



THE OXFORD W.E.B. DU BOIS
EDITED BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

THE WORLD *and* AFRICA COLOR *and* DEMOCRACY



W.E.B. Du Bois

Introductions by

MAHMOOD MAMDANI
and **GERALD HORNE**

The World and Africa
and
Color and Democracy

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Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Editor

The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States
of America: 1638–1870

Introduction: Saidiya Hartman

The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study

Introduction: Lawrence Bobo

The Souls of Black Folk

Introduction: Arnold Rampersad

John Brown

Introduction: Paul Finkelman

Africa, Its Geography, People and Products

Africa—Its Place in Modern History

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The World and Africa

Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace

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The Negro

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THE WORLD AND AFRICA

W. E. B. Du Bois

Series Edition, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Introduction by Mahmood Mamdani

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TO
NINA
FOR
OUR GOLDEN WEDDING

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The Black Letters on the Sign: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Canon

“ . . . the slave master had a direct interest in discrediting the personality of those he held as property. Every man who had a thousand dollars so invested had a thousand reasons for painting the black man as fit only for slavery. Having made him the companion of horses and mules, he naturally sought to justify himself by assuming that the negro was not much better than a mule. The holders of twenty hundred million dollars’ worth of property in human chattels procured the means of influencing press, pulpit, and politician, and through these instrumentalities they belittled our virtues and magnified our vices, and have made us odious in the eyes of the world. Slavery had the power at one time to make and unmake Presidents, to construe the law, and dictate the policy, set the fashion in national manners and customs, interpret the Bible, and control the church; and, naturally enough, the old masters set themselves up as much too high as they set the manhood of the negro too low. Out of the depths of slavery has come this prejudice and this color line. It is broad enough and black enough to explain all the malign influences which assail the newly emancipated millions to-day. . . . The office of color in the color line is a very plain and subordinate one. It simply advertises the objects of oppression, insult, and persecution. It is not the maddening liquor, but the black letters on the sign telling the world where it may be had . . . Slavery, stupidity, servility, poverty, dependence, are undesirable conditions. When these shall cease to be coupled with color, there will be no color line drawn.”

—FREDERICK DOUGLASS, “The Color Line,” 1881.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963) was the most prolific and, arguably, the most influential African American writer of his generation. The novelist and poet James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) once noted the no single work had informed the shape of the African American literary tradition, except perhaps *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, than had Du Bois’s seminal collection of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). While trained as a sociologist at Berlin and as a historian at Harvard, Du Bois was fearless in the face of genre—even when some of the genres that he sought to embrace did not fully embrace him in return. Du Bois published twenty-two single-author works, twenty-one in his lifetime (his *Autobiography*, edited by his friend and literary executor, Herbert Aptheker, would not be published until

1968). A selection of his greatest works, *An ABC of Color: Selections from over a Half Century of the Writings of W. E. B. Du Bois*, appeared in 1963, the year he died. And while these books reflect a wide variety of genres—including three widely heralded and magisterial books of essays published in 1903, 1920, and 1940 (*The Souls of Black Folk*, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*, and *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*), one biography, five novels, a pioneering sociological study of a black community, five books devoted to the history of Africa, three historical studies of African American people, among others—Du Bois was, in the end, an essayist, an essayist of the first order, one of the masters of that protean form that so attracted Du Bois's only true antecedent, Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) as well as Du Bois's heir in the history of the form, James Baldwin (1924–1987). (Baldwin, like Du Bois, would turn repeatedly to fiction, only to render the form as an essay.)

Du Bois, clearly, saw himself as a man of action, but a man of action who luxuriated within a verdant and fecund tropical rainforest of words. It is not Du Bois's intoxication with words that marks his place in the history of great black public intellectuals—persons of letters for whom words are a vehicle for political action and their own participation in political movements. After all, one need only recall Du Bois's predecessor, Frederick Douglass, or another of his disciples, Martin Luther King Jr. for models in the African American tradition of leaders for whom acting and speaking were so inextricably intertwined as to be virtually coterminous; no, the novelty of Du Bois's place in the black tradition is that he wrote himself to a power, rather than spoke himself to power. Both Douglass and King, for all their considerable literary talents, will be remembered always for the power of their oratory, a breathtaking power exhibited by both. Du Bois, on the other hand, was not a great orator; he wrote like he talked, and he talked like an extraordinarily well-educated late Anglo-American Victorian, just as James Weldon Johnson did; no deep “black” stentorian resonances are to be found in the public speaking voices of either of these two marvelous writers. Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) spoke in a similar public voice.

First and last, W. E. B. Du Bois was a writer, a writer deeply concerned and involved with politics, just as James Baldwin was; as much as they loved to write, Douglass and King were orators, figures fundamentally endowed with a genius for the spoken word. Even Du Bois's colleague, William Ferris, commented upon this anomaly in Du Bois's place in the tradition, at a time (1913) when he had published only five books: “Du Bois,” Ferris wrote, “is one of the few men in history who was hurled on the throne of leadership by the dynamic force of the written word. He is one of the few writers who leaped to the front as a leader and became the head of a popular movement through impressing his personality upon men by means of a book” (“The African Abroad,” 1913). Despite the fact that Du Bois by this time had published his Harvard doctoral dissertation in history, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade* (1896), his sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the sole biography that he would publish, *John Brown* (1909), and his first of five novels, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), Ferris attributed Du Bois's catapult to leadership to one book and one book alone, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Indeed, it is probably true that had Du Bois

published this book alone, his place in the canon of African American literature would have been secure, if perhaps not as fascinating!

The Souls of Black Folk, in other words, is the one book that Du Bois wrote which most of us have read in its entirety. It is through *The Souls of Black Folk* that we center Du Bois's place in the literary canon; it is through *Souls* that we structure the arc of his seven decade career as a man of letters. There are many good reasons for the centrality of this magical book to Du Bois's literary career, but it is also the case that the other works that comprise Du Bois's canon deserve fresh attention as a whole. And it is for this reason that my colleagues and I have embarked upon this project with Oxford University Press to reprint Du Bois's single-authored texts, and make them available to a new generation of readers in a uniform edition. The only other attempt to do so—Herbert Aptheker's pioneering edition of Du Bois's complete works, published in 1973—is, unfortunately, long out of print.

The Souls of Black Folk is such a brilliant work that it merits all of the attention that it has been given in the century since it was published. In April 1903, a thirty-five-year-old scholar and budding political activist published a 265 page book subtitled "Essays and Sketches," consisting of thirteen essays and one short story, addressing a wide range of topics, including the story of the freed slaves during Reconstruction, the political ascendancy of Booker T. Washington, the sublimity of the spirituals, the death of Du Bois's only son Burghardt, and lynching. Hailed as a classic even by his contemporaries, the book has been republished in no fewer than 120 editions since 1903. In fact, it is something of a rite of passage for younger scholars and writers to publish their take on Du Bois's book in new editions aimed at the book's considerable classroom market.

Despite its fragmentary structure, the book's disparate parts contribute to the sense of a whole, like movements in a symphony. Each chapter is pointedly "bicultural," prefaced by both an excerpt from a white poet and a bar of what Du Bois names "The Sorrow Songs" ("some echo of haunting melody from the only American music which welled up from black souls in the dark past.") Du Bois's subject was, in no small part, the largely unarticulated beliefs and practices of American Negroes, who were impatient to burst out of the cotton fields and take their rightful place as Americans. As he saw it, African American culture in 1903 was at once vibrant and disjointed, rooted in an almost medieval agrarian past and yet fiercely restive. Born in the chaos of slavery, the culture had begun to generate a richly variegated body of plots, stories, melodies, and rhythms. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois peered closely at the culture of his kind, and saw the face of black America. Actually, he saw two faces. "One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro," Du Bois wrote. "Two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." He described this condition as "double consciousness," and his emphasis on a fractured psyche made *Souls* a harbinger of the modernist movement that would begin to flower a decade or so later in Europe and in America.

