Negro College'. *The Crisis* 40 (August 1933): 176. For an excellent analysis of Du Bois' address see also Leonard Harris. 'The Great Debate: W.E.B. Du Bois vs. Alain Locke on the Aesthetic'. *Philosophia Africana* 7 (March 2004): 21-22.

the nation'.⁴⁰ And unlike Du Bois, who believed artists and their cultural productions had been compromised by racism and commerce, Johnson insisted that 'these Negro writers were less self-conscious and less interested in proving that they were just like white people; in their excursions into the field of letters and art, they seemed to care less about what white people thought, or were likely to think, than about themselves and what they had to say'.⁴¹ Recent scholarship, particularly literary scholars working as cultural historians, have been more welcoming of Johnson's evaluation of racial influence, yet no work has yet to reconsider how we should think about the significance and complicated influence of Du Bois upon the realities and historical interpretations of the Negro Renaissance.

Currently, Harlem-centric historiography remains over-reliant on the interpretations of the 'principal players' and unconcerned about misrepresenting the catalysts and the outcomes (failures) of the aesthetic and intellectual debates that define the period. Its failure to acknowledge the essential and positive impact of Du Bois' influence upon the development of an indigenous aesthetic signifies an analytic flaw that has unnecessarily simplified his relationship with New Negro artists and stereotyped his evolving views on the Black Aesthetic. By perceiving the Harlem Renaissance outside the dominant 'failure' interpretation and beyond the narrow geographical perimeters of a romanticized Harlem, one may more accurately account for the vital contributions Du Bois made to an intellectual dialogue that inspired artists to articulate a black aesthetic. Few scholars have explored his role as an aesthetic trailblazer, but some have acknowledged that the intellectual history of the movement began much earlier than its famous zenith. As Turner noted: 'What is surprising then is not the concept of a Black Aesthetic in literature but that, even before the Harlem "Renaissance", it was articulated distinctly by W. E. B. Du Bois, who has been identified disparagingly with the conservative literary practices of The

⁴⁰ Charles S. Johnson. 'The Negro Renaissance and Its Significance'. In Rayford W. Logan, et al., eds. *The New Negro Thirty Years Afterward*. (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1955), 84.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

Genteel Tradition and with the efforts of Negroes to become assimilated by separating themselves from the folk culture'.⁴²

Du Bois could not then and cannot now be associated singularly with the traditions and principles of either conservative or New Negro ideology. The pervasive generalizations that regard Du Bois only as an antagonist have also forced a misrepresentation of both the timing of his ideological evolution and the potential catalysts that sparked his shift in aesthetic values. His 1921 essay, 'Negro Art, has often been viewed as an intellectual outlier in order to preserve the fallacy that Du Bois consistently distrusted white involvement in Negro art and always demanded aristocratic representations of African American life. That Du Bois reiterated the principles of his 1921 aesthetic manifesto as late as 1925 proved his transformation had occurred abruptly and after four years of supporting unfettered artistic freedom; a contrast to the dominant historical narrative of his constant and absolute resistance of New Negro aesthetics.

Du Bois celebrated the 'common' Negro and had embraced 'the other 90 per cent' he had previously disregarded after his 1918 editorial missteps. His celebration of the common Negro life may well have been a pragmatic spiritual awakening that proved convenient and opportunistic, both in re-establishing public trust during the war and countering the popular 'black pride' message of Garvey; however, he first insisted that artists create independent of the constraints of racial politics (perhaps because Garvey always demanded art serve as propaganda⁴³) and only renounced that point of view once others embraced his vision and implemented his ideas to critical and commercial acclaim.⁴⁴ Whether or not Du Bois' aesthetic beliefs were primarily

⁴² Turner, 'W.E.B. Du Bois', 10.

⁴³ Du Bois' 1921 essay set forth an alternative aesthetic agenda that both co-opted and contrasted Garvey's views. His 1926 review of *The New Negro* and essay 'Criteria of Negro Art' recalibrated his ideology that mimicked a Garvey's belief about the role of propaganda in art in order to differentiate himself from Locke. His intellectual evolution is both ironic and representative of his willingness to change his beliefs to counter would-be rivals, even if it meant embracing the values of a former foe that had become less of a threat.

⁴⁴ Locke's personal correspondences revealed concerns about the renaissance's insistence on 'art for art's sake' that Du Bois would have shared. Locke feared the anarchy of New Negro writers working

constructed to combat rivals is debatable. What is certain is that no one more prominent or more influential articulated and demanded the implementation of a Black Aesthetic. The great irony is that his influence is always acknowledged through his resistance to the very ideas he was instrumental in articulating.

