

5-14-2010

The Feminine Representation of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois in Langston Hughes' Not Without Laughter

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The Feminine Representation of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois in Langston
Hughes's Not Without Laughter

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
English

by

Matt Mosley

B.A. Belmont University, 2005

May, 2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my thesis coordinator, Dr. Earle Bryant, who instructs with love and intelligence. Without his initial encouragement, guidance and persistent help throughout the writing process this thesis would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Steeby whose intellectual prodding deepened and strengthen this work.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge several instructors who helped me throughout my academic career. Most importantly, I wish to praise my high school writing instructor, Mrs. Fuqua. Her early influence set me on this path; I hope she is proud. I wish to thank Dr. Linda Holt, Dr. Margaret Monteverde, Dr. John Paine, and Dr. Susan Tulley from Belmont University in Nashville, TN. Their influence positively shaped my work and spurred great personal goals. Without them, I would not be who I am today. I also wish to thank Dr. Catherine Loomis, Dr. Ann Boyd Rioux, and Dr. Gary Richards from the University of New Orleans in New Orleans, LA. Their classes inexpressibly challenged and inspired.

Last, I wish to acknowledge a few select friends and family. Specifically, my mother and father, Donna and Steve Mosley, for emotionally and spiritually sustaining me throughout my academic career. My brother, Brian Mosley, for inspiring holistic renewal and respectful brotherhood. My friends and support systems in Nashville, New Orleans, and around the world. Daniel Wood for helping me see the world. Zach Bevill for being an intelligent and challenging friend. Clifton Meynard for mentoring me. My New Orleans neighbor, Nanette, for being my surrogate mother and father. Katie Kotteman for being my first friend in this strange city. To the many unidentified for being present in my life. I am continually amazed and grateful for who surround me. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

Langston Hughes's novel Not Without Laughter works within the historically narrow framework of African American uplift ideology. Hughes implies Booker T. Washington's racial uplift ideology from Up From Slavery within Aunt Hager Williams. In addition, Hughes implies W.E.B. DuBois's racial uplift ideology from Souls of Black Folk within Tempy Siles. In both characters, he criticizes the ideologies. In addition, the ideologies work toward an initial construction of masculinity for Sandy, the protagonist, and ultimately undermine an argument for gender equality.

Keywords: race, African American, Langston Hughes, uplift, masculinity, gender, blues, DuBois, Washington, Souls of Black Folk, Up from Slavery, Harlem Renaissance, middle-class, ideology, bourgeois

INTRODUCTION

When the United States of America elected its first bi-racial president, Barack Obama, many believed it marked a victory over a long tradition of racial oppression. At times, Obama seems to portray himself as this symbol of victory over racial injustice and suggests that his election will eventually end historic racial hatred. He articulated the country's ability to combat social injustices in his acceptance speech: "...Because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass." Obama continues to describe the country's ability to combat social injustices when he tells of Ann Nixon Cooper, a 106-year-old African American woman "born a generation past slavery." Her story combines racial and gender injustices legislatively overcome. He explains, "Someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons - because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin." Obama seems to suggest that because a non-white man is president and an African American woman maintains the right to vote, then the country is very close to overcoming oppression of people based upon race and gender.

While Obama points to legislative victories in the area of race and gender equality, others point out underlying societal injustices. Raina Kelley notes her frustration in a Newsweek editorial, "The End of Black History Month?" She writes, "The contributions of famous black Americans, from Frederick Douglass to Oprah Winfrey, are widely known. Martin Luther King Jr. has his own federal holiday. The president of the United States is black. If tens of millions of white people voted for Barack Hussein Obama, the lesson has been learned, right? As if." Due to the general acceptance and adoration of exemplary African Americans and the election of Obama, we might see concrete markers of racial equality. However, she denies such suggestions

with two words, “as if.” Other critics have more eloquently echoed her point. In addition, Senator Harry Reid’s comments as to why Obama could be elected President reveal much about the current underlying social prejudices. Senator Larry Reid stated, “Obama was a good candidate because he was a ‘light-skinned’ African-American ‘with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one’” (Hurst). His comments not only ignited a media firestorm, but also led critics to reanalyze “the state of race relations in the United States” (Hurst). Overall, the country that enacts legislative measures to fight against race and gender injustices still maintains historic societal prejudices based on race and gender.

Whether it represents a victory for racial equality or not, the election of Barack Obama is significant. A man who at one time might have been regarded as a white man’s property is now holding the most powerful office in the country. Within this historic moment, it is important to reflect upon the milestones, intellectually and historically, that have made this event possible. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 declared African Americans free from slavery and began the intellectual discussion of racial uplift. African American leaders—Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. DuBois—participated in the national dialogue of racial uplift, whose terms are defined by their respective times. Kevin K. Gaines sets forth a comprehensive and critical meaning of racial uplift. He writes, “Popular meanings of uplift [are] rooted in public education, economic rights, group resistance and struggle...” (2). He continues, “Uplift, among its other connotations, also represented the struggle for a positive black identity in a deeply racist society” (3). For him, racial uplift includes practical education, an ideology that promotes social, economic, and political equality for African Americans and the establishment of a positive identity among not only African Americans, but also middle-class white Americans. Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. DuBois add to this

dialogue in relation to their noted positions in time and the social climate of the nation. They all offer programs that, in theory, opened the door for Obama's election.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, most African Americans believed the race needed to be “uplifted,” but not everyone agreed on the methodology in which to achieve such a daunting feat. Most agreed African Americans needed to be educated, but they disagreed as to what that education should involve. Generally, the debate divided into two ideological camps—Booker Taliaferro Washington and William Edward Burghardt DuBois. However, such a dichotomy inevitably suggests the absence of ambiguity. In addition, this construction of the dialogue tends too simply to unite notions of race, class and sexuality under the one common term of racial uplift. Gaines states, “Historians have generally framed black thought and leadership narrowly, stressing the opposition between self-help and civil rights agitation, as embodied by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, respectively. Civil rights liberalism remains the focus of such dichotomous—and masculinist—constructions of black leadership, to the exclusion of more democratic constructions of uplift” (2). For Gaines, historians too often ignore the democratic notions of uplift. Specifically, Gaines says notions of gender uplift remain in the background despite significant influential figures fighting for such issues.

Artistic representation of racial uplift occurs prominently during the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes is noted as the Poet Laureate of the Harlem Renaissance, and his novel Not Without Laughter works within the historically “dichotomous...constructions of black leadership” (Gaines 2). The protagonist, Sandy—representing the new generation of racial uplift—observes the ideological camps of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Hughes avoids being overtly political by making the novel ambiguous about Sandy's future in relation to racial uplift ideology. Sandy does not actively promote Washington's or DuBois's ideological

norms, nor does he completely reject them. Many critics suggest Sandy takes the best from both ideologies and forges a new middle ground. Sterling A. Brown, for example, says, “Sandy seems destined to pursue the middle course, and we leave him optimistically to face the future” (Langston 93). Others suggest that notions of individual independence and family overshadow racial ideology. R. Baxter Miller’s article suggests that Sandy “chooses Harriett as a model because of Harriet’s independence and self-content” (368). He continues, “The final chapter suggests a re-creation of the family bond...these three represent the worker, the singer, the potential intellectual” (368). For Miller, Sandy does not overtly choose a racial uplift ideology because it would take him away from his family and strip him of his independence.