Scholars, including Arnold Rampersad, Werner Sollors, Dickson Bruce, and David Levering Lewis, have debated the origins of Du Bois's use of the concept

of “double consciousness,” but what’s clear is that its roots are multiple, which is appropriate enough, just as it is clear that the source of one of Du Bois’s other signal metaphors—“the problem of the twentieth-century is the problem of the color line”—came to him directly from Frederick Douglass’s essay of that title. Du Bois had studied in Berlin during a Hegel revival, and Hegel, famously, had written on the relationship between master and bondsman, whereby each defines himself through the recognition of the other. But the concept comes up, too, in Emerson, who wrote in 1842 of the split between our reflective self, which wanders through the realm of ideas, and the active self, which dwells in the here and now, a tension that recurs throughout the Du Bois oeuvre: “The worst feature of this double consciousness is that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which we lead, really show very little relation to each other.”

Even closer to hand was the term’s appearance in late-nineteenth-century psychology. The French psychologist, Alfred Binet, writing in his 1896 book, *On Double Consciousness*, discusses what he calls “bipartition,” or “the duplication of consciousness”: “Each of the consciousnesses occupies a more narrow and more limited field than if there existed one single consciousness containing all the ideas of the subject.” William James, who taught Du Bois at Harvard, talked about a “second personality” that characterized “the hypnotic trance.” When Du Bois transposed this concept from the realm of the psyche to the social predicament of the American Negro, he did not leave it unchanged. But he shared with the psychologists the notion that double consciousness was essentially an affliction. “This American world,” he complained, yields the Negro “no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” Sadly, “the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American,” leads inevitably to “a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence.” The result is “a double life, with double thoughts, double duties and double social classes,” and worse, “double words and double ideas,” which “tempt the mind to pretense or revolt, hypocrisy or to radicalism.” Accordingly, Du Bois wanted to make the American Negro whole; and he believed that only desegregation and full equality could make this psychic integration possible.

And yet for subsequent generations of writers, what Du Bois cast as a problem was taken to be the defining condition of modernity itself. The diagnosis, one might say, outlasted the disease. Although Du Bois would publish twenty-two books, and thousands of essays and reviews, no work of his has done more to shape an African American literary history than *The Souls of Black Folk*, and no metaphor in this intricately layered book has proved more enduring than that of double consciousness, including Du Bois’s other powerfully resonating metaphors, that of “the veil” that separates black America from white America, and his poignant revision of Frederick Douglass’s metaphor of “the color line,” which Du Bois employed in that oft-repeated sentence, “The problem of the twentieth-century is the problem of the color line”—certainly his most prophetic utterance of many.

Like all powerful metaphors, Du Bois's metaphor of double consciousness came to have a life of its own. For Carl Jung, who visited the United States in the heyday of the "separate but equal" doctrine, the shocking thing wasn't that black culture was not equal, the shocking thing was that it was not separate! "The naïve European," Jung wrote, "thinks of America as a white nation. It is not wholly white, if you please; it is partly colored," and this explained, Jung continued, "the slightly Negroid mannerisms of the American." "Since the Negro lives within your cities and even within your houses," Jung continued, "he also lives within your skin, subconsciously." It wasn't just that the Negro was an American, as Du Bois would note, again and again, but that the American was, inevitably and inescapably, a Negro. The bondsman and the slave find their identity in each other's gaze: "two-ness" wasn't just a black thing any longer. As James Baldwin would put it, "Each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other—male in female, female in male, white in black, black in white."

Today, talk about the fragmentation of culture and consciousness is a commonplace. We know all about the vigorous intermixing of black culture and white, high culture and low—from the Jazz Age freneticism of what the scholar Ann Douglass calls "mongrel Manhattan" to Hip Hop's hegemony over American youth in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Du Bois yearned to make the American Negro one, and lamented that he was two. Today, the ideal of wholeness has largely been retired. And cultural multiplicity is no longer seen as the problem, but as a solution—a solution to the confines of identity itself. Double consciousness, once a disorder, is now the cure. Indeed, the only complaint we moderns have is that Du Bois was too cautious in his accounting. He'd conjured "two souls, two thoughts two unreconciled strivings." Just two, Dr. Du Bois, we are forced to ask today? Keep counting.

And, in a manner of speaking, Du Bois did keep counting, throughout the twenty-two books that comprise the formal canon of his most cogent thinking. The hallmark of Du Bois's literary career is that he coined the metaphors of double-consciousness and the veil—reappropriating Frederick Douglass's seminal definition of the semi-permeable barrier that separates and defines black-white racial relations in America as "the color line"—to define the place of the African American within modernity. The paradox of his career, however, is that the older Du Bois became, the more deeply he immersed himself in the struggle for Pan-Africanism and decolonization against the European colonial powers, and an emergent postcolonial "African" or "Pan-Negro" social and political identity—culminating in his own life in his assumption of Ghanaian citizenship in 1963. And the "blacker" that his stand against colonialism became, the less "black," in a very real sense, his analysis of what he famously called "The Negro Problem" simultaneously became. The more "African" Du Bois became, in other words, the more cosmopolitan his analysis of the root causes of anti-black and -brown and -yellow racism and colonialism became, seeing the status of the American Negro as part and parcel of a larger problem of international economic domination, precisely in the same way that Frederick Douglass rightly saw the construction of the American color line as a function of, and a metaphor for, deeper, structural, economic relations—"not the maddening liquor, but the black letters on the sign

telling the world where it may be had," as Douglass so thoughtfully put it. The Negro's being-in-the-world, we might say, became ever more complex for Du Bois the older he grew, especially as the Cold War heated up and the anti-colonial movement took root throughout Africa and the Third World.

Ironically, Du Bois himself foretold this trajectory in a letter he wrote in 1896, reflecting on the import of his years as a graduate student at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin: "Of the greatest importance was the opportunity which my *Wanderjahre* [wander years] in Europe gave of looking at the world as a man and not simply from a narrow racial and provincial outlook." How does the greatest black intellectual in the twentieth century—"America's most conspicuously educated Negro," as Werner Sollors puts it in his introduction to Du Bois's *Autobiography* in this series—make the rhetorical turn from defining the Negro American as a metaphor for modernity, at the turn of the century, to defining the Negro—at mid-century—as a metonym of a much larger historical pattern of social deviance and social dominance that had long been central to the fabric of world order, to the fabric of European and American domination of such a vast portion of the world of color? If, in other words, the Negro is America's metaphor for Du Bois in 1903, how does America's history of black-white relations become the metaphor of a nefarious pattern of economic exploitation and dominance by the end of Du Bois's life, in 1963? Make no mistake about it: either through hubris or an uncanny degree of empathy, or a mixture of both, throughout his life, W. E. B. Du Bois saw his most naked and public ambitions as well as his most private and intimate anxieties as representative of those of his countrymen, the American Negro people. Nevertheless, as he grew older, the closer he approached the end of his life, Du Bois saw the American Negro as a metaphor for class relations within the wider world order.

In order to help a new generation of readers to understand the arc of this trajectory in Du Bois's thinking, and because such a large part of this major thinker's oeuvre remains unread, Oxford University Press and I decided to publish in a uniform edition the twenty-one books that make up Du Bois's canon and invited a group of scholars to reconsider their importance as works of literature, history, sociology, and political philosophy. With the publication of this series, Du Bois's books are once again in print, with new introductions that analyze the shape of his career as a writer, scholar, and activist.

