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Notes

Introduction

- 1 Around 1917–18, local organizers in Lynchburg, Virginia began to institutionalize a NAACP chapter, and Anne Spencer, mentored by James Weldon Johnson, helped lead the way (Greene 48). Though a NAACP activist, she was not as politically militant as some of her male contemporaries such as McKay and Hughes. The Spencers hosted a number of black intellectual and Harlem Renaissance luminaries at their 1313 Pierce Street home, using the Spencer home served as a stopover from New York and Washington DC to southern cities such as Atlanta or Nashville (Greene 66). The guest list included Paul Robeson, Roland Hayes, Walter White, Charles S. Johnson, George Washington Carver, Adam Clayton Powell, Du Bois, Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Georgia Douglas Johnson (Greene 68; Salmon 3; Frischkorn and Rainey 16).

Though she wrote hundreds of poems, Spencer only published twenty during her lifetime, most of them during the Harlem Renaissance. She devoted her time to gardening and working as a librarian at Lynchburg's only black school, Dunbar High School (Frischkorn and Rainey 16). The twenty published poems, however, were placed in some of the most prestigious and well-known periodicals of the day, among them the widely read *The Crisis*, the National Urban League's *Opportunity*, and the sociological *Survey Graphic* (Greene 63). She also published in anthologies that came to define the Harlem Renaissance, most notably Johnson's 1922 *Book of American Negro Poetry*, Alain Locke's 1925 *The New Negro*, and Countee Cullen's 1927 *Caroling Dusk*. Her poetry could be seen as genteel and sentimental in a modernist era that rejected Victorianism and realism. But some of her poems, such as "White Things," are among the most modernist of Harlem Renaissance poets.

- 2 Its use of imagery and symbolism to depict the horrors of whiteness echo "The Whiteness of the Whale" chapter in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.
- 3 Jeffrey Myers's pathbreaking work *Converging Stories: Race, Ecology, and Environmental Justice in American Literature* is arguably the first book-length study to claim forcefully that black writers "drew strong connections between racial oppression and destructive attitudes toward the land" (2005: 4). Moving from Thomas Jefferson, to Hendry David Thoreau, and then to Charles Chesnutt, Myers covers a number of American writers who make connections between the

physical environment and racial struggle. While conceptually groundbreaking, the broad scope of Myers's book exemplifies the first problem; it needs more theoretical rigor and historical specificity in exploring the race-nature connection.

- 4 Two more recent studies continue to develop threads spooled by Outka's work. Ian Finseth's *Shades of Green: Visions of Nature in the Literature of American Slavery, 1770–1886* (2009) surveys a century of African-American nature-oriented literature, ranging from Ralph Waldo Emerson and Harriet Beecher Stowe to Martin Delaney and Frederick Douglass. He detects links between slavery and abolitionism and the advance of the natural sciences into mainstream discourse, contending that "nature" is an evolving concept in antebellum views of race and slavery. Antislavery philosophy and rhetoric, he argues, engaged natural science and developed "shifting imagistic patterns" that humanized African-descended peoples (2009: 5). This angle into discourses about nature both "liberated and constrained" antislavery thought and representation by associating nonwhites positively with nature and yet naturalizing race at the same time (2009: 7).
- 5 Chris Williams's *Ecology and Socialism* convincingly argues for the urgency and continued relevance of Marxist critique when capitalism's seemingly unstoppable ability to revolutionize itself batters against the material and thus ecological limits of the earth's resources. Williams portends a "global ecocide" for the twenty-first century, in which "thousands of species sit on Extinction Death Row" (2010: 1).
- 6 Speaking to the influence of Marxism during the interwar period of modern African-American literature, William J. Maxwell argues that the "history of African-American letters cannot be unraveled from the history of American Communism without damage to both" (1999: 2).
- 7 As Garrard puts it, "[o]ne of the major forms ecofeminism now takes is 'intersectional analysis,' which claims that justice for oppressed groups—originally women in ecofeminism, but now many other human identity groups—are included—coincides both theoretically and in practice with environmentalist objectives" (2014: 5). Patricia Hill Collins highlights the problems surrounding the definition of intersectionality (2015). She does, however, define the term according to the "general consensus" that it refers to "critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (2015: 2).
- 8 In some ways, I prefer the term "integrated analysis" because the rhetoric of integration was so prominent in the age of Du Bois; it has a more distinctive civil rights ring to it than "intersectional" does.