However, Sandy’s ambiguous alignment with programs of racial uplift does not mean that Hughes’s novel is not political. The novel’s first draft received extensive comments from Charlotte Mason, Hughes’s benefactor known as “Godmother” (Rampersad 156). She “expected to be consulted regularly on every important aspect of [Hughes’s] creative flight” (Rampersad 156). John P. Shields’s article points out specific points of Mason’s influence in the novel. Specifically, she suggested that Hughes keep his political biases out of the text. Within the comments on the novel’s first draft, she wrote: “Oh my dear Langston, keep yourself in the background” (Shields 605). While Hughes avoids overtly political language, he nonetheless delivers a political novel. Shields points out, “Hughes, in the final version, manages to include a critical voice—despite Godmother’s objections—by using heightened poetic, even epiphanic language” (608). Hughes’s political ideas appear through metaphor and ideological representation.

Specifically, Hughes reiterates African Americans’ disjunction between political and social statuses; African Americans possess legislatively granted freedom, but no societal

liberties. In this case, Hughes uses metaphor to suggest his critique. At one point in the novel, he goes into detail about Hager's clothes cleaning process. With a heightened awareness of racial history and injustice, the cleaning process becomes a reflection of timely racial injustices. The narrator elaborates, "After soaking all night, the garments were rubbed through the suds in the morning; and in the afternoon the colored articles were on the line while the white pieces were boiling seriously in a large tin boiler..." (50). Overall, the clothes start the cleaning process together, implying the physical proximity of African Americans and white Americans before the Emancipation Proclamation. In the morning, all of the clothes are "rubbed through the suds"; African Americans and white Americans possess a legislative guarantee of freedom; all are cleansed from the stain of slavery. However, after the equalizing process, Hager separates the clothes by color, which implies the physical distance between African Americans and white Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation. This physical distance suggests segregation, but also a distance in opportunity within social, political, and economic realms. Interestingly, the colored clothing strung up on a line suggests the constant lynchings African Americans suffered. The white clothing remains in the tub to continue cleaning; this suggests white Americans' continuation of prosperity, the ever-increasing whiteness of the country. Here, Hughes cleverly reiterates the social injustices African Americans suffer despite the legislative victory to abolish slavery.

In addition, Hughes comments on programs of racial uplift as potentially superficial and limited. He also does this with symbolism. When Sandy picks up work at Drummer's Hotel, a grimy establishment, his job requires him to clean the spittoons located in the main room of the hotel. With a heightened awareness, the description of the hotel and spittoons suggest a futile struggle of racial uplift. The narrator explains, "[Sandy] always felt very proud of himself when,

about six o'clock, he could look around the dingy old lobby and see the six gleaming brass bowls catching the glow of the electric lamps..." (208). The spittoons begin the day in the same condition as the lobby—dingy—and suggest the initial economic and social status of most African Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation. Through Sandy's hard work, they are gleaming; Sandy, in this case, represents the implementation of programs to uplift African Americans socially, politically, and economically. However, Hughes offers his critique of such programs. Implicitly the spittoons quickly return to their former state; African Americans, as a whole, do not gain real equality; they are not successfully uplifted. Hughes subtly comments on current racial uplift dialogue. He seems to suggest the programs creates a temporary gleam, but real uplift occurs when the entire country unites for the common goal of racial uplift.

Outside of the use of symbolism, Hughes represents and critiques specific ideologies of racial uplift. Booker T. Washington's and W.E.B. DuBois's ideologies exhibit through Aunt Hager Williams and Tempy Siles, respectively. I draw from Booker T. Washington's Up From Slavery in order to establish ideological similarities and Hughes's critiques of racial uplift ideology within Aunt Hager Williams. In addition, I draw from W.E.B. DuBois's Souls of Black Folk in order to establish similar notions within Tempy Siles. Beyond representing racial uplift ideologies in order to critique, Hughes complicates the representation by using female characters. Hughes may be attempting to poetically disguise his critique, but potentially he is attempting to overturn historically established masculinist notions of African American uplift ideology. However, the ideologies themselves encourage and reiterate traditional constructions of masculinity, and the representation of such ideology within female characters works only to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity and the patriarchy. In addition, Hughes depicts Hager and Tempy as women who remain well within the domestic sphere

CHAPTER ONE

Aunt Hager Williams and Booker T. Washington:

Representation and Critique

Booker T. Washington is, without a doubt, an important figure within the debate of racial uplift during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. With opening the Tuskegee Negro Normal Institute on 4 July in 1888, rising to national fame in light of his Atlanta Exposition speech in 1895, and helping to establish the National Negro Business League in 1900, he spoke for his race on a national level. Washington's ideology and methodology were consistent throughout his career at Tuskegee and on the lecture circuit. His autobiography, Up from Slavery, tells the story of his life from his time in slavery through his rise to great national influence. Donald B. Gibson notes that, "[Washington] is not simply telling the story of his life, he is delivering complex messages through the telling" (376). Washington's story exhibits the most comprehensive presentation of his ideology and methodology toward racial uplift.

For my purposes, I use Up From Slavery as a presentation of Washington's core beliefs in order to establish striking similarities between Washington's ideology and Langston Hughes's character Aunt Hager Williams in his novel Not Without Laughter. Sterling A. Brown describes Hager as "an aged Negro woman, a pious, homespun, ample-bosomed individual, beloved by all with whom she comes into frequent contact" (Langston 92). Hager's influence on the protagonist is irrefutable; she is Sandy's prominent maternal figure. For example, in the beginning of the novel Sandy holds on to *her* apron strings while watching the approaching storm (20). Hager's importance grows when looking at the structure of the novel. "Aunt Hager Williams" are the first words of the novel. Her death occurs in the twenty-second chapter of the thirty chapters; she is at rest on page 232 of 299 pages. However, well after her death, her

understanding of racial uplift reemerges. In the final scene of the novel, Harriet reiterates Hager's wishes for Sandy. Harriet explains, "He's gotta be what his grandma Hager wanted him to be—able to help the black race...Help the whole race!" (298). Hager's influence in the novel also suggests her representation of Washington's ideology. Hughes encourages the correlation between Washington and Hager; Hager directly encourages the protagonist to be like Booker T. Washington. She proclaims in reference to Sandy, "I's gwine make a edicated man out o' him. He's gwine be another Booker T. Washington" (141). The need for education echoes common threads within the dialogue of racial uplift. Specifically, much of Washington's text centers on the formation and development of the Tuskegee Negro Normal Institute. Washington applies past personal experiences at Hampton Institute in order to create a program of racial uplift. For Washington, African Americans must adhere to several general characteristics in order to bring "about a higher degree of civilization" (85). Those characteristics—clean spaces and self, establishment of economic value, and European colonialist construction of nature—note an adherence to bourgeois white American norms. For Hager, Washington is the ideal African American. Hager—whether she realizes it or not—puts into practice Washington's core beliefs and is somewhat rewarded in the end.