Reading the canon of Du Bois's work in chronological order, a certain allegorical pattern emerges, as Saidiya Hartman suggests in her introduction to *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade*. Du Bois certainly responded immediately and directly to large historical events through fierce and biting essays that spoke adamantly and passionately to the occasion. But he also used the themes of his books to speak to the larger import of those events in sometimes highly mediated ways. His first book, for example, proffers as its thesis, as Hartman puts it, a certain paradox: "the slave trade flourished under the guise of its suppression," functioning legally for twenty years following the Compromise of the Federal Convention of 1787 and "illegally for another half century." Moreover, Du Bois tackles this topic at precisely the point in American history when Jim Crow segregation is becoming formalized through American law in the 1890s,

culminating in 1896 (the year of the publication of his first book) with the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* “separate but equal” decision of the Supreme Court—exactly twenty years following the end of Reconstruction. Three years later, as Lawrence Bobo shows, Du Bois publishes *The Philadelphia Negro* in part to detail the effects of the “separate but equal” doctrine on the black community.

Similarly, Du Bois’s biography of John Brown appeared in the same year as a pioneering band of blacks and whites joined together to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the organization that would plot the demise of legal segregation through what would come to be called the Civil Rights Movement, culminating in its victory over de jure segregation in the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which effectively reversed the *Plessy* decision, and in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. John Brown, for Du Bois, would remain the emblem of this movement.

Likewise, Du Bois’s first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, published just two years following his biography of John Brown, served as a subtle critique both of an unreflective assimilationist ideology of the early NAACP through its advocacy of “a black-owned farming cooperative in the heart of the deep South,” as William Andrews puts it, just as it surely serves as a critique of Booker T. Washington’s apparently radical notion that economic development for the newly freed slaves could very well insure political equality in a manner both irresistible and inevitable, an argument, mind you, frequently made today under vastly different circumstances about the role of capitalism in Du Bois’s beloved Communist China.

Du Bois registers his critique of the primitivism of the Harlem Renaissance in *The Gift of Black Folk*, as Glenda Carpio cogently argues, by walking “a tightrope between a patriotic embrace of an America in which African American culture has become an inextricable part and an exhortation of the rebellion and struggle out of which that culture arose.” In response to the voyeurism and faddishness of Renaissance Harlem, Du Bois harshly reminds us that culture is a form of labor, too, a commodity infinitely exploitable, and that the size of America’s unprecedented middle class can be traced directly to its slave past: “It was black labor that established the modern world commerce which began first as a commerce in the bodies of the slaves themselves and was the primary cause of the prosperity of the first great commercial cities of our day”—cities such as New York, the heart of the cultural movement that some black intellectuals passionately argued could very well augur the end of racial segregation throughout American society, or at least segregation between equal classes across the color line.

Paul Finkelman, in his introduction to *John Brown*, quotes the book’s first line: “The mystic spell of Africa is and ever was over all America.” If that is true, it was also most certainly the case for Du Bois himself, as John Thornton, Emmanuel Akyeampong, Wilson J. Moses, and Mahmood Mamdani show us in their introductions to five books that Du Bois published about Africa, in 1915, 1930, 1939, and 1947. Africa, too, was a recurring metaphor in the Duboisian canon, serving variously as an allegory of the intellectual potential of persons of African descent; as John K. Thornton puts it, “What counted was that African

history had movement and Africans were seen as historical actors and not simply as stolid recipients of foreign techniques and knowledge," carefully "integrating ancient Egypt into *The Negro* as part of that race's history, without having to go to the extreme measure of asserting that somehow the Egyptians were biologically identical to Africans from further south or west." The history of African civilization, in other words, was Du Bois's ultimate argument for the equality of Americans white and black.

Similarly, establishing his scholarly mastery of the literature of African history also served Du Bois well against ideological rivals such as Marcus Garvey, who attacked Du Bois for being "too assimilated," and "not black enough." Du Bois's various studies of African history also served as a collective text for the revolutions being formulated in the forties and fifties by Pan-African nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, who would lead their nations to independence against the European colonial powers. Du Bois was writing for them, first as an exemplar of the American Negro, the supposed vanguard of the African peoples, and later, and more humbly, as a follower of the African's lead. As Wilson J. Moses notes, Du Bois once wrote that "American Negroes of former generations had always calculated that when Africa was ready for freedom, American Negroes would be ready to lead them. But the event was quite opposite." In fact, writing in 1925 in an essay entitled "Worlds of Color," an important essay reprinted as "The Negro Mind Reaches Out" in Alain Locke's germinal anthology *The New Negro* (as Brent Staples points out in his introduction to Du Bois's fifth novel, *Worlds of Color*, published just two years before he died), Du Bois had declared that "led by American Negroes, the Negroes of the world are reaching out hands toward each other to know, to sympathize, to inquire." And, indeed, Du Bois himself confessed at his ninety-first birthday celebration in Beijing, as Moses notes, that "once I thought of you Africans as children, whom we educated Afro-Americans would lead to liberty. I was wrong." Nevertheless, Du Bois's various books on Africa, as well as his role as an early theorist and organizer of the several Pan-African Congresses between 1900 and 1945, increasingly underscored his role throughout the first half of the century as the father of Pan-Africanism, precisely as his presence and authority within such civil rights organizations as the NAACP began to wane.

Du Bois's ultimate allegory, however, is to be found in *The Black Flame Trilogy*, the three novels that Du Bois published just before repatriating to Ghana, in 1957, 1959, and 1961. The trilogy is the ultimate allegory in Du Bois's canon because, as Brent Edwards shows us in his introductions to the novels, it is a fictional representation of the trajectory of Du Bois's career, complete with several characters who stand for aspects of Du Bois's personality and professional life, including Sebastian Doyle, who "not only studied the Negro problem, he embodied the Negro problem. It was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. It made his world and filled his thought," as well as Professor James Burghardt, trained as a historian at Yale and who taught, as Du Bois had, at Atlanta University, and who believed that "the Negro problem must no longer be regarded emotionally. It must be faced scientifically and solved by long, accurate and intense investigation. Moreover, it was not one problem, but a series of

problems interrelated with the social problems of the world. He laid down a program of study covering a hundred years."

But even more important than these allegorical representations of himself, or early, emerging versions of himself, Du Bois used *The Black Flame* novels to underscore the economic foundation of anti-black racism. As Edwards notes, "The real villain," for Du Bois, "is not an individual Southern aristocrat or racist white laborer, but instead capitalism itself, especially in the corporate form that has dominated the economic and social landscape of the world for more than a century," which underscores Du Bois's ideological transformations from an integrationist of sorts to an emergent mode of African American, first, and then Pan-Africanist cultural nationalism, through socialism, landing squarely in the embrace of the Communist Party just two years before his death.

Despite this evolution in ideology, Mansart, Du Bois's protagonist in the triology, ends his series of intellectual transformations precisely where Du Bois himself began as he embarked upon his career as a professor just a year after receiving his Harvard PhD in 1895. In language strikingly familiar to his statement that the time he spent in Berlin enabled him to look "at the world as a man and not simply from a narrow racial and provincial outlook," Du Bois tells us in the final volume of the trilogy that Mansart "began to have a conception of the world as one unified dwelling place. He was escaping from his racial provincialism. He began to think of himself as part of humanity and not simply as an American Negro over against a white world." For all of his ideological permutations and combinations, in other words, W. E. B. Du Bois—formidable and intimidating ideologue and ferocious foe of racism and colonialism—quite probably never veered very far from the path that he charted for himself as a student, when he fell so deeply in love with the written word that he found himself, inevitably and inescapably, drawn into a life-long love affair with language, an affair of the heart to which he remained faithful throughout an eighty-year career as a student and scholar, from the time he entered Fisk University in 1885 to his death as the Editor of "The Encyclopedia Africana" in 1963. And now, with the publication of the Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois, a new generation of readers can experience his passion for words, Du Bois's love of language purely for its own sake, as well as a conduit for advocacy and debate about the topic that consumed him his entire professional life, the freedom and the dignity of the Negro.