Scholars who view the renaissance as a failure generally take little account of the personal rivalries that lend clearer understanding of what Du Bois attempted to achieve and how challenges from Garvey, Johnson, Locke, and young New Negro writers affected his intellectual positions on art and his aspirations to control and lead a cultural renaissance. Du Bois' anxiety concerning white influence as the detriment of the New Negro Renaissance became a cornerstone of his 'failure' thesis articulated in 1933, and has echoed as a dominant theme throughout 70 years of historical scholarship. His influence on African American historiography remains vast, even though his interpretation of the Negro Renaissance as a failure has long suppressed a critical interpretation of the legitimate and productive inter-racial collaboration that took place.

Du Bois has been afforded too much credit for his 'criticisms' of New Negro aesthetics and accusations of white exploitation as valid. Reacting against losing control of the renaissance, his claims regarding the corruption of Negro art were unsubstantiated, and driven, in part, by his efforts to undermine the success of *Opportunity* and Alain Locke. Du Bois' anxiety over the decline of his magazine and his increasing irrelevance in the Renaissance compelled him to mount an opposition against New Negro writers who created art and literature inspired by his aesthetics. By condemning their aesthetic and validating their failure, he also,

beyond his influence, and as his authority and reputation among artists waned in the late 1920s, Locke persisted in his efforts to control significant literary figures like McKay and Hughes, alienating them in the process. Aesthetically and commercially, prominent writers wanted to move beyond their 'midwives', diminishing or even eliminating the aesthetic/intellectual/political black mentor from their lives. Locke and Du Bois shared a similar evolution towards irrelevance among artists that, because of the prevailing history that casts them as opposites, has, to this point, been unexamined. See the Alain Locke Papers, MS-C, particularly correspondences with Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Charlotte Osgood Mason (Boxes 38 and 67-72).

inadvertently, undermined how history has evaluated his vital ideological contributions to the Black Aesthetic in the 1920s. Ironically, historiography has given Du Bois little or no credit for defining the aesthetic and laying the intellectual foundation upon which Locke and Johnson built.

As an agent of history, Du Bois assessed much of what transpired during the New Negro Renaissance incompletely and interpreted events with an eye to how they concerned him, individually; making him an unreliable source for literary historians. Ironically, his misinterpretations have profoundly affected why scholars have overlooked his actual achievements and influence upon the creation of an authentic and indigenous aesthetic. Scholars may believe it contradictory to credit Du Bois for encouraging an aesthetic that, at its pinnacle, he vehemently denounced; however, African American artists have reaped the benefits of a vanguard New Negro aesthetic for nearly 90 years. The time has arrived to acknowledge Du Bois may have been wrong about what these artists actually achieved during the 1920s, and likewise give Du Bois the credit for its inspiration he so richly deserves.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Manuscript Collections

William Stanley Beaumont Braithwaite Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois. Special Collections, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Aaron Douglass Papers. Manuscripts. Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Langston Hughes Papers. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Alfred A. Knopf Papers. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

David Levering Lewis/Voices from the Renaissance Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Alain Locke Papers. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Correspondences of Claude McKay. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

George Schuyler Family Papers. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Joel Spingarn Collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

Joel E. Spingarn Papers. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Joel E. Spingarn Papers. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Joel and Amy Spingarn Collection. Schomburg Research Center. New York Public Library.

Wallace Thurman Collection. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Carl Van Vechten Collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

Walter White Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

W.P.A. Writers Program Collection. Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Oswald G. Villard Papers (MS Am 1323). Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Published Microfilm Collections

Federal Surveillance of Afro-Americans (1917-1925): The First World War, The Red Scare, and the Garvey Movement. Theodore Kornweibel, Jr. (ed.). Frederick, Md: University Publications of America, 1986.

Papers of the NAACP. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, Inc., 1982.

The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois. New York: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1981.

Published Primary Sources

Doren, Carl Van. 'The Younger Generation of Negro Writers' *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): 144.

Du Bois, W.E.B.. 'Books'. *The Crisis* 33 (January 1927): 128.

---. 'Criteria of Negro Art'. W.E.B. DuBois: Writings. New York: Library of America, 1986, 993-1001.

---. 'Criteria of Negro Art'. *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290-297. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from

The Crisis, Volume 2, 1926-1934. Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983.

---. *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil.* State College, PA: Pennsylvania State Electronic Series Classic Publication, 2007.

---. 'Documents of the War'. *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 16-21. In Herbert Aptheker's (ed.). *Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from The Crisis, Volume 1, 1911-1925.* Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983.

---. *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept.* New York: Schocken Books, 1990.

---. Editorial. 'A Philosophy in Time of War'. *The Crisis* 16 (August 1918): 164-165.

---. 'An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War'. *The Crisis* 18 (June 1919): 63-87.

---. Editorial. 'Close Ranks'. *The Crisis* 16 (July 1918): 111.

---. 'Documents of the War'. *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 16-21.

---. Editorial. 'Officers'. *The Crisis* 14 (June 1917): 60-61.

---. Editorial. 'Our Special Grievances'. *The Crisis* 16 (September 1918): 216-217.