First, Washington insists upon cleanliness. His initial acceptance into the Hampton Institution comes from a cleanliness exam. He does not pass a conventional exam, write an eloquent essay, nor receive a formal interview. Instead, he is told to "take the broom and sweep" the recitation-room (25). He passes the test and explains, "never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction" (25). He continues, "I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed" (25). Passing this initial test opens up a new world for Washington;

he is able to study, acquire hope for economic freedom and maintain optimism about the country's ability to combat racial injustices.

In Hughes's depiction of Sandy's first day of integrated class he mirrors Washington's acceptance into Hampton Institute. The integrated class is Sandy's first experience with legislative equality and represents a new sense of hope and freedom. Here, Hager stresses the importance of cleanliness, not intellectual ability, as a means to deserving such notions of freedom. Hager says: "Wash yo' face good, sir, put on your clean waist, an' polish yo' shoes" (130). She continues, "'cause I don't want none o' them white teachers sayin' I sends you to school dirty as a 'cuse to put you back in de forth grade" (130). Hager implies that Sandy is deserving of participation in an integrated classroom if he is overtly clean. Much like Washington's "exam" that opens up a new world of opportunity, Hager suggests that Sandy's cleanliness provides similar results.

Because Washington's ability to clean the recitation-room provides an opportunity to enter Hampton Institute, cleanliness would become a trait of all Tuskegee students. Washington proclaims, "One thing that I have insisted upon at Tuskegee is that everywhere there should be absolute cleanliness" (84). For Washington, a clean living and working space encourages self-respect and respect from others: "...People would excuse us for our poverty, for our lack of comforts and conveniences, but...they would not excuse us for dirt" (84). For Washington, poverty and the lack of comforts are social injustices endured by African Americans. However, dirt in social spaces can only be blamed upon those who inhabit those spaces. For Washington, if African Americans maintain clean social spaces, then social and political injustices will come to the forefront and ultimately be rectified.

Washington also discusses the importance of personal hygiene. At Tuskegee, Washington insists students “bathe as regularly as to take their meals” and demands that “...all buttons must be kept on their clothes, and that there must be no torn places and no grease-spots” (85). The “gospel of the tooth-brush” is an idea taken from his mentor General Armstrong at the Hampton Institute (84). Washington explains, “We wanted to teach the students how to bathe; how to care for their teeth and clothing...” (61). Washington demands cleanliness of space and self.

Aunt Hager, a washwoman, embodies Washington’s notions of cleanliness. In addition to her work, she spends her leisure time maintaining an explicitly clean home. The narrator articulates, “she was always cleaning something about the house, dusting, polishing the range, or scrubbing the kitchen floor until it was white enough to eat from” (209). If Hager fails to follow Washington’s insistence upon cleanliness, then it is within personal hygiene. She is less concerned or less able to encourage Sandy’s hygiene. The narrator says that though she “would always be waiting for him, keeping the fire warm, with the wash-tub full of water for his weekly bath” (210), Sandy does not bathe “as regularly as to take [his] meal” and knows anything of a toothbrush. In any case, Hager is the only character to encourage Sandy’s hygiene. She fulfills, if only partially, Washington’s demand for cleanliness.

Second, Washington encourages African Americans to establish economic value. This point is clear in his 1895 Atlanta Exposition speech. For Melbourne Cummings, this speech is Washington’s most important. Cummings asserts, “Almost everything he talked about after the Atlanta Exposition speech was an amplification of that address” (82). In the speech, Washington declares that African Americans must “cast down their buckets where they are” and prove their individual economic worth in order to establish worth for the entire race (106). He continues to

say that African Americans should focus on “perfecting themselves in the industries at their doors and in securing property” (40).

Washington privileges industry knowledge over intellectual cultivation and what he calls “mere books” (61). Throughout the autobiography, he is critical of men who claim intellect but have no industrial skills. He imagines such a man as, “sitting down in a one-room cabin, with grease on his clothing, filth all around him, and weeds in the yard and garden, engaged in studying a French grammar” (59). For him, these are unsuccessful men. In order for African Americans to be successful, he encourages them to fill an industrial need in the local community. Washington explains, “The individual who can do something that the world wants done will, in the end, make his way regardless of his race” (75). He continues to encourage African Americans to perform exceptional work in order to receive recognition and reward. Washington writes, “Any man, regardless of colour, will be recognized and rewarded just in proportion as he learns to do something well—learns to do it better than someone else—however humble the thing may be” (137). David Howard-Pitney explains Washington’s assumptions about American society: “In America, [Washington] claimed, every person rises or falls in direct proportion to individual ability and effort. The circumstances of class, ethnicity, or race were irrelevant because American society promises that everyone who works hard can become a prosperous middle-class individual” (54). Washington implies that perfecting an industrial skill will establish economic value and lead to economic, political, and social equality. At Tuskegee, Washington reiterates this path to racial uplift. He explains, “We wanted to give [students] such a practical knowledge of some one industry, together with the spirit of industry, thrift, and economy...to teach them to study actual things instead of mere books alone” (61). He continues

further to insist his students “learn to love work for its own sake” and acquire a “dignity of labour” (72, 35). Tuskegee wished to lift labor up from “mere drudgery and toil” (73).

Hager’s occupation fills a need in the local community and establishes her economic value. Her occupation also intertwines two notions of Washington’s ideology, cleanliness and industry. Her overt association with her occupation works to emphasize the connection with Washington’s ideology. Her life is so tuned to her profession that the narrator suggests the days of the week are inseparable with the tasks she performs. The opening of the fourth chapter begins, “On Thursday she did the Reinharts’ washing, on Friday she ironed it, and on Saturdays she sent it home, clean and beautifully white” (49). Also, her association with and dedication to her occupation never falters in light of sickness. The narrator points out her physical decline when she “had been trying to finish her wash” (222). Notably, she seems more concerned about finishing her work than about her own health. She asks Sandy to ask “Sister Johnson...if she can’t wring out ma clothes fo’ me” (222). She continues, “an’ you can help her hang ‘em up” (222). Hager’s occupation also suggests the limited opportunities women possess within Washington’s ideology. Washington insists African Americans learn an industrial skill; however, women must remain within the traditional domestic sphere.

Hager fulfills Washington’s exceptional work standards. Beyond her dedication to her occupation, she criticizes Jimboy, Sandy’s father, for his lack of work ethic. Hager criticizes Jimboy saying, “Always something wrong with that nigger! He’ll be back here now, layin’ round, doin’ nothin’ fo’ de rest o’ de summer” (43). Jimboy, associated with blues music and instant fulfillment, values art and entertainment over economic value and hard work. Later in the novel, Hager specifically implies Jimboy’s lack of economic value. She proclaims about

Jimboy, “He sho’ ain’t worth his salt!” (134). Overall, her criticism of Jimboy further solidifies her symbolic connection to Washington’s ideologies.