The first volume in the series is Du Bois's revised dissertation, and his first publication, entitled *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America*. A model of contemporary historiography that favored empiricism over universal proclamation, *Suppression* reveals the government's slow movement toward abolition as what the literary scholar Saidiya Hartman calls in her introduction "a litany of failures, missed opportunities, and belated acts," in which a market sensibility took precedence over moral outrage, the combination of which led to the continuation of the Atlantic slave trade to the United States until it was no longer economically beneficial.

Lawrence D. Bobo, one of the foremost urban sociologists working today, argues in his introduction to *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899), that Du Bois was not only an innovative historian, as Hartman properly identifies him, but also a groundbreaking social scientist whose study of Philadelphia displays “the most rigorous and sophisticated social science of its era by employing a systematic community social survey method.” Although it was well reviewed at its publication—which coincided with the advent of the field of urban sociology—*The Philadelphia Negro* did not become the subject of significant scholarly attention until the 1940s, and has become, since then, a model for the study of black communities.

The distinguished scholar of black literature and culture, Arnold Rampersad, calls *The Souls of Black Folk* “possibly the most important book ever penned by a black American”—an assertion with which I heartily agree. A composite of various essays, subjects, and tones, *Souls* is both very much of its time, and timeless. It contributed to the American lexicon two terms that have been crucial for more than a century in understanding the African American experience: the “color line” and “double consciousness.” For Rampersad, that we have learned so much about both issues since Du Bois first wrote, but have not made either irrelevant to our twenty-first century experience is, in a real way, our scholarly blessing and burden.

Abandoning the scholarly and empirical prowess so vividly on display in *Suppression* and *Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois meant his biography of John Brown to be not a work of scholarship but rather one “about activism, social consciousness, and the politics of race,” argues the legal historian Paul Finkelman in his introduction to *John Brown* (1909). The only biography in Du Bois’s vast oeuvre, the book grew out of his participation in the Niagara Movement’s meeting at Harpers Ferry in 1906 (an event the centenary of which I had the good fortune to celebrate), and—with the myth of John Brown taking precedence at times over the facts of his life—marks Du Bois’s transition from professional academic to full-time activist.

There was not a genre that Du Bois did not attempt in his long career as a writer. After the John Brown biography, Du Bois turned to the novel. In his introduction to *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), Du Bois’s first novel, the literary historian William Andrews looks beyond the Victorian diction and sometimes purple prose to see a work that is the “most noteworthy Great African American Novel of its time.” *Quest* is a “Southern problem” novel writ large on a national and even mythic canvas, and one that is ultimately radical in its endorsement of strong black womanhood, equality and comradeship between the sexes, and, in Du Bois’s words, “a bold regeneration of the land,” which for Andrews means a hitherto-unheard-of proposed economic alliance between poor blacks and poor whites in the rural South.

Moving from a national to an international canvas, Du Bois published *The Negro* (1915), more than half of which is devoted to African history. In this way, John K. Thornton argues in his introduction, Du Bois firmly grounded for an educated lay readership the history of African Americans in the history of Africa. Drawing on the emergent disciplines of anthropology and linguistics

and including, even sketchily, accounts of what would now be called Diaspora communities in the Caribbean and Latin America, *The Negro* is important in that it presents, in Thornton's words, "African history [as having] movement and Africans . . . as historical actors and not simply as stolid recipients of foreign techniques and knowledge."

Dismissed by some critics and lauded by others as the "militant sequel" to *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920) appeared in a world radically transformed by the ravages of World War I. In addition to these international upheavals, and to the "crossing and re-crossing" of the color line engendered by the war, the historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham tells us in her magisterial introduction to this volume that blacks at home in the U.S. faced major changes and relocations. The Great Migration was in full swing when Du Bois wrote *Darkwater*, and the change in the center of black life is reflected in the change of scene to the North, a far, urban cry from the rural setting of most of *Souls*. If *Souls* saw the American landscape in black and white, Higginbotham finds that *Darkwater* is like chiaroscuro, the painting technique developed by artists of the Italian Renaissance: "Du Bois, like these Renaissance painters, moves beyond the contouring line of the two-dimensional and introduces depth and volume through his representation of color—through his contrast and shading of white and various darker peoples." Higginbotham goes on to say that "Du Bois continually undermines the fixedness of racial boundaries and subverts the visual coherence of racial identities to an extent that cannot be accidental." The Du Bois who emerges in *Darkwater* is increasingly a citizen of the world, whose gaze may be fixed on his native land but whose understanding of that land is inextricably bound to the larger world around him.

The Gift of Black Folk (1924) had an odd genesis as part of the Knights of Columbus's series on "Racial Contributions to the United States." In her introduction, Glenda Carpio notes that Du Bois's celebration of black accomplishments did not turn away from the bitter history of slavery that spawned them: these were not gifts always rendered freely, Carpio points out. Though less substantial than many of his other works, and primarily a catalog of black accomplishments across different fields, *Gift* is notable for the complex ways Du Bois links African American contributions in the arenas of labor, war, church and social life, fraternal organizations, and especially the arts, by both women and men, to the bitter history of slavery.

Homi Bhabha sees *The Dark Princess* (1928) as another odd work, a "Bollywood-style Bildungsroman," in which the race-man Mathew Towns teams with Kautilya, the "dark Princess of the Tibetan Kingdom of Bwodpur," to combat international colonialism in the struggle for global emancipation. But in this somewhat messy novel, which renders the international scenes with a Zolaesque precision, Bhabha detects a serious philosophical purpose: to elaborate on the "rule of juxtaposition" (first defined in *Darkwater*), which "creat[es] an enforced intimacy, an antagonistic proximity, that defines the color-line as it runs across the uncivil society of the nation."

Du Bois moved from the esoteric exercise of *The Dark Princess* to a more accessible form for his next publications, *Africa, Its Geography, People and Products*, and

Africa—Its Place in Modern History (1930). Published as Blue Books for the educated lay reader by E. Haldeman-Julius of Girard, Kansas, the two volumes are, for the African historian and African Emmanuel Akyeampong, remarkably useful and trenchant. The first volume is a relatively straightforward analysis of Africa's geography, climate, and environment, and the impact these physical factors have had on the development of African civilization. The second volume, which seeks "to place the continent at the very center of ancient and modern history," is more polemical, with economics cited as the central motivating factor behind modern colonialism and the slave trade.

The anger that was evident in the second of the two Blue Books came to full flower in *Black Reconstruction* (1935), a sweeping corrective to contemporary histories of the Reconstruction era, which (white) historians had shaped with the view of blacks as inadequate to the task of capitalizing on the freedom that emancipation had given them, and black history as "separate, unequal, and irrelevant," in the words of Du Bois's Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, David Levering Lewis. Inspired by *The Gift of Black Folk* and from Du Bois's own withdrawal of his article on the Negro in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which demanded an excision of "a paragraph on the positive Reconstruction role of black people," *Black Reconstruction* provided original interpretations of black labor's relation to industrial wealth and, most radically, of the *agency* of black people in determining their lives after the Civil War. In his introduction, Lewis contends, rightly, that the book marks a progression in Du Bois's thought, from his early faith in academic knowledge and empiricism as a cure-all for the nation's problems, to the "more effective strategy of militant journalism informed by uncompromising principles and vital social science."

Wilson J. Moses presents *Black Folk Then and Now* (1939) as a midway point between *The Negro* (1915) and *The World and Africa* (1946). While all three volumes sought to address the entire span of black history, the special mandate of *Black Folk* was to "correct the omissions, misinterpretations, and deliberate lies that [Du Bois] detected in previous depictions of the Negro's past." In this volume, he went back to the original Herodotus and provided his own translation, which led him to affirm, with other black writers, that the Egyptians were, indeed, black (a conclusion he had resisted earlier in his career). But even in this work, with such evidence of his intellectual background on display, Du Bois is less interested in intellectual history than in social history. Even as he tracks developments in the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, Du Bois neglects the Pan-African movement and his own involvement in it.