- 9 Applied to the context of climate change, intersectional analysis should, as prescribed by Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, be concerned with “how individuals relate to climate change,” which “depends on their positions in context-specific power structures based on social categorisations” (2014: 421).

Chapter 1

- 1 Washington biographer Louis Harlan says that Roosevelt’s “amalgam of Darwinism and traditional racism allowed him ... to believe that racial inferiority rather than economics, technology, politics, and culture explained the difficulties of Haiti and Liberia” (1972: 312).
- 2 The first autobiography, *The Story of My Life and Work* (1900), ghostwritten by the black journalist Edgar Webber, was so inadequate that Washington hired Thrasher to revise and republish it in 1901 (Norrell 2009: 216). The resulting *Up from Slavery*, then, became a revised version of Max Thrasher’s revision of Webber’s narrative (Norrell 2009: 217). Later, the travelogue *The Man Farthest Down* (1913) and the fourth autobiography *My Larger Education* (1911) were written in collaboration with Robert Ezra Park, who went on to head the Chicago School of Sociology.
- 3 This minstrel game strategy was also not lost on Du Bois. When Andrew Carnegie donated \$600,000 in US Steel bonds to Tuskegee’s endowment after reading *Up from Slavery*, Du Bois commented that Washington “had no faith in white people, not the slightest, and he was most popular among them, because if he was talking with a white man he sat there and found out what the white man wanted him to say, and then as soon as possible he said it” (qtd. in Harlan 1983: 134).
- 4 In contrast to Du Bois, Harold Cruse, who emerged from the 1960s Black Arts Movement, reframes the debates and argues that many black intellectuals, including those in the militant Black Power movement, fail to give Washington due credit. In his 1967 seminal study *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, he casts Washington as an economic nationalist and Du Bois as an integrationist, although he notes that their philosophies were never as polarizing as they were later made out to be. Cruse argues that starting around 1940, Du Bois gravitated toward Washington’s position: he began to focus on economic self-sufficiency as the road to full citizenship and racial integration ([1967] 2005: 176). If Du Bois’s long intellectual arc bent toward the Tuskegee philosophy, then he did so “[w]ithout ever admitting that Booker T. Washington had indeed been closer to the truth in 1900” (Cruse [1967] 2005: 177). As Cruse sees it, the “problem of Afro-American nationalism is as American as are its historical roots. Its origins

are to be found in the nationalist vs. integrationist Frederick Douglass—Martin R. Delaney—Booker T. Washington—W. E. B. Du Bois conflicts down through the 1920s” ([1967] 2005: 344). Ultimately, Cruse’s terms avoid the reductive binary of Washington the conservationist and Du Bois the radical by adopting the more value-neutral terms of economic nationalism versus integrationism.

In his 2009 biography *Up from History: The Life of Booker T. Washington*, Robert J. Norrell argues that Washington’s diminished status as a heroic figure is the result of historical forgetting and “lost truths” (13). Norrell criticizes Harlan’s earlier two-volume biography for comparing Washington “not just to Uncle Tom but also to a minotaur, an amoral and manipulative wizard, and a bargainer with the devil for momentary earthly power” (15). Focused too much on Washington’s white sympathizers, critics forget just how violently southern whites were opposed to his tactics. To counter this anachronistic wisdom of hindsight, Norrell contends that Washington’s “emphasis on educational, moral, and economic development became a lost artifact for most American thinking about how to integrate minorities and any other disadvantaged group in the modern world” (16).

- 5 In “Booker T. Washington as Pastoralist: Authenticating the Man at Century’s End,” Jones argues for the political and economic efficacy of Washington’s valorization of pastoral life. Jones sees Washington’s pastoral politics as a strategy for reconciling social antagonism by championing simplicity over complexity, or rustic southern life over northern urban life. His pastoral politics led Washington to seek racial harmony over racial equality—politics consistent with his five fingers-one hand metaphor from his Atlanta address (Jones 1999: 42). This pastoral ideal of harmony translates into a two-pronged approach to education that integrates mind and body, “head” and “hand” (Jones 1999: 43), or what Theodore Lewis calls Washington’s “audacious vocationalist philosophy” (2014: 189). Though I interpret Washington through the georgic mode rather than pastoral, Jones’s conclusions do offer an early ecocritical example of how Washington’s value can be reassessed from this perspective.
- 6 Bontemps’s historical novel *Black Thunder* (1936) dramatizes the failed Gabriel Prosser slave revolt in Virginia in 1800. In this case, the swamp functions much as it does in Bartram’s *Travels*, as a space of resistance to the plantation zone. When the slaves launch an assault on Richmond, they do it from Brook Swamp, using a thunderstorm as cover (84–5). See the end of Chapter 4 for further discussion.
- 7 Walter Benjamin’s statement on engaged literary activity also works as a fitting description of Washington’s approach to genre: “[s]ignificant literary work can only come into being in a strict alternation between action and writing; it must nurture the inconspicuous forms that better fit its influence in active