---. Editorial. 'The Battle of Europe'. *The Crisis* 12 (September 1916): 216-217.

---. 'Editorial'. *The Crisis* 5 (January 1913): 130.

---. 'Editorial'. *The Crisis* 9 (February 1915): 184.

---. 'Editorial'. *The Crisis* 30 (May 1925): 9.

---. Editorial. 'The Perpetual Dilemma'. *The Crisis* 13 (April 1917): 270-271.

---. Editorial. 'World War and the Color Line.' *The Crisis* 9 (November 1914): 28-30.

---. Editorial. 'Art for Nothing'. *The Crisis* 24 (May 1922): 7-8.

---. 'Editorial. '*The Crisis*'. *The Crisis* 1 (November 1910): 10.

- . 'Editorial. *The Crisis* and the NAACP'. *The Crisis* 11 (November 1915): 27.
 - . Editorial. 'The Second Birthday'. *The Crisis* 5 (November 1912): 27-28.
 - . Editorial. 'Writers'. *The Crisis* 1 (April 1911): 21.
 - . 'Negro Art'. *The Crisis* 22 (June 1921): 55-56.
 - . 'Negro Writers'. *The Crisis* 19 (April 1920): 299.
 - . 'Opinion'. *The Crisis* 18 (September 1919): 235.
 - . 'Opinion: Our Success and Failure'. *The Crisis* 18 (July 1919): 127-130.
 - . 'Opinion: Returning Soldiers'. *The Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 13-14.
 - . 'Opinion: The New Crisis'. *The Crisis* 30 (May 1925): 7.
 - . 'Opinions of W.E.B Du Bois'. *The Crisis* 17 (December 1918): 59.
 - . 'Our Bookshelf'. *The Crisis* 31 (January 1926): 140.
 - . 'The Browsing Reader'. *The Crisis* 35 (June 1928): 202.
 - . 'The Class Struggle'. *The Crisis* 22 (June 1921): 55-56.
 - . 'The Looking Glass'. *The Crisis* 12 (June 1916): 69.
 - . 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed, A Symposium'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 278.
 - . 'The Negro in Art and Literature'. *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 49 (September 1913): 233.
 - . 'The Negro College'. *The Crisis* 40 (August 1933): 176-178.
 - . 'The Talented Tenth'. In W.E.B. Du Bois, *Writings*. New York: The Library of American, 1986.
 - . 'Truth and Beauty'. *The Crisis* 25 (November 1922): 8.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. and Alain Locke. 'The Younger Literary Movement'. *The Crisis* 27 (February 1924): 162.

Farrar, John. 'A Challenge to the Negro'. Carl Van Vechten Collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

Heyward, Du Bose. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 220.

Hughes, Langston. 'Negro Artists and ____: Claude McKay'. Correspondences of Claude McKay. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection/Collection of American Literature: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

---. The Big Sea. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1986.

---. 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain'. *The Nation* 122 (23 June 23 1926): 691-695.

---. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (April 1926): 278.

Hurston, Zora Neale. 'You Don't Know Us Negroes'. Lawrence Spivak Papers, Container 37. United States Library of Congress Manuscripts Division.

Johnson, Charles S. 'Editorial: An Opportunity for Negro Writers'. *Opportunity* 2 (September 1924): 258.

---. 'Editorials: On Writing About Negroes'. *Opportunity* 3 (August 1925): 227-228.

---. 'Editorials: Out of the Shadow'. *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 131.

---. 'Editorials: The Contest'. *Opportunity* 3 (May 1925): 131.

---. 'Editorials: The New Generation'. *Opportunity* 2 (March 1924): 68.

---. 'The Debut of the Younger School of Negro Writers'. *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): 143.

---. 'The Negro Renaissance and Its Significance'. In Rayford W. Logan, et al., eds. The New Negro Thirty Years Afterward. Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1955: 80-88.

Johnson, James Weldon. Along This Way. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Jordan, William. 'The Damnable Dilemma: African-American Accommodation and Protest in World War I'. *Journal of American History* 81 (March 1995): 1562-1583.

Mencken, H. L. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 220.

Ovington, Mary White. 'The State of *The Crisis*'. 12 May 1924. The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois. Special Collections, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Owen, Chandler and A. Phillip Randolph. 'Editorial'. *The Messenger* 1 (November 1917): 5.

Scarborough, Dorothy. 'From Cotton Field and Levee To the Streets of Harlem'. *The New York Times Book Review* (December 20, 1925): 20.

Schuyler, George. 'The Negro-Art Hokum'. *The Nation* 122 (June 16, 1926): 663.

Seligmann, Herbert L. 'Saturday Book Review: Achievements of the Negro: As a Writer, Artist and Maker of Song'. *The New York Sun* (26 December 1925).

Van Vechten, Carl. 'The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed'. *The Crisis* 31 (March 1926): 219-220.