Du Bois's autobiography, on the other hand, shows a man far more interested in writing about his intellectual journey than his personal or social life. The philosopher Anthony Appiah, in his subtle introduction to *Dusk of Dawn*, tells us that Du Bois was famous for nothing so much as his accomplishments as an intellectual and a writer; his institutional affiliations (with the NAACP, with the Pan-African Congress) were fleeting, and his internal contradictions were vexing (he was both a committed Socialist and a committed elitist). The aim of this account, like so much of Du Bois's other work, was to address the problem of the color line, and he presents his distinguished, singular life as emblematic of that problem, and himself as hopeful for its solution.

At the time he rejoined the NAACP to oversee its global programming in 1944, Du Bois was prepared to dedicate himself completely to the abolition of colonialism, which he saw as the driving force behind all global conflicts. What was remarkable about his anti-colonialism was, as Gerald Horne rightly points out in his introduction to *Color and Democracy* (1946), Du Bois's inclusion of Asia, and particularly Japan, in the discussion. As fertile ground for colonial enterprises, Asia yielded still more evidence of the "inviolable link between color and democracy."

Color continued to preoccupy Du Bois, and in *The World and Africa*, he attempted to correct the ways in which color (black) had affected history. Mahmood Mamdani tells us in his introduction that Du Bois's motivation in writing this somewhat hasty volume was to tell the story of "those left out of recorded history" and to challenge, in effect, "an entire tradition of history-writing . . . modern European historiography." Du Bois was aware that this was just a beginning to a much larger project, to connect the history of Europe that dominated the academic discipline of history to events and progress in the world at large, including Africa.

In Battle for Peace: The Story of My 83rd Birthday features an embattled Du Bois enduring prosecution by (and eventually winning acquittal from) the federal government whose indictment of him as an unregistered agent for the Soviet Union was, according to Manning Marable, a trumped-up means by which to discredit the great black leader and frighten his fellow supporters of international peace into silence. It worked, at least in part: while Du Bois drew support from many international associations, the NAACP essentially abandoned him. Ten years later, in 1961, Du Bois would permanently leave the United States for Ghana.

Brent Hayes Edwards in his introduction calls the *Black Flame* trilogy of novels Du Bois's most neglected work. Written in the last few years of life, *The Ordeal of Mansart* (1957), *Mansart Builds a School* (1959), and *Worlds of Color* (1961) follow the life of Manuel Mansart from his birth in 1876 (the last year of Reconstruction) to his death in 1956, a period which spans his rise from a noted but provincial Southern educator to a self-educating citizen of the world of color. With its alternating apocalyptic and utopian tone, its depiction of real historical figures and events, and its thoughtful "animation of economic history and especially labor history," the *Black Flame* trilogy offers, according to Edwards, "the clearest articulation of Du Bois's perspective at the end of his life, and his reflections on an unparalleled career that had stretched from Reconstruction through the Cold War."

Du Bois was a largely marginalized figure in the last decade of his life, and his work published at that time, most notably the *Black Flame* trilogy, went into the critical and cultural abyss. Mark Sanders suggests that the "invisibility" of the trilogy, then and now, can be explained by an evolution in literary "taste" in the 1950s, wrought by new trends in literary criticism and magazine culture, the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, and Du Bois's own development. Even if we have rejected in many real ways the ethos of the 1950s, for Sanders, our prescriptions for taste still owe a great deal to that decade.

Werner Sollors finds "four major narrative strains" in the posthumously published *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (1968): the personal (including "startling"

sexual revelations from the famously staid Du Bois); the academic, editorial, and organizational, in which his work is fully explored, and the political is always personal even while science and reason are held to be the solution to the race problem; the Communist, first as interested onlooker and then as Party member; and the elderly, in which an old man takes stock of contemporary youth culture with something of a jaundiced eye. Sollors suggests that far from being disjointed, the various strands of the *Autobiography* are united by Du Bois's ongoing quest for recognition. I would argue that there is nothing pathetic in this quest; it is simply the desire for respect from the society (black and white) that Du Bois spent his long life trying to understand.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Cambridge, Massachusetts
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Introduction

Mahmood Mamdani, Columbia University

"How do we know what man did in West Africa," asks W. E. B. Du Bois in *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History* (1947), "since black Africa has no written history? This brings the curious assumption that lack of written record means lack of matter and deed worth recording."

How do you tell the story of those left out of recorded history? How do you tell the stories of the poor and the oppressed, of minorities, of women—really, the stories of subaltern majorities? For those left out of documented records, where do you find the documentation? And if the documentation is not conclusive, what do you do?

Du Bois's answer was threefold. First, look at the written record yet again, to move "from direct narrative to indirect allusion and confirmation," because "the deeds of men that have been clearly and accurately written down are as pinpoints to the oceans of human experience"; second, lean on memory, "the memory of contemporary onlookers, of those who heard their word, of those who over a lapse of years interpreted it and handed it on"; and third, rely on "the mute but powerful testimony of habits, customs, and ideals, which echo and reflect vast stretches of past time." At the end of it all, he suggests that "we agree upon as true history and actual fact any interpretation of past action which we today believe and want to believe is true." Du Bois had no illusion that this would necessarily solve the problem: "The relation of this last historical truth to real truth may vary from fact to falsehood."

But this lack of certainty did not turn into a moment of doubt, freezing Du Bois into an intellectual posture. He wrote in the 1946 foreword to *The World and Africa*, "I feel now as though I were approaching a crowd of friends and enemies, who ask a bit breathlessly, whose and whence is the testimony on which I rely for something that even resembles Authority?" Du Bois's opening and main response was unequivocal: "I am challenging Authority ... the herd of writers of modern history who never heard of Africa or declare with Guernier '*Seule de tous les continents l'Afrique n'a pas d'histoire!*'" (alone of all the continents Africa has no history).

Du Bois's work was aimed at a tradition of scholarship that had racialized Africa and then draped "black" Africa in a curtain of ignorance. This racialized

prejudice was summed up most systematically, even if not most originally, in the writings of the great philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). Hegel divided Africa into three geographies. He considered two of these—North Africa, which he called “European Africa,” and Northeast Africa, the “land of the Nile”—to be appendages of Europe and Asia, respectively. Of “Africa Proper,” the land to the south and the west, this human reserve from which were drawn captives for the transatlantic slave trade, Hegel wrote: “Africa proper, as far as history goes back, has remained—for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world—shut up; it is the gold land compressed within itself—the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of conscious history is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night.”¹

These views were echoed down the generations by others, also perched at the rooftops in the Western academy, and they reverberated a million times over as common sense. As late as 1965, Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, wrote in *The Rise of Christian Europe*: “Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America, and darkness is not a subject for history.”²

The questions that W. E. B. Du Bois raised made it clear that his concern was not with writing just another history of Africa but with questioning an entire tradition of history writing. Unlike nationalist historians whose concern was to write a history of the new nation-states or of Africa, Du Bois wanted to outline a world history that would provincialize Europe. The object of his critique was no less than modern European historiography. This is why the big question that he raised about Africa—What has been Africa’s contribution to world history?—directly led to another big question: How has the obscuring of this history been a necessary consequence of a modern traffic in humans that has debased humanity in the black?

If modern historiography had draped Hegel’s “Africa Proper” in “the dark mantle of the night,” nothing less than a scholarship that would highlight Africa’s relations with humanity—through history—would be necessary to remove that mantle. Fully aware that no one individual could completely remove the mantle, Du Bois strove to gather the intellectual courage and clarity to begin it.