Third, Washington constructs nature as a means to provide economic hope and social assurance. Scott Hicks, in “W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, and Richard Wright: Toward an Ecocriticism of Color,” points out a key moment when Washington’s construction of the natural world becomes clear. Hicks remembers a scene in which Washington ponders within the natural world around Tuskegee. Hicks quotes Washington: “as often as possible, [I enjoy] touching nature, not something artificial or an imitation, but the real thing...I pity the man or woman who has never learned to enjoy nature and to get strength and inspiration out of it” (207). As if drawing upon similar ideas, Hughes reiterates these sentiments about nature. For example, Hager’s home unites her and her family with the natural world; the narrator points out, “All the windows and doors were open” (92). Elizabeth Schultz states, “Both the porch and the backyard are extensions of the house into the outdoors. Members of the family are often on the porch talking...while the back yard...is a playground for Sandy” (1178). Hager communes with nature more than any other characters in the novel. After the storm at the beginning of the novel, Hager laughs and delights at the “hundreds of purple and white morning-glories” on her back fence (31). In addition, Hager is associated with her backyard’s apple tree. Hughes uses the tree as a literary device to denote a passing of time, but the tree also functions as a natural sanctuary for the family. Sandy plays “house” with his friends of differing complexions (33), listens to Harriet and Jimboy perform music (61), learns to play guitar with Jimboy (129), and reflects when his grandmother is sick (225). The apple tree is a space beyond social prejudices; it is a place of familial rejuvenation; it is a real natural space that provides sanctuary from the unnatural conditions of social injustices.

Washington's construction of nature as a provider of economic hope illustrates his colonial constructions of nature. Hicks claims Washington views nature as "something to be conquered and exploited" (205). Specifically, Washington sees nature as a means to cultivate capital. For him, exploiting nature in order to gain economic worth leads to being recognized and rewarded. Also, exploiting nature will allow African Americans a sense of equality; the act of exploitation suggests an ability to influence their physical environment in ways in which they are unable to influence other aspects of their lives. Hicks explains, "Even if African Americans could not exercise suffrage, assembly, and fair trial, they at least could control nature" (205). Importantly, however, this exploitation mirrors the exploitation white Americans enacted upon African Americans. By viewing nature within this construction, Washington agrees with colonial exploitation of nature as a proper means of cultivating economic value.

In addition, Washington's constructions of nature also provide a sense of assurance that African Americans will obtain equality. The assurance comes from Washington's belief that there is a natural process in American society for obtaining equality. Specifically, he thinks African Americans must first adhere to basic characteristics of the bourgeois and establish basic economic value in order to naturally obtain equal rights. For him, the establishment of economic worth is an integral part of American society. Hicks suggests Washington's "construction of nature replicates his notion of human accommodationism" (206). Washington's argument against passing legislative laws reinforces this idea. Washington argues, "The agitation of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than artificial forcing" (108).

While Hager does not seem to exploit nature for monetary gain, she exhibits Washington's belief in a natural progression toward equality. For example, she seems to suggest

that African Americans have not achieved equality because they have not established basic economic value. She states, “I been knowin’ white folks all ma life, an’ they’s good as far as they can see—but when it comes to po’ niggers, they just can’t see far, that’s all” (82). Hager also reiterates Washington’s notions of accommodation. Scott Hicks asserts that Washington—and I submit the same holds true for Hager—believes “African Americans must not agitate for their rights through protest or politics; rather, they will receive their rights in due time, at the right season, when relations between whites and blacks have progressed in a ‘natural’ way” (206).

The most striking scene in which Hager exhibits an understanding of the natural process of American equality comes when Sandy is turned away from Children’s Day at a newly opened amusement park. The children are upset because of the unexpected injustice. Hager acknowledges the injustice, but ultimately accepts the futility of trying to change the social situation. Hager says, “They’s po trash owns that park. Don’t know no better, hurtin’ chillens’ feelin’s, but we’ll forgive ‘em! Don’t fret yo’self, Sister Johnson. What good can frettin’ do? Come on here, let’s we have a party of our own” (199). This reaction reiterates Washington’s understanding that African Americans will achieve equality through perseverance and struggle; no forced equality. Therefore, many African Americans endure outright injustices in the name of a greater plan, a natural process.

Hager’s fulfillment of Washington’s ideology is eventually recognized and rewarded within the community. Notably, this comes in the form of sympathy at her funeral. The service is large and exuberantly decorated with flowers donated from people of varying social statuses.

The narrator explains,

There were many fine pieces from the families for whom she had washed and from the white neighbors she had nursed in sickness. There were offerings, too, from

Tempy's high-toned friends and from Harriett's girl companions in the house in the Bottoms. Many of the bell-boys, porters, and bootleggers sent wreaths and crosses with golden letters on them...there was a bouquet of violets from Buster's mother and a blanket of roses from Tempy herself. (231)

Hughes makes a point to note the differing complexions, occupations, and geographic locations of those who express sympathy for Hager's passing. Her recognition transcends socially constructed boundaries. Specifically, her obituary recognizes her work within the white community. It simply reads, "She was known and respected by many white families in the community" (230). Ultimately, Hughes suggests that only her death allows her to achieve a kind of social equality.

While her funeral displays the possible benefits of fulfilling Washington's ideology of racial uplift, such displays of equality do not remain. After this lavish display at the church, Hager's body quickly returns to her previous social status. Her body rests in the "far, lonesome corner where most of the Negroes rested" (231). Hughes implies that fulfilling such ideology may lead to brief recognition and reward, but ultimately African Americans will return to their earlier social status.

Overall, Washington's ideology encourages African Americans to develop characteristics of the traditional, bourgeois, colonial white American society. He is adamant about general cleanliness, and his methodology of racial uplift hinges on the establishment of economic value. He suggests African Americans will naturally proceed toward equality if they fulfill this methodology. For him, there is no need to artificially or legislatively push social and political equality; the race is simply not ready. Washington offers a limited notion of progress, which Hager fulfills. She receives recognition and reward through a display of sympathy at her funeral that transcends socially constructed boundaries. However, with this representation Hughes critiques Washington's ideology as limited and results in only a brief display of equality.

CHAPTER TWO

Tempy Siles and W.E.B. DuBois:

Representation and Critique

William Edward Burghardt DuBois is the next important figure within the debate of racial uplift during the beginning of the twentieth century. With becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895, helping to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, and contributing articles to the journal *The Crisis*, he spoke for his race on a national level. DuBois's methodology changed throughout his career, but remained focused within the dialogue of racial uplift. For my purposes, I use his classic work The Souls of Black Folk as a presentation of DuBois's core beliefs specifically in 1903 in order to establish striking similarities between DuBois's beliefs and Hughes's character Tempy Siles in Not Without Laughter. As DuBois's ideology is the generation after Washington's, Tempy is the next influential female in the novel after Hager. Tempy Siles is Aunt Hager Williams's daughter. Wallace Thurman aptly describes Tempy Siles: she "marries modest riches, becomes genteel in her tastes, deserts the Baptists for the Episcopalians, and draws her skirts aside from all that has been known as 'Negro'" (Langston 92). Importantly, Tempy is present in only a few chapters of the novel. The time Sandy lives with her, chapter twenty-three to the beginning of chapter twenty-eight, mark her most influential moments—essentially pages 234 to 275. However, this lack of presence in the novel does not undermine her influence; her physical absence actually reiterates her worldly success and suggestion of racial equality. Tempy successfully moves out of the world of poverty shown at Hager's house and navigates closer, in proximity and freedom, to the white community. Hughes pushes the correlation between DuBois and Tempy; Tempy encourages Sandy to be like

W.E.B. DuBois. She tells him, “Take DuBois for your model...” (242). DuBois, for Tempy, is associated with real progress for African Americans. He advocates general bourgeois characteristics as a means to uplift the entire race. Specifically, he encourages higher learning beyond menial industrial skills and a reconsideration of the natural world. Beyond such notions, he sustains the belief of uplifting, praising and emulating a few exceptional African Americans. Tempy fulfills DuBois’s ideals and reaps immediate benefits. However, looking deeper, one notices that Hughes suggests the methodology is superficial and provides little beyond the appearance of equality.