---. 'Uncle Tom's Mansion'. *The New York Herald Tribune Books* (December 20, 1925): Section VI, 5.

Secondary Sources:

Books and Articles in Books

Anderson, Jervis. This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1982.

Aptheker, Herbert, (ed.). Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois. White Plains, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986.

Baker, Jr., Houston A. Afro-American Poetics: Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

---. Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Balshaw, Maria. Looking for Harlem: Urban Aesthetics in African American Literature. London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000.

Banks, William. Beloved Harlem: A Literary Tribute to Black America's Most Famous Neighborhood: From the Classics to Contemporary. New York: Harlem Moon/Broadway Books, 2005.

Banner, Jr., James M., (ed.). A Century of American Historiography. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010.

Barrett, John E. Harlem in Review: Critical Reactions to Black American Writers, 1917-1939. London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1992.

Barrett, Lindon. Blackness and Value: Seeing Double: Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Bascom, Lionel C., (ed.). A Renaissance in Harlem: Lost Voices of an American Community. New York: Avon Books, 1999.

Bassett, John E. Harlem In Review: Critical Reactions to Black American Writers, 1917-1939. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press; London; Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 1992.

Bernard, Emily, (ed.). Remember Me to Harlem: the Letters of Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten, 1925-1964. New York: Vintage, 2002.

---. 'Renaissance and the Vogue'. In George Hutchinson (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Bigsby, Christopher, (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Blackshire-Belay, Carol Aisha, (eds.). Language and Literature in the African American Imagination. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992.

Bone, Robert A. The Negro Novel in America. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958.

Brennan, Timothy. Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Broderick, Francis L. W.E.B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959.

Brown, Sterling A. 'The Negro Author and His Publisher'. In Cary D. Wintz (ed.). Remembering the Harlem Renaissance (7 Vols.). New York: Garland, 1996.

---. 'The New Negro in Literature (1925-1955)'. In Mark A. Sanders, (ed.). A Son's Return: Selected Essays of Sterling A. Brown. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996.

---. 'Our Literary Audience'. In Angelyn Mitchell (ed.). Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Carroll, Anne Elizabeth. Word, Image, and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Chambers, Clarke. Paul U. Kellogg and The Survey: Voices for Social Welfare and Social Justice. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.

Clarke, John Henrik, (ed.). Harlem, USA. Brooklyn: A&B Publishers Group, 1998.

Colebrook, Claire. New Literary Histories: New Historicism and Contemporary Criticism. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997.

Coleman, Leon. Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance: A Critical Assessment. New York: Garland, 1998.

---. 'Carl Van Vechten Presents the New Negro'. In Victor A. Kramer (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. New York: AMS Press, 1987.

Cronon, Edmund David. Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955.

Cruse, Harold. The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual. New York: New York Review; York: Signature Books Services, 2005, 1967.

Davis, Thadieous M. 'Foreword'. In There Is Confusion, ed. Jessie Fauset. Northeastern University Press, 1989.

Dawahare, Anthony. Nationalism, Marxism, and African American literature Between the Wars: New Pandora's Nox. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2003.

De Jongh, James. Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- Devine, Philip E. Human Diversity and The Culture Wars: A Philosophical Perspective on Contemporary Cultural Conflict. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 'An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War'. *The Crisis* 18 (June 1919): 63-87. In Herbert Aptheker (ed.). Writings in Periodicals Edited by W.E.B Du Bois: Selections from *The Crisis*, Volume 1, 1911-1925. Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1983.
- Edwards, Tim, (ed.). Cultural Theory: Classical and Contemporary Positions. London: Sage Publications, 2007.
- Ellis, Mark. Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government During World War I. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2001.
- Fabre, Geneviève and Feith, Michel. Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Fabre, Geneviève and O'Meally, Robert, (eds.). History and Memory in African-American Culture. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Farebrother, Rachel. The Collage Aesthetic in the Harlem Renaissance. Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009.
- Favor, J. Martin. Authentic Blackness: The Folk in The New Negro Renaissance. Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Feagin, Joe. 'Introduction'. In Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003.
- Franklin, John Hope and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.
- Gabbin, Joanne V. Sterling A. Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1994.
- Gallagher, Catherine and Greenblatt, Stephen. Practicing New Historicism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Gates, Jr., Henry Louis. Afro-American Literary Studies in the 1990's. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- . Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Gates, Jr., Henry Louis and Jarrett, Gene Andrew, (eds.). The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Gilpin, Patrick J. 'Charles S. Johnson: Entrepreneur of the Harlem Renaissance'. In Arna Bontemps (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Remembered. New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1972.

Goeser, Caroline. Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006.

Graff, Gerald. Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education. New York; London: Norton, 1992.

Grant, Colin. Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn. Or Does It Explode? Black Harlem in the Great Depression. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hakutani, Yoshinobu and Robert Butler, (eds.). The City in African American Literature. Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1995.