- communities than does the pretentious, universal gesture of the book—in leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards” ([1955] 1978: 61).
- 8 For more on blood-and-soil ideology in modern African-American political thought, see Foley (2003) and M. C. Thompson, *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture between the Wars* (2007), Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
  - 9 Margaret Ronda interprets the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar through a pessimistic georgic lens, in which labor is necessarily fruitless toil because of the sharecropping system. In contrast to my view of Washington, Ronda argues that “Dunbar’s georgics reveal the material effects of the uneven modernization of racialized labor in the post-Reconstruction era” (2012: 864). She argues that Washington’s 1895 Atlanta speech presents a vision in which “African American labor, in his argument, remains labor for another, the undertaking of marginal drudge work that whites refuse” (867). Washington’s vision lacks the pessimism and “negative modernity” of Dunbar’s. Dunbar “presents a philosophical alternative to Washington’s optimistic rhetoric of capitalist progress” (870). The ambiguity of pessimism versus optimism goes back to the original Latin text of the *Georgics* and how classicists have long disputed Virgil’s vision of dignified labor versus cursed toil. In his reading of the georgic mode in Sterling Brown’s poetry, David Anderson argues that Brown “made the georgic central to the African-American literary tradition in his scholarship and criticism” (2015: 86). Michael Collins emphasizes how Brown’s depictions of agrarian labor become occasions for a larger critique of the sharecropping system and paradoxical condition of black labor—neither free nor slave—in the post-Reconstruction South.
  - 10 Scott Hicks likewise protests Washington’s attitudes toward nature, drawing on a few passages from *Up from Slavery* and the Atlanta address: “[i]n recreation and in industry, Washington posits nature as something that must be conquered and exploited” (2006: 205). Because he advocates the domination of nature for the sake of racial uplift by economic gain, Washington “celebrates environmental degradation and exploitation past and future” (Hicks 2006: 205).

Chapter 2

- 1 Like *The Souls of Black Folk*, many of the essays in *Darkwater* are retooled versions of earlier publications, such as “The Souls of White Folk,” originally published in a 1910 issue of *The Independent* (Lewis 2004: v).
- 2 Ecocritics such as Scott Hicks have already explored the numerous instances of the complex pastoral and other nature themes in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In an

- extension of the complex pastoral, Anne Raine reads the book's environmental aesthetic as an "ambient poetics"—or what Du Bois himself calls an "atmosphere of the land"—of the racialized southern landscape (2013: 322–41; 1904: 129).
- 3 Outka describes Muir's racist rhetoric in his encounter with an African-American woman and boy while hiking through the woods: "Muir's racism comes in the way he looks, in how his language and his eye collapses dark-skinned humans into the natural landscape" (2008: 160).
  - 4 Ecocritic Lawrence J. Oliver is wrong, then, to claim that "[t]here is no social or political subtext to the description of the Grand Canyon" (2015: 466).
  - 5 Neither Du Bois's later autobiographies nor Lewis's biography mention such an actual trip, though it seems likely that Du Bois found time to visit these places in his life before 1919.
  - 6 Washington had spoken to Young's soldiers while they were stationed in San Francisco prior to their work at Sequoia Park (Kilroy 2003: 54).
  - 7 For more on urban nature writing, see *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments* (1999), edited by M. Bennett and D. W. Teague.