First, DuBois’s text itself exhibits one characteristic inherent in DuBois’s methodology—proper and elevated language. Stanley Brodwin’s “The Veil Transcended: Form and Meaning in W.E.B. DuBois’ ‘The Souls of Black Folk’” points out DuBois’s stylistic skills: “DuBois employed a variety of literary techniques handled with skill: rhetorical tropes, allegory, symbolic patterns, personal confession, biography, and musical motifs from the sorrow songs or spirituals” (306). Brodwin continues, “DuBois frequently uses inversions and lapses, occasionally, into language like ‘Lo,’ ‘anon,’ and ‘hark!’ He employs archaic biblical forms such as ‘Hast thou.’ His prose is often ‘purple’” (319). The lofty language differs from the more straightforward and simple language of Booker T. Washington’s autobiography. DuBois’s language fights against connotations of African Americans being intellectually simplistic or inferior.

Tempy also encourages proper and elevated language. She starts with Sandy’s name. From her first scene in the novel, Tempy insists on calling Sandy by his birth name, James, and not his nickname. Not only does this suggest DuBois’s linguistic ideals, but it also suggests a new identity for the protagonist. He is no longer “Sandy,” the boy shrouded in poverty and deep

racial injustices; now, he is “James,” a member of an exceptional class of African Americans. For her, the connotations associated with certain words lead to real social constructs. She implies that the use of elevated language elevates African Americans in class. She corrects Sandy’s speech on the first morning at her house. She explains, “You needn’t say yes’m’ in this house. We are not used to slavery talk here” (235). For her, “slavery talk” allows others to identify Sandy as a slave. Tempy pushes this notion further to include other constructions of identity. For her, proper language, dress, and diet reflect an exceptional individual. Tempy corrects Sandy’s “slave talk”, dresses him at Wertheimer’s, and gets her recipes from *The Ladies’ Home Journal* (238).

DuBois’s elevated language reflects extensive and elite training in higher education. Generally, DuBois believes education works as a means to preemptively fight against criminal behavior; a community should fund education instead of correctional facilities. DuBois articulates, “The chief problem in any community cursed with crime is not the punishment of the criminals, but the preventing of the young from being trained to crime” (79). DuBois suggests training for African Americans in all areas of academia: “teach the workers to work and the thinkers to think; make carpenters of carpenters and philosophers of philosophers, and fops of the fools” (40). Importantly, he warns against Washington’s ideology for education only as “money-getting” (40). For DuBois, education will allow African Americans to enjoy freedom from political and social injustices. DuBois contends, “The final product of our training must neither be psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man. And to make men, we must have ideals, broad, pure, and inspiring ends of living...” (40). DuBois states, “The function of the Negro college, then, is clear: it must maintain the standards of popular education, it must seek the social

regeneration of the Negro, and it must help in the solution of problems of race contact and cooperation. And finally, beyond all this, it must develop men” (49).

Bringing to mind DuBois’s education at Harvard, Tempy insists Sandy pursue a classical track at school. His courses “included Latin, ancient history, and English...[he also receives] an introduction to Shakespeare...[and] *The Merchant of Venice*” (244). A “proud” Tempy watches over the “studious” Sandy while he “spent much of his first year with Tempy deep in novels” (243). As DuBois insists, the courses and novels go beyond practical “money-getting” industrial skills. Hughes implies that the courses cultivate traditional elite knowledge.

Second, DuBois recommends reconsidering the colonial construction of the natural world. For him, the end of slavery marks a time to rethink the natural possibilities of African Americans and the natural world. DuBois reiterates this point by personifying the natural world. Hicks states, “DuBois’s personification of the land makes clear, the enslavement of a whole people forces a revision of customary ways of thinking of the entire environment as an object of enslavement. No longer, that is, should humans blindly adhere to a ‘tendency... born of slavery and quickened to renewed life by the crazy imperialism of the day, to regard human beings as among the material resources of a land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends’” (209-210). For DuBois, African Americans do not progress socially or politically only by establishing their economic value; likewise, the environment is not bettered because it contains economic value. In direct opposition to Washington, “DuBois detaches notions of economic value from environmental sites” (210). Hicks points out DuBois’s insistence upon an aesthetically pleasing cultivation of the land over merely an economic cultivation. DuBois states in the chapter “Of the Black Belt,” “Further on lives Jack Delson, the most prosperous Negro farmer in the county. It is a joy to meet him...six hundred and fifty acres he owns, and has

eleven black tenants. A neat and tidy home nestled in a flower-garden” (60). Scott asserts, “What symbolizes his success, more than figures and statistics, is the environment he has constructed amidst the environment he cultivates” (211). Hicks continues, “Delson’s reformulation of the picturesque—self-sufficient, self-actualized, and self-made—provide a basis for DuBois’s confidence that ‘the Negro is rising’ (SBF 87)” (211).

Notably, Tempy does not commune within the natural world like Hager. Elizabeth Schultz’s essay explains that “The dominant imagery of these concluding chapters concerns architecture, books, streets, trains, elevators” (1185). Schultz continues, “By alienating her from nature, Hughes underscores her desires not only to identify with the color and the material prosperity of Stanton’s upper-class whites, but also to distance herself from the rich African-American culture embraced by the other members of her family” (1185). Tempy locks up Hager’s house after the funeral. In doing so, she metaphorically shuts out the natural world and her ancestors’ history. No longer does Sandy enjoy a natural sanctuary under the apple tree in Hager’s backyard; no longer does the natural world provide comfort against the unnatural injustices of racism. Tempy rethinks her environment and establishes new aesthetics within an urban and elite beauty.

Rethinking aesthetics has a dramatic effect on Sandy. The narrator notes a moment when Sandy understands his new relationship to nature and history, a scene where Sandy notices the natural world and his childhood as a distant memory. The narrator states, Sandy “stood for a moment in his pyjamas looking out of the window at the roofs of the houses and the tops of the trees under the night sky” (266). Within this moment, Schultz suggests a complete synthesis of ideologies. Sandy immerses himself in the urban world, but is still able to see the rural world at a distance: “Sandy has the capacity to remember the all-important legacies from his rural home

and to integrate them into his new urban life” (1186). This is a melancholy moment in the novel. Hughes suggests that through fulfilling DuBois’s ideology, as Sandy has, one feels socially and historically separated and saddened.

Third, DuBois’s reconsideration of the natural world destabilizes Washington’s assurance of racial equality through the country’s natural process. To use Washington’s words, DuBois suggests an “artificial” lifting of a select group of African Americans, the Talented Tenth, in order to uplift the rest of the race. This elite tenth of the African American population represents intelligence in a range of fields including math, science, politics, the humanities and artistic talents in various genres. This select population would encourage Caucasian Americans to view African Americans’ potential; also, African Americans would see strong African American role models. DuBois explains his theory: “Progress in human affairs is more often a pull than a push, a surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage-ground” (44). For him, the initial uplifting of a few would lead to the lifting the entire race.