Hall, Donald E. Literary and Cultural Theory: From Basic Principles to Advanced Applications. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Harlan, Louis R. The Negro in American History. Washington: American Historical Association, 1965.

Harris, Leonard, (ed.). The Critical Pragmatism of Alain Locke: A Reader on Value Theory, Aesthetics, Community, Culture, Race, and Education. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Harris, Leonard and Molesworth, Charles. Alain L. Locke: The Biography of a Philosopher. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Helbling, Mark Irving. The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many. Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Huggins, Nathan. Harlem Renaissance. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

- Hughes, Langston. 'Harlem Literati in the Twenties'. In Cary D. Wintz, (ed.). Remembering the Harlem Renaissance. (7 Vols.). New York: Garland, 1996.
- Hutchinson, George. The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997.
- , (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Jackson, John L., Jr. Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Johnson, Abby Arthur and Ronald Maberry Johnson. Propaganda and Aesthetics: The Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.
- Johnson, Eloise E. Rediscovering the Harlem Renaissance: The Politics of Exclusion. New York: Garland, 1997.
- Johnson, James Weldon. Black Manhattan. New York: De Capo, 1991.
- Jordan, William. Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Kellner, Bruce. Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.
- , (ed.). Letters of Carl Van Vechten. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- . "Refined Racism": White Patronage in the Harlem Renaissance'. In Victor A. Kramer, (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. New York: AMS Press, 1987.
- Kellogg, Charles F. NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967.
- Kornweibel, Theodore. Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2002.
- Kramer, Victor A., (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. New York: AMS Press, 1987.
- Lamothe, Daphne Mary. Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

- Lentz-Smith, Adriane. Freedom Struggles: African Americans & World War I. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Lewis, David Levering. W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1993.
- . W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000.
- . When Harlem Was in Vogue. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Locke, Alain L., (ed.). The New Negro. New York: Touchstone Books, 1997.
- Marable, Manning. W.E.B. DuBois: Black Radical Democrat. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- Marks, Carole and Diana Edkins. The Power of Pride: Stylemakers and Rulebreakers of the Harlem Renaissance. New York: Crown, 1999.
- McHenry, Elizabeth. Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- McKay, Claude. Harlem: Negro Metropolis. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1940.
- Mitchell, Angelyn, (ed.). Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Molho, Anthony and Wood, Gordon S. Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Moore, Jacqueline M. Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation's Capital, 1880-1920. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999.
- Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. Afrotopia: The Roots of African American Popular History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Napier, Winston. African American Literary Theory: A Reader. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Nash, Gary B., Crabtree, Charlotte, and Dunn, Ross E. (eds.). History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Nies, Betsy. Racial Ideology in the Literature of Popular Culture of the 1920's. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Noble, David W. Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Ogbar, Jeffrey Ogbonna Green. The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Osofsky, Gilbert. Harlem, the Making of a Ghetto: Negro New York, 1890-1930. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1996.

Patton, Venetria K. and Maureen Honey, (eds.). Double-Take: A Revisionist Harlem Renaissance Anthology. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Perry, Margaret. Silence to the Drums: A Survey of the Literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976.

Pfitzer, Gregory M. Popular History and the Literary Marketplace, 1840-1920. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008.

Quarles, Benjamin. Black Mosaic: Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Rampersad, Arnold. The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

---. 'Introduction'. In The New Negro, ed. Alain Locke. New York: Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, Inc. 1997.

Reed, Jr., Adolph. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Colour Line. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Scruggs, Charles. The Sage in Harlem: H.L. Mencken and the Black Writers of the 1920s. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984.

Singh, Amritjit. 'Black-White Symbiosis: Another Look at the Literary History of the 1920s'. In Victor A. Kramer (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. New York: AMS Press, 1987.

Singh, Amritjit, William S. Shiver, and Stanley Brodwin, (eds.). The Harlem Renaissance: Revaluations. New York: Garland, 1989.

Spiller, Robert E., et al (eds). Literary History of the United States: Volume I. New York: Macmillan, 1953.

Sullivan, Patricia. Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement. New York: New Press (Distributed by Perseus Distribution), 2009.

Sylvander, Carolyn W. Jessie Redmond Fauset, Black American Writer. Troy, New York: Whitston Press, 1981.

Taylor, Monique M. Harlem Between Heaven and Hell. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Tolson, Melvin B. The Harlem Group of Negro Writers. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001.

Turner, Darwin T. 'W. E. B. DuBois and the Theory of a Black Aesthetic'. In Victor A. Kramer (ed.). The Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined. New York: AMS Press, 1987.

Tyrrell, Ian R. Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Van Notten-Krepel, Elenore. Wallace Thurman's Harlem Renaissance. Leiden: E.M.B.F van Notten-Krepel, 1994.

Veeser, H. Aram, (ed.). The New Historicism. London: Routledge, 1989.