Chapter 3

- 1 From "Life without Principle" (1863). Thoreau continues: "What is the value of any political freedom, but as a means to moral freedom? Is it a freedom to be slaves, or a freedom to be free, of which we boast?" (369). In context, Thoreau targets wage slavery more than the institution of slavery itself, though he would certainly include slavery as part of his critique of the busy-ness of "business" and its reductive work-ethic ideology.
- 2 Yolande is Du Bois's daughter, who was briefly married to Countee Cullen.
- 3 Throughout her work, Newsome mentions three nature writers, all men: John Burroughs, Dallas Lore Sharp, and Walter Prichard Eaton.
- 4 As Harlem Renaissance scholars have observed over the years, many of the movement's luminaries spent most of the 1920s away from Harlem: McKay split his time living in Harlem, London, Marseille, Tangiers, and other cities; Georgia Douglas Johnson lived in Washington, DC; Toomer was a perpetual wanderer as a proselytizer for the Gurdjieff movement; Spencer lived in Lynchburg, Virginia; and Wallace Thurman did not move to Harlem until 1925. Though she cites no sources, Mary B. Zeigler paints a portrait of Newsome as a mover-and-shaker: children's librarian, elementary teacher, and organizer of the Boys of Birmingham Club (1988: 128). Zeigler notes that not much can be

determined about Newsome's life because a tornado destroyed her estate in 1974 (1988: 129).

- 5 Scholars usually periodize the Harlem Renaissance into two distinct phases, of which Locke's change to the title of McKay's militant sonnet "The White House"—a title that could be construed as a direct threat against the president—to the less incendiary "White Houses." For Foley, the militant, masculine, and radical New Negro forged out of the Red Summer of 1919 gave way to the feminized, sanitized, cultural nationalism of Locke's *The New Negro* of 1925. Indeed, 1930s proletarian portrayals of the "failed" Harlem Renaissance depict an effete, bourgeois Talented Tenth blind to the concerns of black masses. However, Newsome's work does not seem to reflect this periodization.
- 6 Merchant traces a genealogy of this association in her classic study *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980).
- 7 Wright divides bird citizens into three groups according to migration patterns: Summer Citizens, Winter Visitors, and Citizens who stay at home (1897: 69–70).
- 8 "Negro Spirituals," an undated poem removed from *Gladiola Garden*, compares the singing of sparrows to slave music:

A race was bound in chains as slaves.

With freedom gone, there seemed all night.

And yet it made a song and sang.

In spite of all, it gave earth LIGHT.

Who sang so sweetly in the night? (K. C. Smith 2004: 220)

Dunbar wrote a poem called "The Sparrow" that also offers a positive valuation of the maligned bird: "A little bird, with plumage brown, / Beside my window flutters down" (1913: ll. 1–2), and "So birds of peace and hope and love / Come fluttering earthward from above" (ll. 9–10).

- 9 Newsome captures the pedagogical "message" of her "springtime friends" in her "book on the out-of-doors" (1915: 90). At this time, I cannot find this book, if copies of it even exist. Newsome's "Bird Romance" continues many of the themes and style of "Birds and Manuscripts."
- 10 By "damoiselles," Newsome probably means damselflies, which are similar to dragonflies.
- 11 The caged animal trope is reminiscent of English and German romanticism. William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence" contains the lines: "A robin redbreast in a cage / Puts all heaven in a rage. / A dove-house filled with doves and pigeons / Shudders hell through all its regions" (1803: ll. 5–8). In the late German romanticism of Rainer Maria Rilke's "Der Panther," the speaker

observes a panther trapped in a zoo with a “mighty Will” that “stands paralyzed” (1907: l. 8).

Chapter 4

- 1 The image of the scarred earth is a trope with negative connotations that goes back to John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*; it is also used in Attaway’s critique of industrialization in *Blood on the Forge*.
- 2 Similar to Young’s short story, John F. Matheus’s “Swamp Moccasin” revolves around the menace of the swamp and particularly the titular snake. It brings us closer to themes in *Mules and Men* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with its focus on a group of twenty-three black prison laborers rather than a single fugitive. Appearing in *The Crisis* in 1926, the story takes place somewhere on Florida’s Gulf Coast in the early morning. Matheus fills the story with descriptive passages of the swamp: “[t]hey saw only swamp tangles, labyrinth of long-leaved pines” (1926: 67). The prisoners are encamped in the swamp: the white “swamp boss” and guards can leave when their shift is over, but the convicts must stay. They work for an unnamed turpentine production company. Again, the swamp is menacing, but this menace is more closely aligned with the constant controlling gaze of the white guards: “Circe of the Swamp was metamorphosing them into beasts—hogs, possums, skunks, wolves. The Camp Boss, whose footsteps struck terror, whose glance petrified, who wielded force and power unchecked, was her visible agent” (1926: 68). This passage displays the fear of the swamp as a space where human/nature and human/animal boundaries break down. A water moccasin appears: “far above all in terror the pitiless, ferocious viper snake of the morasses, the swamp moccasin” (1926: 68). This time the water-moccasin is ambiguously identified with the black convict who captures the snake when it attacks one of the white guard’s dogs. The convict tries to gain control of the writhing, poisonous snake. But the snake bites him quickly in the face, and the white guard panics and shoots the convict in the face, mirroring the snake’s violence. The story ends ambiguously: the convict “fell heavily and as the dogs licked his blood, the Camp guards heard their boss muttering, while his face was turning purple and swelling as big as three: ‘God—must be—a nigger! He looks so black’” (1926: 69). The ending is ambiguous as the snake and the black convict seem to become interchangeable both from the narrator’s perspective and the white guards’.
- 3 Hurston’s views on the southern environment were informed directly by the cultural anthropology of Franz Boas. Since the personal and intellectual influence of Boas on Hurston has been mapped out in the scholarly research,