As DuBois positions himself as a member of this elite sect of African Americans, Tempy also considers herself a member of the exceptional group. She “owned houses” (237). Her husband, Arkin Siles, is a mail-clerk “who had inherited three houses from his father” (236). Tempy and her husband’s reputation in the community are “eminently respectable” (238). She befriends the best African Americans in the community. The narrator states, “Tempy’s friends were all people of standing in the darker world—doctors, school-teachers, a dentist, lawyer, a hairdresser” (239). Hughes implies this group inherently adheres to bourgeois norms of dress and manner. Thus, they all fulfill DuBois’s characteristics.

Because of her membership in the best African American community, Tempy seems to be able to exercise a kind of economic freedom. Tempy explains, “I always trade at good shops” (235). The narrator points out that Tempy is the “only colored woman in town who ran a bill” at Wertheimer’s, the city’s largest store (235). Unlike Washington’s ideology, which suggests African Americans must first establish economic value in order to achieve racial equality, Tempy works in the opposite manner. She establishes social and political associations that allow her to exercise a kind of economic freedom.

For Tempy, becoming a member of the exceptional African American class exists through external signs—speech, dress, and diet. In reality, these external signs suggest Tempy’s complete assimilation to bourgeois white American norm. She dilutes DuBois’s notion of excellence into adaptation, acceptance, and integration. She explicitly states, “Colored people certainly needed to come up in the world...up to the level of white people—dress like white people, talk like white people, think like white people—and then they would no longer be called ‘niggers’” (238). One critic notes, “She is the arriviste, the worshipper of white folks’ ways, the striver” (Langston 96). Hughes suggests the possibility of such a character, one who distorts DuBois’s initial African American ideals, becoming a member the elite class.

To further reiterate Tempy’s tendency to publicly promote DuBois’s ideology while privately encouraging assimilation, one needs look no further than her personal bookshelf. Siles encourages Sandy’s classical intellectual pursuits at school, yet her private texts reveal a leaning toward popular white American texts. The narrator explains there were a “row of English classics bound in red, an Encyclopedia of World Knowledge in twelve volumes...and some modern novels—The Rosary, The Little Shepard of Kingdom Come, the newest Harold Bell Wright, and all that had ever been written by Gene Stratton Porter, Tempy’s favorite author”

(241). Interestingly, there is no mention of classical texts, Shakespeare or Plato, like the ones she encourages Sandy to read. Instead, there are texts with “simple characters” that emphasize “love, appreciation” and “tended to see people as all good or all bad” (Chudleigh, *The Life*).

Hughes mentions two African American authors, Charles Chestnutt and Paul Lawrence Dunbar. The narrator explains that Tempy tolerates Dunbar only “on account of his fame” (242). Tempy subscribes to DuBois’s own publication and official organ of the NAACP, *The Crisis*. At first, this fact reiterates Tempy’s association with DuBois’s ideology. She is knowledgeable and overtly associated with DuBois’s ideology. However, she actively reiterates her assimilation to white American norms by putting the publications in her “sewing-room closet” (242).

If Hughes suggests a critique of Washington’s ideology metaphorically through Williams’s funeral, then he is less poetic with his critique of DuBois’s ideology. Noting the limited time Tempy spends within the novel, Hughes seems to delve into her ideology through short anecdotes and narrator summation. Specifically, Hughes comments on DuBois’s methodology of raising up a select, exceptional group of African Americans. For all outward purposes, Tempy is a member of an elite African American class. However, her belief that she has achieved social and political equality is mistaken. Similar to Hager, Tempy does not completely overcome racial prejudices. She is freer than Hager in society, but she is not completely free. Her friends are influential members of the African American community, but not members of the white American community. She is alienated from nature, her family, her history, specific sects of African Americans and white Americans. Hughes suggests DuBois advocates an artificial separation between African Americans in hopes of achieving social and political equality.

CHAPTER THREE

Constructions of Masculinity

Hughes's novel presents and critiques the two ideological camps of racial uplift through female characters. Because Hughes writes no exceptional male figures, Aunt Hager and Tempy also present and encourage notions of masculinity in Sandy. Through looking at Washington's and DuBois's construction of masculinity in the texts Up From Slavery and The Souls of Black Folk, respectively, Sandy displays both of the men's construction of the masculine.

First, Washington and DuBois insist upon upholding traditional gender roles. David Leverenz's essay "Booker T. Washington's Strategies of Manliness, for Black and White Audiences" articulates Washington's argument for traditional gender roles. Leverenz writes, "To gain full rights of citizens, [African Americans] needed to establish minimal social standing along traditionally gendered lines" (154). Some critics extend this notion further in order to point out the undemocratic notions of racial uplift ideology. Hazel V. Carby's chapter entitled "The Souls of Black Men" explains, "Not only does [racial uplift] apply exclusively to men, but it encompasses only those men who enact narrowly and rigidly determined codes of masculinity" (10). Only African American men who conform to specific constructions of masculinity are entitled to racial equality.

For both men, masculinity hinges on the patriarchal organization of the nuclear family. Hughes refuses to establish a male character that maintains such notions. Specifically, Jimboy exists outside those traditional notions of masculinity. Jimboy, Sandy's father, is present in seven chapters, five through eleven—less than seventy-five pages. With such a limited time in the novel, Jimboy's influence is obviously less than Hager's and Tempy's. His influence

dramatically decreases—beyond the limited page numbers—through his unwillingness or inability to work within the valued patriarchal system.

Overall, Jimboy is nonchalant about his role in the family. He is constantly away from the family and communicates to his wife through letters every “two or three weeks” (46). He concerns himself not with his family’s anxiety or worry; the family leaves with no assurance of his return. The narrator attempts to rationalize Jimboy’s resistance to patriarchal notions as simply a part of his unchangeable character. The narrator explains, “It was just that he couldn’t stay in one place all the time. He’d been born running, he said, and had run ever since” (45). Jimboy’s last vanishing act from the house epitomizes his lack of concern for his family. Sandy comes home to realize that Jimboy’s possessions, including his guitar, are gone. Jimboy simply tells Hager to “tell Annjee he say goodbye, ‘cause his travellin’ blues done come on” (134). The family expects no further explanation.

In addition, Jimboy does not financially support his family. Hughes emphasizes this in the chapter entitled “Work.” Jimboy takes Sandy fishing. Jimboy relaxing on the water juxtaposes Annjee’s, Jimboy’s wife, harsh treatment from her white employer. Clearly, Annjee is doing more—and suffering more—to financially provide for her family. Within the chapter Hager scolds Jimboy for his reluctance to establish patriarchal authority. She says, “Always something to keep you from workin’” (71). And continues, “Layin’ round here fishin’ when you ought to be out makin’ money to take care o’ this house an’ that chile o’ your’n” (72). Even when Jimboy leaves his family to find work in another city, Hughes never suggests that Jimboy sends money back to the family.