---. The New Historicism Reader. London: Routledge, 1994.

Vogel, Todd. The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Washington, Robert E. The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt: A Sociology of Literature Perspective. Lanham, MD; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Watson, Steven. The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture, 1920-1930. New York: Pantheon Books, 1995.

Wayne, Cooper. Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987.

- Weiss, Nancy J. The National Urban League: 1910-1940. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Whalan, Mark. The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.
- Wilkerson, Carmiele, Y., and Shamoan Zamir. 'Du Bois and the "New Negro"'. In Shamoan Zamir (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Williams, Chad. Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Wilson, Sondra K. The Messenger Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from The Messenger Magazine. New York: Modern Library, 2000.
- Wilson, Sondra K. The Crisis Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the N.A.A.C.P.'s Crisis Magazine. New York: Modern Library, 1999.
- Wintz, Cary D., (ed.). Remembering the Harlem Renaissance. (7 Vols.), New York: Garland, 1996.
- Wolters, Raymond. Du Bois and His Rivals. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.
- Zimmerman, Jonathan. Whose America?: Culture Wars in the Public Schools. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Articles**
- Austin, Addell P. 'The *Opportunity* and *Crisis* Literary Contests, 1924-27'. *CLA Journal* 32 (December 1988): 235-246.
- Bamikunle, Aderemi. 'The Harlem Renaissance and White Critical Tradition'. *CLA Journal* 29 (September 1985): 33-51.
- Berg, Allison. 'The New "New Negro"'. *College Literature* 25 (Fall 1998): 172-180.
- Bernard, Emily. 'Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity'. *Modernism/modernity* 16 (2009): 446-448.
- Bremer, Sidney. 'Home in Harlem, New York: Lessons from the Harlem Renaissance Writers'. *PMLA* 105 (January 1990): 47-56.

Briggs, Gabriel A. 'The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938' (review). *Callaloo* 32 (2008): 322-325.

Brown, Stephanie. 'Image and the New Negro: Representation and Identity in the Harlem Renaissance' (review). *Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 16 (2006): 119-121.

Calo, Mary Ann. 'African American Art and Critical Discourse Between World Wars'. *American Quarterly* 51 (1999): 580-621.

Chinitz, David. 'The New Harlem Renaissance Studies'. *Modernism/modernity* 13 (April 2006): 375-382.

Churchill, Suzanne W., et al. 'Youth Culture in *The Crisis* and *Fire!!*'. *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 1 (2010): 64-99.

Daniels, Douglas H. 'Review: Untitled'. *The Journal of American History* 68 (March 1982): 967.

Davis, Allison. 'Our Negro "Intellectuals"'. *The New Crisis* 107 (July 2000): 41.

Davis, Charles T. 'Review: Untitled'. *American Literature* 45 (March 1973): 138-139.

Davis, David A. 'A Freedom Bought with Blood: African American War Literature from the Civil War to World War II, and The Great War the Culture of the New Negro' (review). *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 34 (2009): 234-237.

Early, Gerald. 'The New Negro Era and the Great African American Transformation'. *American Studies* 49 (2008): 9-21.

---. 'Three Notes Toward a Cultural Definition of the Harlem Renaissance'. *Callaloo* 14 (Winter 1991): 136-149.

Edwards, Erica R. 'Recapitulating the Yam: The Promise of African-American Literary Studies at History's End: A Response to Frances Smith Foster'. *American Literary History* 22 (Summer 2010): 381-389.

Ellis, Mark. "'Closing Ranks" and "Seeking Honors": W. E. B. Du Bois in World War I," *Journal of American History* 79(1992): 96-124.

---. 'W.E.B. Du Bois and the Formation of Black Opinion in World War I: A Commentary on "The Damnable Dilemma"'. *Journal of American History* 81 (1995): 1584-1590.

- English, Daylanne K. 'Selecting the Harlem Renaissance'. *Critical Inquiry* 25 (Summer 1999): 807-821.
- Fitchue, M. Anthony. 'Locke and Du Bois: Two Major Black Voices Muzzled by Philanthropic Organizations'. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 14 (Winter 1996-1997): 111-116.
- Formation of Alain Locke's Social Philosophy. *The Massachusetts Review* 39 (Spring 1998): 93-112.
- Gaines, Kevin Kelly. 'Race at the End of the "American Century"'. *Radical History Review* 87 (Fall 2003): 207-225.
- Gaither, Renoir W. 'The Moment of Revision: A Reappraisal of Wallace Thurman's Aesthetics in *The Blacker the Berry* and *Infants of Spring*'. *CLA Journal* 37.1, (September 1993): 81-93.
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. 'Harlem on Our Minds'. *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Autumn 1997): 1-12.
- . 'The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black'. *Representations* 24 (Autumn 1988): 129-155.
- Goffman, Ethan. 'Tangled Roots: History, Theory, and African American Studies'. *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (Winter 2000): 1008-1016.
- Grant, Nathan. 'Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture between the Wars' (review). *Modern Fiction Studies* 55 (Summer 2009): 394-397.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 'Racial Memory and Literary History'. *PMLA* 'Special Topic: Globalizing Literary Studies' 16 (January, 2001): 48-63.
- . 'What is the History of Literature?' *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring 1997): 460-481.
- Harris, Leonard. 'The Great Debate: W.E.B. Du Bois vs. Alain Locke on the Aesthetic'. *Philosophia Africana* 7 (March 2004): 15-39.
- Hart, Robert C. 'Black-White Literary Relations in the Harlem Renaissance'. *American Literature* 44 (January 1973): 612-628.
- Helbling, Mark. 'Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance'. *Negro American Literature Forum* 10 (Summer 1976): 39-47.