I do not go into a detailed account here. What's notable here is that Hurston inherited a nature-culture problematic from Boas. This problematic develops out of methodological concerns, asking how nature and culture interact without confusing what is really a cultural phenomenon with a natural one. Boas famously applied this method when he conducted studies to prove that there were no biological/natural differences between races, but rather cultural differences.

- 4 *Mules and Men* met praise from anthropologists and mainstream book critics, particularly for its view, in Du Boisian terms, behind the Veil of black life without white presence. Sterling Brown, who covered similar ground in poetic form in his 1932 *Southern Road*, criticized the book's apparent apolitical portrayal of southern black life (Boyd 2003: 281). He took issue with the book's incompleteness, its refusal to portray head on the exploitation of black labor and the despair of poverty and deprivation in the South: "[t]hese people live in a land shadowed by squalor, poverty, disease, violence, enforced ignorance and exploitation. Even if browbeaten, they do know a smouldering resentment ... *Mules and Men* should be more bitter; it would be nearer the total truth" (qtd. in Boyd 2003: 281).
- 5 Tode continues: "Mexican and Negro workers only are employed in the insect ridden cypress swamps, often up to their hips in water, and must live with their families in house boats built over the swamps. Living quarters for Negro workers are 'match-box' shacks or box cars, segregated from white workers in the towns and in the camps. Negro lumber workers share the lot of all other Negro workers in the South, in that they are discriminated against in the types of jobs given them, are paid lower wages and provided inferior housing conditions and poorer schools for their children" (1931: 83–4).

Chapter 5

A version of this chapter was previously published in *Modern Fiction Studies* 55 (3) (Fall 2009): 566–95.

- 1 In "Work and Culture: The Evolution of Consciousness in Urban Industrial Society in the Fiction of William Attaway and Peter Abrahams," Cynthia Hamilton focuses on the novel's seeming antiurbanism, but she is primarily concerned with its lament for the decaying cultural forms that once sustained black life in the South (1987). In "Migration, Material Culture, and Identity in William Attaway's *Blood on the Forge*," Stacy I. Morgan works within a migration narrative frame when she argues that the novel shows us how "material culture serves not only to *reflect* but to *shape* the lives of poor and

working-class Americans” (2001: 715). Edward Margolies goes the furthest when he conflates Smothers’s worldview with Attaway’s, arguing that the novel condemns “a kind of greed that manifests itself as a violence to the land, a transgression of Nature” (1970: xiv).

- 2 Because of this ambiguity in the georgic mode (optimism versus pessimism), I use the terminology of pastoralism in this section to convey Attaway’s generally pessimistic attitude toward country living.
- 3 Edward Margolies ties this view to an early-nineteenth-century romanticism, one that condemns the capitalist “greed that manifests itself as a violence to the land, a transgression of Nature” (1970: xiv). He goes on to caution that “[f]rom one point of view [Attaway’s] feelings about the sanctity of nature now seem almost quaint in an age of cybernetics,” though, he adds, this critique does not devalue the novel’s relevance to the global environmental crisis (1970: xviii).

Conclusion

- 1 As Joni Adamson and Scott Slovic observe, the “roots of the environmental movement can be traced back to the abolition movement” and “many of the most successful strategies of early environmentalism were borrowed from the abolition, civil rights, and women’s movements and American Indian Land Claims lawsuits” (2009: 6).
- 2 See <http://newworknewculture.org/>. See also the writings of American philosopher, Frithjof Bergmann.
- 3 For a discussion of the problems involved in analogizing biodiversity with cultural diversity, see Schaffner (2008).