Jimboy does not protect his family, physically or emotionally. He does not provide basic physical needs like food, water, and shelter. The family lives in his mother-in-law’s house. He

is not present during the tornado nor does he orchestrates the rebuilding of the house's porch. He plays no role in providing clothing or food for the family. In addition, Jimboy does not protect his family from emotional hardships. Jimboy seems to turn to the blues during difficult times; his guitar is his constant companion. While he seems to have successfully achieved coping mechanisms for harsh social injustices, he does not offer the same instruction to Sandy. At one point, Jimboy attempts to teach Sandy to play the guitar, but fails to relate the healing or cathartic notions of the blues.

While Jimboy does not achieve absolute patriarchal characteristics within the family, he does exhibit male chauvinistic qualities. He states, "Don't never let no one woman worry you...Treat 'em like chickens, son. Throw 'em a little corn and they'll run after you, but don't give 'em too much. If you do, they'll stop laying and expect you to wait on 'em" (72). Overall, he understands male privilege enough to manipulate it for his benefit and avoid the inherent responsibilities.

Jimboy destabilizes the traditional patriarchy. The absence of a traditional patriarchal male in the family reflects the historical injustices inflicted upon African Americans; historically, African Americans suffered the absence of a father figure for several reasons. For example, slave owners may father a child. Alternatively, a legitimate father may have to leave the house in order to provide financially for the family. However, Hughes does not allow Jimboy to embody such historical circumstances. Jimboy stands outside of the traditional patriarchy and outside the argument of racial uplift. Jimboy's role in the family opens up the ability for Hughes to represent Washington and DuBois as female characters.

While Sandy observed racial uplift ideology, he also developed notions of masculinity from Hager and Tempy. Continuing with the correlations between the characters and their

ideologies, Hughes writes Hager to encourage Washington's construction of masculinity and Tempy to encourage DuBois's construction of masculinity. Washington displays his construction of masculinity through rhetoric temperance. DuBois displays his construction of masculinity through intellectual prowess. Both Washington and DuBois assume the display of masculinity is a method in which to display class association and engage racial uplift.

Washington's rhetoric temperance "exemplified middle-class black male dignity and self-control, mixing assertiveness with civility without craven submission, and without lower-class styles of flashiness, disrespect, and rebelliousness" (152). DuBois's intelligence is "a way to avoid gendered and racialized subordination, deformation, and degradation" (Carby 34).

For Leverenz, Washington's construction of masculinity comes from an extreme control over emotionally charged rhetoric. Leverenz states, "Washington performed a manliness based on self-control and mastery" (160). He successfully negotiates between the white American community and the African American community; also, he successfully negotiates between the differing views of Northern states and Southern states within the Union. Overall, his rhetoric of compromise, specifically his speech at the Atlanta Exposition, is among his strongest displays of masculinity.

Sandy displays similar characteristics at several points in the novel. Specifically, Sandy discovers Harriett performing music in a minstrel tent and knows Hager would disapprove. Like Washington, he is placed in the middle of two passionate and differing opinions. He knows that Harriet is determined to pursue her music; he knows that Hager would find Harriett's actions immoral. The narrator articulates Sandy's rhetoric temperance. The narrator states, "Sandy had lived too long with three women not to have learned to hold his tongue about the private doings of each of them...Because he loved all three—Harriett and Annjee and Hagar—he didn't carry

tales on any one of them to the others” (114-115). In this case, Sandy displays extreme self-control and rhetorical tact; he maintains rhetoric of silence.

For Carby, DuBois’s construction of masculinity comes from the cultivation of intelligence. Carby articulates, “It is the process of becoming an intellectual that DuBois offers as an alternative route to manhood” (34). For DuBois, intellectual cultivation allows African American males to overcome societal injustices. In Tempy’s house, Sandy exhibits a similar path toward manhood. As previously stated, he spends much of his time intellectualizing within and outside of school.

Importantly, Sandy is not solely a product of household patriarchy. He learns more socially constructed notions of masculinity in two social spaces—the barbershop and pool hall. Both public spaces involve men conversing with other men as a means to reinforce and reiterate social constructions of masculinity. In these settings, Sandy is able to observe such constructions and successfully practice the constructions himself. These experiences do not undermine or overtly oppose the previously presented constructions from Hager and Tempy. The initial constructions of masculinity harden through additional exposure to masculinity in social spaces.

For Sandy, the barbershop represents a “new world” (188). It is a “man’s world” full of “loud man-talk and smoke and laughter” (188). Subjects of conversation range from “Baseball, Jack Johnson, racehorses, white folks, Teddy Roosevelt, local gossip, Booker Washington, women, labor prospects in Topeka, Kansas City, Omaha, religion, politics, women, God...”(188). Beyond the subjects of conversation, the narrator notes particular modes of rhetoric between the men. Specifically, Sandy learns the “protective art of turning back a joke” (189). At first, he listens and is embarrassed as others confront him with the rhetorical mode. Eventually, Sandy feels “advanced far enough in the art of ‘kidding’ to say: ‘So’s your pa’s,’ to

people who informed him that his head was nappy” (190). Here, Sandy is able to use restraint, apply it to the harsh masculine rhetoric found at the barbershop and result in a subtle joke.

The pool hall also exemplifies a continuation of experience outside of the matriarchal home. In this case, Sandy actively intellectualizes two simplified versions of male sexuality. On the one hand, in the pool hall Uncle Dan presents the construction of the overtly potent male to Sandy. Dan states, “Dey called me de ‘stud nigger’! Yes, de did! On ‘count o’ de kind o’ slavery-time work I was doin’—I were breedin’ babies fo’ to sell!” (250). He continues to explain he was “laying wid de womens all night, ever’ night” (250). This construction opposes Tempy’s bourgeois construction of male sexuality. While in her house, Tempy presents the construction of the asexual and pious male found in a book, The Doors of Life. The book insists, “everyone [should] marry early and settle down to a healthy, moral, Christian life” (258). The narrator continues, the book “consisted almost entirely in how to pray in the orthodox manner, and in how *not* to love” (259). While the novel is ultimately ambiguous about Sandy’s construction of male sexuality, one may assume he intellectualizes both constructions into a kind of middle ground.

Overall, Sandy’s construction of masculinity comes from a diverse range of characters. The initial and most influential constructions come from Hager and Tempy. The females consciously impart upon him racial uplift ideologies and unconsciously encourage specific constructions of masculinity. These initial constructions of masculinity allow Sandy to successfully navigate within male spaces outside of the home. The experiences outside of the home reiterate his masculine constructions within the home. By the end of the novel, Sandy is no longer a simple boy oscillating between Washington’s and DuBois’s ideologies and

constructions of masculinity. He is able to use temperance and intellect in order to negotiate through the streets of Chicago.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Potential Argument for Gender Uplift

Hughes, I suggest, offers no overtly influential males in the novel. Importantly, he depicts Hager and Tempy as enacting the greatest influence upon the protagonist. By doing so, Hughes may be attempting to poetically disguise his political representations, but potentially he may be attempting to overturn historically established masculinist notions of African American uplift ideology, as well. Specifically, some might suggest he may be making an argument for gender uplift. Gender uplift, similar to racial uplift, attempts to overcome historic legislative and social injustices based on gender. In the novel, Hughes joins the “fathers” of racial uplift, Washington and DuBois, with Sandy’s “mothers,” Hager and Tempy. This suggests a potential intermingling of two uplift ideologies—race and gender—for a common cause. However, by using the ideologies of Washington and DuBois, Hughes undermines this potential suggestion of gender uplift. In addition, Hughes portrays Hager and Tempy in traditional domestic spheres and maintains the traditional patriarchal system that prevents complete gender equality. Hughes is more concerned with racial uplift ideologies than establishing an actual suggestion of gender uplift.