In fine, I have done in this book the sort of thing at which every scholar shudders. With meager preparation and all too general background of learning, I have essayed a task, which, to be adequate and complete, should be based upon the research of a lifetime! But I am faced with the dilemma, that either I do this now or leave it for others who have not had the tragedy of life which I have, forcing me to face a task for which they may have small stomach and little encouragement from the world round about. If, out of my almost inevitable mistakes and inaccuracies

and false conclusions, I shall have at least clearly stated my main issue—that black Africans are men in the same sense as white Europeans and yellow Asiatics, and that history can easily prove this—then I shall rest satisfied even under the stigma of an incomplete and, to many, inconclusive work.

The questions that Du Bois asked sketched the outlines of an intellectual project that would reverberate into the next century. With the upsurge of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa and the civil rights movement in the United States, a new generation of intellectuals came to share Du Bois's political and intellectual concerns. *The World and Africa* was published in 1947. About a decade later, in 1955, Cheikh Anta Diop wrote and published *Nations nègres et culture*. Around that same time the Ibadan School of Historians in Nigeria pioneered the development of methods in the documentation of oral history. Standing on these shoulders Martin Bernal could begin his multivolume ambition, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, in 1987.

W. E. B. Du Bois had the intellectual vision to realize that any effort to restore Africa's place in history would have to go beyond Africa's geography and question key assumptions that have informed the writing of the history of Europe in modern times. The book identifies the main points around which this rethinking will need to be: ancient Greece, the European Renaissance, and the industrial revolution, each pivotal in the story of Europe as told by its historians. To reevaluate this story, Du Bois proposed to relocate each of these turning points in context, so as to highlight in each instance the connections with the world at large, including Africa. Such an approach raised a new set of questions about the very assumptions underlining the dominant historiography.

Is it possible to make sense of ancient Greece as a stand-alone civilization, without taking into consideration its connections with the rest of the Mediterranean world, especially Egypt and Asia—as did, indeed, the traditional school associated with Herodotus? “When persons wished to study science, art, government, or religion, they went to Egypt. The Greeks, inspired by Asia, turned toward Africa for learning, and the Romans in turn learned of Greece and Egypt.”

Similarly, was the Renaissance a secular miracle, a civilizational pool with no tributaries, or does it, too, have a history? For Du Bois, the Renaissance is the “new light with which Asia and Africa illumined the Dark Ages of Europe” and brought “new hope for mankind.” So Du Bois alerts us to the unintended bridge-building consequences of some of the most brutal invasions during the European Middle Ages. “It was Asia and Africa which in the thirteenth century prepared Europe for the Renaissance through Genghis Khan and the Crusades.” In that same vein, Du Bois could have discussed the role of Andalusia (Spain) in the onset of the Renaissance.

And finally, even the forces that propelled the industrial revolution in its totality cannot be understood without an account of the story of Africans in America. “From being a mere stopping place between Europe and Asia or a chance treasure house of gold, America became through African labor the centre of the sugar empire and the cotton kingdom and an integral part of that

world history and trade which caused the Industrial Revolution and the reign of capitalism."

At the heart of the industrial revolution was the story of African slaves, and of the triangular trade among the Americas, Europe, and Africa. What accounts for the explosive demand for slaves in the modern era, an era that eulogized freedom as a distinctly human endeavor and yet chained humanity in the millions? Orlando Patterson has shown that whereas the growing demand for slaves in the premodern period came mainly from the centralizing monarchy—whether in the emperor's household such as *familia Caesaris* in early imperial Rome, the imperial civil service in Byzantium, or the military in the Indian Deccan—seeking autonomy from an aristocratic elite, the major demand for slaves in the modern period came from the insertion of slaves in the productive economy, the capitalist plantation system.³ Du Bois insisted that the two slave systems, the premodern and the modern, were radically different: "The mild domestic slavery of the African tribes and of the Arabs and Persians, which did not preclude the son of a slave becoming a king, a statesman, or a poet was changed into chattel slavery with hard tasks and cruel tasks."

In like manner, Du Bois insists that the modern capitalist market is the real thread that tied the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Arab slave trade with the European slave trade in a subordinate relationship: the Arab slave trade was a subsidiary of the European slave trade because the Arab trade supplied a rapidly growing European and American demand (whether for ivory or for slaves to work in plantations). "In this whole story of the so-called 'Arab slave trade' the truth has been strangely twisted. Arab slave trading was at the beginning, and largely to the end, a secondary result of the British and American slavery and slave trade and specifically was based on American demand for ivory."

How could the slave come to be debased so totally in an era that exalted freedom as key to being human? But it makes sense that in a society where large numbers enjoy civic freedom and where it is believed that to be human is to be free would turn around and conclude that only the free are truly human. Where freedom is supposed to be the birthright of humans, the temptation to explain away continuing unfreedom by systematically debasing the unfree as subhuman—in deed as well as in thought—is not all that surprising.

There is a tension that runs through the story of world history as Du Bois tells it, because that story is told in two different ways. On the one hand, Du Bois is determined to take on the libel of racial deficiency with which black Africa and its descendents have been stigmatized in the modern era. To remove the stigma of racial inferiority he is compelled to gauge the historical landscape through racially coded lenses. So, fully aware that they "had no name for race," he looks for the "race" of the ancient Egyptians, if only to show that their origins were Negroid. "We conclude, therefore, that the Egyptians were Negroids, and not only that, but by tradition they believed themselves descended not from the whites or yellows, but from the black peoples of the south." But the preoccupation with origins does not blind Du Bois to the nature of subsequent developments. "Gradually, of course, the Egyptians became a separate inbred people with characteristics quite different from their neighbors . . . brown in color." And

yet the text that follows is full of explorations into different times and places, each preoccupied with bringing to light the presence of “black” or “Negroid” people in the flow that we call civilization.

On the other hand, Du Bois tells a story in which civilization is not an inbred product but is incubated in precisely those places and times that made possible a confluence of different cultures. One of the most poignant observations in this regard comes in the course of a discussion on Arabs and Arabia: “There was but scant indigenous culture in Arabia. The rise of civilization among Arabs, as among all peoples, took place where they were fired by contact with Mongoloids at Bagdad, Negroids in the valley of the Nile; and in Spain after the Arabs had passed slowly and in comparatively small numbers through Africa and augmented their numbers with black and brown Negroids and mixed Berbers.”

This tension gives the text a contradictory character. On the one hand, its preoccupation with origins gives it a familiar nineteenth- and twentieth-century “nationalist” feel. On the other hand, even as he succumbs to this nationalism, Du Bois is fully aware of its dangers. Not surprisingly, the text opens itself to an alternate possibility. Exasperated with modern attempts to paint Egyptians as anything but black, he has this to say: “We may give up entirely, if we wish, the whole attempt to delimit races, but we cannot, if we are sane, divide the world into whites, yellows, and blacks, and then call blacks whites.” Thus opens a radically different possibility: not only to doggedly defend the record of the race—“black” or “Negroid”—but also to think through the relationship between emancipation and deracialization.

Geography has a history, and we will do well to historicize the geographies of Africa. Africa was a name that Romans gave to their southernmost province, what we now know as North Africa. With the Atlantic slave trade, “Africa Proper” became the name of the land south of the Sahara. From being a civilizational bridge, the Sahara became a barrier. The flow of goods and ideas shifted westward, from the Sahara to the Atlantic. Tarnished with the modern European tendency to racialize peoples and places, the place Africa became synonymous with a race and a color—as in black Africa, or Bantu Africa. For Du Bois the challenge was twofold: to deracialize the meaning of the African experience in the world and to join it to the struggle for Pan-Africanism.