- . 'Review: Untitled'. *American Quarterly* 24 (Aug 1972): 291.
- Herring, Terrell Scott. 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Manor: *Infants of the Spring* and the Conundrum of Publicity'. *African American Review* 35 (2001): 581-597.
- Hutchinson, George. 'Jean Toomer and the "New Negroes" of Washington'. *American Literature* 63 (December 1991): 683-692.
- . 'Mediating "Race" and "Nation": The Cultural Politics of *The Messenger*'. *African American Review* 28 (Winter 1994): 531-548.
- Janken, Kenneth R. 'Untitled: Review'. *The Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991): 371.
- Jarrett, Gene Andrew. 'New Negro Politics'. *American Literary History* 18 (2006): 836-846.
- Klotman, Phyllis R. 'Review: Afro-American Literature'. *Contemporary Literature* 15 (Spring 1974): 286.
- Kuenz, Jane. 'American Racial Discourse, 1900-1930: Schuyler's, *Black No More*'. *Novel* 30 (Winter 1997): 170-192.
- Lenz, Gunter H. 'Symbolic Space, Communal Rituals, and the Surreality of the Urban Ghetto: Harlem in Black Literature for the 1920s to the 1960s'. *Callaloo* 10 (Spring 1988): 309-345.
- Levine, Lawrence W. 'Review: Untitled'. *The American Historical Review* 87 (April 1982): 552.
- Long, Richard A. 'The Genesis of Locke's *The New Negro*'. *Black World* 25 (February 1976): 11-18.
- Maza, Sarah. 'Stephen Greenblatt, New Historicism, and Cultural History, or, What We Talk About When We Talk About Interdisciplinarity'. *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004): 249-265.
- McGee, Julie L. "'The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920-1950": David C. Driskell and Race, Ethics, and Aesthetics'. *Callaloo* 31 (Fall 2008): 1175-1185.
- McLaren, Joseph. 'The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White' (review). *Research in African Literatures* 31 (Fall 2000): 195-198.

- Moses, Wilson J. 'The Lost World of the Negro, 1895-1919: Black Literary and Intellectual Life Before the "Renaissance"'. *Black American Literature Forum* 21 (Spring-Summer 1987): 61-84.
- Mullen, Bill. 'Breaking the Signifying Chain: A New Blueprint for African-American Literary Studies'. *Modern Fiction Studies* 47 (Spring 2001): 145-163.
- Murray, Rolland. 'African-American Literary Studies and the Legacies of Black Nationalism'. *American Literary History* 21 (Winter 2009): 923-937.
- Nance, Ethel Ray. 'The New York Arts Renaissance, 1924-1926'. *Negro History Bulletin* 31 (April 1968): 15-19.
- Napier, Wilson. 'Affirming Critical Conceptualism: Harlem Renaissance Aesthetics and the Formation of Alain Locke's Social Philosophy'. *The Massachusetts Review* 39 (Spring 1998): 93-112.
- Nisetich, Rebecca S. 'Inventing the New Negro: Narrative, Culture, and Ethnography' (review). *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 34 (2009): 231-233.
- Osofsky, Gilbert. 'Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered'. *American Quarterly* 17 (Summer 1965): 229-238.
- Rachleff, Peter. 'Rethinking Cultural Politics and the Politics of Culture'. *Callaloo* 23 (Fall 2000): 1516-1519.
- Reardon, Stacy. 'The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro'. *Callaloo* 33 (Fall 2010): 1140-1143.
- Rhodes, Chip. 'Writing Up the New Negro: The Construction of Consumer Desire in the Twenties'. *Journal of American Studies* 28 (August 1994): 191-207.
- Ronald, Judy. 'The New Black Aesthetic and W. E. B. Du Bois'. *The Massachusetts Review* 35 (Summer 1994): 249-282.
- Rowell, Charles H. "'LET ME BE WITH OLE JAZZBO": An Interview with Sterling A. Brown'. *Callaloo* 14 (1991): 795-815.
- Scruggs, Charles. 'Alain Locke and Walter White: Their Struggle for Control of the Harlem Renaissance'. *Black American Literature Forum* 14 (Autumn 1980): 91-99.
- . "'All Dressed Up But No Place to Go": The Black Writer and his Audience During the Harlem Renaissance'. *American Literature* 48 (January 1977): 543-563.