Historically, Washington and DuBois are father figures for African Americans and overtly insist upon patriarchal norms. Raymond Hedin’s essay puts forth, “[Washington’s] actions are the groupings of the neophyte father” (95). DuBois, in his enactment of the Talented Tenth, positions himself as an African American leader, a surrogate father. Gary L. Lemons notes DuBois’s undeniable insistence upon patriarchal notions: “even as a man who embraced feminism, writing extensively in support of woman suffrage, the libratory nature of his discursive practice, more often than not, in the context of the familial, worked to re-inscribe

patriarchal privilege and practice” (194). As discussed before, the adherence of the patriarchal system is required for both of their racial uplift ideologies. This system enables Washington and DuBois to maintain their position in the family and fight for a similar position in society.

Hughes suggests a kind of union, or—reluctantly—marriage, between the “fathers” of African Americans and Sandy’s “mothers.” The suggestion of the union offers a solution to fatherless children and reiterates his ability to blend racial and gender injustices, but ultimately reinforces the traditional patriarchal system. First, the union overcomes Sandy’s essentially fatherless upbringing and acts as an alternative to the traditional family unit. Hedin explains, “The basic wrong that slavery had perpetuated, the wrong that had kept slaves from achieving full adulthood, was its denial to the slave of a full and secure family life, with all its supports and incentives for developing responsibility; it was the lack of family history that was keeping blacks even now from achieving success” (98). Hughes may be suggesting that the union of masculine ideology with mothers would offer substitute for an absent father. This alternative family unit would allow African Americans to have a sense of family history and successfully achieve adulthood.

Second, the union highlights Hughes’s ability to write genderracially as means toward overcoming or highlighting social inequalities. Hughes is able to write beyond traditional social constructions of gender. David R. Jarraway’s essay speaks of the benefits for Hughes’s resistance to traditional gender constructions: “These possibilities allow Hughes’s discourse to transcend specific representations of men and women within a constraining and containing sameness and to open out instead onto a new and more dynamic level of difference—and hence of equality and freedom” (827). For Jarraway, Hughes’s blurring of traditional gender roles reveals a universal understanding of difference, a difference that applies to both sexes. Thus, this

understanding leads to the potential argument for gender uplift. Anne Borden's essay takes the notion of nontraditional gender representation further by including race. She asserts, "He writes in a manner which could be described as genderracial, emphasizing how gender and racial identity are intertwined" (333). She continues, "In his writings, Langston Hughes explores the convergence of race and gender in Black men's and women's lives, questioning binary constructions of identity" (333). The combination of blurring race and gender again leads to universal notions of difference, a difference that then applies to both sexes and races. Hughes's genderracial writing is potentially a means to argue for racial and gender equality. However, this argument falls within the traditional union of marriage between male and female, the foundation of the patriarchal system. Hager's and Tempy's commitment to these specific ideologies is the only reason for an argument for gender uplift is possible. Without the connection to the ideologies, Hughes offers no other suggestion for combating historic gender injustices.

No other female character in the novel offers a successful model for gender uplift. One may argue that Harriet is the most liberated woman because she exists outside of the domestic sphere and is overtly rebellious to the domestic patriarchal system. She emphasizes her feminine sexuality "with skirts held high and head thrown back" as she performs on stage (113). She celebrates a sensual life outside of the domestic sphere; also, she financially supports herself on such celebrations. She becomes the "Princess of the Blues" but ultimately societal female restrictions oppress her. Her liberation is shown as a façade when she performs on stage. Her transcending the domestic sphere is shown to be false or exaggerated. While on stage, she returns to the domestic sphere. Hughes has her dressed in domestic attire, "an apron of blue calico, with a bandanna handkerchief knotted around her head" on stage as she sings about a lost

lover (293). Ultimately, her celebrations outside of the domestic do not help her to overcome historic legislative nor social injustices based on gender. She may not be restricted to the physically domestic life, but she seems bound to always portray such traditional roles on stage.

Hughes also undermines the potential argument for gender equality in his portrayal of Hager and Tempy. Hughes never depicts Hager or Tempy far from traditional domestic roles. Both are not socially or politically liberated female; they do not enact influence in public space. Hughes portrays the women within “obligatory celebrations of domesticity and motherhood” (Lemons 136). In fulfilling Washington’s ideologies, Hager must establish economic worth within the traditional female sphere. She has no choice but to participate and labor within domestic and motherly activities. She works, socializes, and maintains family order within her home. Similarly, Tempy is also restricted from public influence. She participates in domestic and motherly roles. She takes on the complete care of Sandy, and as her economic success increased, she eventually “stayed home, keeping house” (238).

By using the ideologies of Washington and DuBois, Hughes follows the historic journey of African American women. The extraordinary reality that exists for African American women is that many sacrificed their own argument for uplift for the benefit of the race. Gaines reiterates the historical precedent in terms of racial uplift ideologies: “Black women are...placed in the subordinate position of sacrificing gender consciousness and the reproductive self-determination in the name of race unity” (13). Thus, Hughes offers no real ideology for political, economic, or social uplift for women. Hughes may *suggest* gender uplift through two highly influential women and one woman outside of the domestic sphere, but his greatest concern in this novel is presenting racial uplift ideologies. Hughes insists upon upholding the patriarchal system by pulling from ideologies that reiterate and insist upon the foundation of a patriarchal system.

CONCLUSION

Langston Hughes's Not Without Laughter works within a historically narrow debate of racial uplift ideology. Hughes draws from Booker T. Washington's ideology found within his autobiography Up From Slavery in order to establish similarities within Aunt Hager Williams. In addition, he draws from W.E.B. DuBois's ideology found in The Souls of Black Folk in order to establish similarities within Tempy Siles. In both characters, Hughes implies criticisms of the ideologies. While providing a dichotomized view of racial uplift, the ideologies also encourage an initial construction of masculinity for Sandy as well as undermine an argument for gender equality.

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VITA

Matt Mosley, the son of Steve and Donna Mosley, was born and raised outside of Chattanooga, TN. The childhood house was full of imagination, older brother tauntings and pepperoni pizza. He attended Belmont University in Nashville, TN for a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a minor in Writing. He sang in a bluegrass band, The Pembroke Boys, and published poems in the university's literary journal. In addition, he completed an internship with a travel writing company in London, England. Traveling sporadically though Europe, he learned the fun and value of diversity.

After completing his time in Nashville, he spent nine months traveling in New Zealand and surrounding islands. Enjoying employment with Greenpeace, he made great memories, learned about the world and learned about himself. Most importantly, he learned that a job could be personally fulfilling, provide concrete and positive results within the community, and be fun.

After New Zealand, Matt moved to New Orleans, LA and fell in love with the city. Specifically, he loves the city's vibrancy and its ability to "make the universe hum," as an observant friend once said. He loves the city's quirkiness and exuberant pride. He hopes to remain in New Orleans and pursue a fulfilling career that merges his love for writing and his desire to positively influence his community.