Writing in the *National Guardian*, Du Bois recalled the antecedents of Pan-Africanism among Negro Americans: “In the eighteenth century they had regarded Africa as their home to which they would eventually return when free. They named their institutions ‘African’ and started migration to Africa as early as 1815.” The mass movement for a return to Africa was led by Marcus Garvey. Du Bois thought it “poorly conceived,” but he acknowledged its strength: “this was a peoples’ movement rather than a movement of intellectuals.” As a popular movement, however, “back to Africa” had a short life. “[T]he American Negroes were soon sadly disillusioned: first their immigrants to Liberia found that Africans did not regard them as Africans; and then it became clear by 1830 that colonization schemes were a device to rid America of free Africans so as to fasten slavery more firmly to support the cotton kingdom.” As

American Negroes “turned to a new ideal”—“to strive for equality as American citizens”—Pan-Africanism in the United States became more of an intellectual preoccupation.

Why would natives who had never left home (continental Africans) be ambivalent to the return of natives who had been forcibly kidnapped from home (African Americans)? To what extent was this ambivalence rooted in the recognition that returning natives were not just freed persons coming home but the front paw of a new colonizing movement? Du Bois wrestled with these questions for the rest of his life. On the one hand, Pan-Africanism was born of the experience of bondage in the New World: “The idea of one Africa to unite the thought and ideals of all native peoples of the dark continent belongs to the twentieth century and stems naturally from the West Indies and the United States. Here various groups of Africans, quite separate in origin, became so united in experience and so exposed to the impact of new cultures that they began to think of Africa as one idea and one land.”

On the other hand, the more committed that African Americans became to fighting for equal citizenship in the United States, the more Du Bois thought “American Negroes learned from their environment to think less and less of their fatherland and its folk” and began “to acquiesce in color prejudice.” Du Bois wrote in the *National Guardian* of the effects of this specifically American complex: “American Negroes of former generations had always calculated that when Africa was ready for freedom, American Negroes would be ready to lead them. But the event was quite opposite.” Neither did he exempt himself fully from this tendency. He recalled the time that his wife, Shirley Graham, returned from reading his message to the All-African Conference in Accra, Ghana, in 1958. When she told him “of Lumumba there demanding independence for Congo, I [Du Bois] thought he was an unthinking fanatic.” In that same mood, he told Africans in the Peking University audience gathered to celebrate his ninety-first birthday: “Once I thought of you Africans as children, whom we educated Afro-Americans would lead to liberty. I was wrong.”

Right up to the end of his life this giant of an intellectual kept his feet solidly on the ground and his gaze into the horizon, refusing to capitulate either to romance or to cynicism. More than six decades after W. E. B. Du Bois wrote *The World and Africa*, his twin preoccupation—to deracialize the meaning of the African experience and to use that knowledge to illuminate the quest for an African unity—remains a worthy guide for thought and action in the twenty-first century.⁴

NOTES

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 91. See also Hegel, “Introduction: Reason in History,” in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 173–174.
2. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), p. 9.
3. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).
4. I would like to thank Mamadou Diouf for a critical reading of this text.

Foreword

Since the rise of the sugar empire and the resultant cotton kingdom, there has been consistent effort to rationalize Negro slavery by omitting Africa from world history, so that today it is almost universally assumed that history can be truly written without reference to Negroid peoples. I believe this to be scientifically unsound and also dangerous for logical social conclusions. Therefore I am seeking in this book to remind readers in this crisis of civilization, of how critical a part Africa has played in human history, past and present, and how impossible it is to forget this and rightly explain the present plight of mankind.

Twice before I have essayed to write on the history of Africa: once in 1915 when the editors of the Home University Library asked me to attempt such a work. The result was the little volume called *The Negro*, which gave evidence of a certain naïve astonishment on my own part at the wealth of fact and material concerning the Negro peoples, the very existence of which I had myself known little despite a varied university career. The result was a condensed and not altogether logical narrative. Nevertheless, it has been widely read and is still in print.

Naturally I wished to enlarge upon this earlier work after World War I and at the beginning of what I thought was a new era. So I wrote *Black Folk: Then and Now*, with some new material and a more logical arrangement. But it happened that I was writing at the end of an age which marked the final catastrophe of the old era of European world dominance rather than at the threshold of a change of which I had not dreamed in 1935. I deemed it, therefore, not only fitting but necessary in 1946 to essay again not so much a history of the Negroid peoples as a statement of their integral role in human history from prehistoric to modern times.

I still labor under the difficulty of the persistent lack of interest in Africa so long characteristic of modern history and sociology. The careful, detailed researches into the history of Negroid peoples have only begun, and the need for them is not yet clear to the thinking world. I feel compelled nevertheless to go ahead with my interpretation, even though that interpretation has here and there but slender historical proof. I believe that in the main my story is true, despite the fact that so often between the American Civil War and World War I the weight of history and science supports me only in part and in some cases appears violently to contradict me. At any rate, here is a history of the world written from the African point of view; or better, a history of the Negro as part of the world which now lies about us in ruins.

I am indebted to my assistant, Dr. Irene Diggs, for efficient help in arranging the material and reading the manuscript.

I feel now as though I were approaching a crowd of friends and enemies, who ask a bit breathlessly, whose and whence is the testimony on which I rely for something that even resembles Authority? To which I return two answers: I am challenging Authority—even Maspero, Sayce, Reisner, Breasted, and hundreds of other men of highest respectability, who did not attack but studiously ignored the Negro on the Nile and in the world and talked as though black folk were nonexistent and unimportant. They are part of the herd of writers of modern history who never heard of Africa or declare with Guernier “*Seule de tous les continents l’Afrique n’a pas d’histoire!*”

For chapters one and two I have relied upon my own travel and observation over a fairly long life. For confirmation I have resurrected William Howitt’s *Colonization and Christianity*, a popular history of how Europeans treated the natives in their colonies. The book was published in London in 1838, and since then imperial Europe had tried to forget it. I have also made bold to repeat the testimony of Karl Marx, whom I regard as the greatest of modern philosophers, and I have not been deterred by the witch-hunting which always follows mention of his name. I like Robert Briffault’s *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1938) and George Padmore’s *How Britain Rules Africa* (1936). I have mentioned the work of Anna Graves, who is usually ignored because she does not follow the conventions of historical writing and because no publisher has thought that he could make money out of her work.

In chapter three, on the slave trade, I have especially relied on Eric Williams’ new and excellent work, *Capitalism and Slavery*; also on Wilson Williams’ work published in the first number of the Howard University *Studies in the Social Sciences*. My own *Suppression of the Slave Trade* has continued to be of service. Rayford Logan’s work on the United States and Haiti and Chapman Cohen’s *Christianity, Slavery, and Labor* (1931) have also been used. Reginald Coupland’s *East Africa and Its Invaders* (1938) has been valuable. But my greatest help in this chapter after Eric Williams, has been E. D. Moore’s *Ivory: The Scourge of Africa* (1931); it is an invaluable book and I am deeply indebted to its author for facts.

In chapter four I have relied on Edwin W. Smith, now Editor of *Africa* and Julian Huxley; also on C. G. Seligmann, whose *Races of Africa* (1930), is priceless and marred only by his obsession with the “Hamites.”