Sklar, Robert. 'Review: Untitled'. *The Journal of American History* 59 (June 1972): 190-191.

Smith, David Lionel. 'The Black Arts Movement and Its Critics'. *American Literary History* 3 (Spring 1991): 96.

Spooner, Jody. 'The Assertion of Self-Definition in New Negro Literature'. *Community College Humanities Review* 25 (Spring 2004): 60-73.

Stein, Judith. 'The Difficult Doctor Du Bois'. *Reviews in American History* 29 (June 2001): 247-254.

Stokes, Mason Boyd. 'Say My Name'. *American Literary History* 17 (Spring 2005): 171-182.

Story, Ralph D. 'Patronage and the Harlem Renaissance: You Get What You Pay For'. *CLA Journal* 32 (March 1989): 284-295.

Tarver, Australia. 'Reading Race and Intertextuality from the Abolitionist Era to the Harlem Renaissance'. *College Literature* 33 (Summer 2006): 198-203.

Thomas, H. Nigel. 'Patronage and the Writing of Langston Hughes's *Not Without Laughter*: A Paradoxical Case'. *CLA Journal* 42 (September 1998): 48-70.

Watts, Eric King. 'African American Ethos and Hermeneutical Rhetoric: An Exploration of Alain Locke's *The New Negro*'. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (February 2002): 19-32.

---. 'Cultivating a Black Public Voice: W. E. B. Du Bois and the "Criteria of Negro Art"'. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 181-201.

Whalan, Mark. "'The Only Real White Democracy'" and the Language of Liberation: The Great War, France, and African American Culture in the 1920s'. *Modern Fiction Studies* 51 (Winter 2005): 775-800.

Wilentz, Gay Alden. "'What Is Africa to Me?': Reading the African Cultural Base of (African) American Literary History'. *American Literary History* 15 (Fall 2003): 639-653.

Worth, Robert F. '*Nigger Heaven* and the Harlem Renaissance'. *African American Review* 29 (Autumn 1995): 461-473.

Yost, Brian. 'The Changing Same The Evolution of Racial Self-Definition and Commercialization'. *Callaloo* 31 (Fall 2008): 1314-1334.

Dissertations

Bernard, Emily Elaine. 'Black Anxiety, White Influence: Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., Yale University, 1998 Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9831394 (14 June 2002).

Carroll, Anne Elizabeth. 'Word, Image, and Identity: Collaborative Volumes of the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1999. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9925782 (14 June 2002).

Cochran, Merry Alice. 'When Harlem Was in 'Vanity Fair': The Harlem Renaissance in the Mainstream American Press'. MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2000. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT MQ45355 (14 June 2002).

Dowling, Robert Morris. 'Slumming: Morality and Space in New York City from 'City Mysteries' to the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., City University of New York, 2001. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 3008822 (14 June 2002).

English, Daylanne Kathryn. 'Eugenics, Modernism, and the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1996. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1998.

Eversley, Shelly Jennifer. 'The Real Negro: The Question of Authenticity in Twentieth Century African-American Literature'. PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1998. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9832871 (14 June 2002).

Hawkins, Clifton C. "'Race First Versus Class First': An Intellectual History of Afro-American Radicalism, 1911-1928". PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 2000. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9980507 (14 June 2002).

Nadell, Martha Jane. "'Nor Can I Reduce This Experience to a Medium": Race, Art, and Literature in America, 1920s-1940s'. PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9988582 (14 June 2002).

Potter, Jr., Lawrence Thomas. 'Harlem's Forgotten Genius: The Life and Works of Wallace Henry Thurman'. PhD diss., University of Missouri, Columbia, 1999. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9946287 (14 June 2002).

Schulz, Jennifer Lee. 'Cultural Infrastructure: The Production and Circulation of the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., University of Washington, 1997. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9736375 (14 June 2002).

Stavney, Anne E. 'Harlem in the 1920's: A Geographical and Discursive Site of the Black White Literary Imagination'. PhD diss., University of Washington, 1994. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1997.

Williams, Jeffery Robert. 'Benjamin Brawley and the Compass of Culture: Art and Uplift in the Harlem Renaissance'. PhD diss., University of Missouri, Columbia, 1998. Digital Dissertations. Proquest. File #AAT 9974707 (12 April 2003).

Websites

'H.T. Burleigh (1866-1949) [biography]'. The Library of Congress. Accessed 17 March 2012.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200035730/default.html>

Finnegan, Cara. 'Social Welfare and Visual Politics: The Story of Survey Graphic'. New Deal Network. Accessed 17 March 2012. <http://newdeal.feri.org/sg/essay.htm>.