In chapter five on Egypt there is naturally the greatest diversity of opinion. My attention to the subject was first aroused by the little pamphlet published by Alexander F. Chamberlain in 1911, “The Contribution of the Negro to Human Civilization.” Naturally one must read Maspero, Breasted, Rawlinson, and the other earlier and indefatigable students; but I have mainly depended upon W. M. Flinders Petrie’s *History of Egypt* and on the sixth volume of the work on Egypt in the Middle Ages by E. Stanley Lane-Poole edited by Petrie. The travels of Ibn Batuta and Duarte Barbosa form a firm background to the modern research of Arthur Thomson, David Randall-MacIver, and Grace Caton-Thompson. Especially *Egyptian Civilization* by Alexandre Moret, published in French in 1927 and shortly thereafter in English has been illuminating. I have looked through the splendid reproductions of Karl R. Lepsius’ *Denkmäler*. I have read Eduard Meyer’s *Geschichte des Altertums* (1910–13); but of greatest help to me has been

Leo Hansberry. Mr. Hansberry, a professor at Howard University, is the one modern scholar who has tried to study the Negro in Egypt and Ethiopia. I regret that he has not published more of his work. The overwhelming weight of conventional scientific opinion on Africa has overawed him, but his work in manuscript is outstanding. Arthur E. P. B. Weigall's *Short History of Egypt* has also been of use.

In chapter six I have depended upon Hansberry. One always turns back to Winwood Reade's *Martyrdom of Man* for renewal of faith. The works of Sir Ernest Budge, George A. Reisner, A. H. Sayce, and F. L. Griffith have naturally been of use when they were not indulging their opinions about Negroes.

I should like to have used the researches on the Negro in classic Europe of Dr. Frank Snowden of Howard University. But classical journals in America have hitherto declined to publish his paper because it favored the Negro too much, leaving the public still to rely on Beardsley's stupid combination of scholarship and race prejudice which Johns Hopkins University published. I tried to get Dr. Snowden to let me see his manuscript, but he refused.

In chapter seven I have relied upon Leo Frobenius. Frobenius is not popular among conventional historians or anthropologists. He indulged his imagination. He had strong beliefs; but he was a great man and a great thinker. He looked upon Africa with unprejudiced eyes and has been more valuable for his interpretation of the Negro than any other man I know. The many works of Robert S. Rattray and Meek, Westermann and Schapera, cannot be ignored. African students like Soga and Caseley-Hayford have helped me, and younger men like Orizu. Mbadiwe, and Ojiki. Basic is the fine unprejudiced work of Maurice Delafosse. I have used Flora Lugard, although she is not a scientist; and also a new young Negro writer, Armattoe.

In the eighth chapter I have naturally depended upon Sir Harry H. Johnston and his study of the Bantu languages; the splendid work of Miss Caton-Thompson. I have learned much from James A. Rogers. Rogers is an untrained American Negro writer who has done his work under great difficulty without funds and at much personal sacrifice. But no man living has revealed so many important facts about the Negro race as has Rogers. His mistakes are many and his background narrow, but he is a true historical student.

In chapter nine there is reliance on Lane-Poole and Cooper, whom I have mentioned before, and on the new points of view brought by Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Autobiography* (1940) and his *Glimpses of World History* (1942). The study of Egypt and the East by Alfred T. Butler and Palon have shed much needed light; and general anthropology is gradually revealing the trend of the Negro in Africa as we emerge from the blight of the writers of current history.

Chapter ten is built on the work of Maurice Delafosse and of William D. Cooley (1841), with help from H. R. Palmer, Flora Lugard, and many others.

Chapter eleven depends on current thought and documents; and books like Leonard Barnes' *Soviet Light on the Colonies* (1944) and Harold Laski's *Rise of Liberalism* (1936).

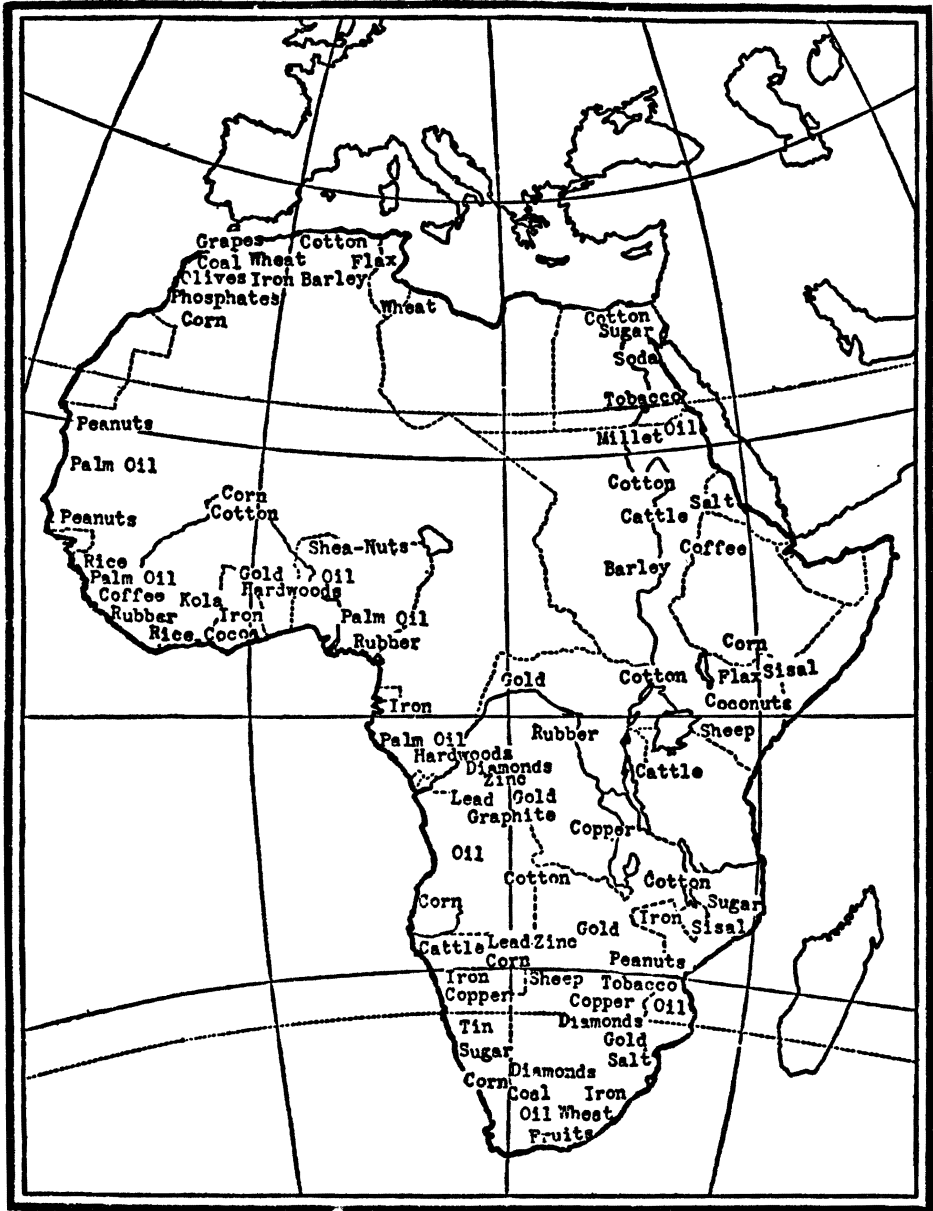
In fine, I have done in this book the sort of thing at which every scholar shudders. With meager preparation and all too general background of learning, I

have essayed a task, which, to be adequate and complete, should be based upon the research of a lifetime! But I am faced with the dilemma, that either I do this now or leave it for others who have not had the tragedy of life which I have, forcing me to face a task for which they may have small stomach and little encouragement from the world round about. If, out of my almost inevitable mistakes and inaccuracies and false conclusions, I shall have at least clearly stated my main issue—that black Africans are men in the same sense as white European and yellow Asiatics, and that history can easily prove this—then I shall rest satisfied even under the stigma of an incomplete and, to many, inconclusive work.

W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS

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The World and Africa



The Products of Africa



The Political and Cultural Development of Africa
1325 B.C.—A.D. 1850

(The dates indicate roughly the widest development of the different states; the lines show approximately the boundaries of the states at the date of widest expansion.)