UC Santa Barbara
Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title
Cosmopolitan Fantasies, Aesthetics, and Bodily Value: W. E. B. Du Bois's Dark Princess and the Trans/Gendering of Kautilya

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8r74n6wq

Journal
Journal of Transnational American Studies, 3(1)

Author
Alston, Vermonja R

Publication Date
2011-03-15

DOI
10.5070/T831007011

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Cosmopolitan Fantasies, Aesthetics, and Bodily Value: W. E. B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* and the Trans/Gendering of Kautilya

VERMONJA R. ALSTON

> India as a *Land of Desire* forms an essential element in General History. From the most ancient time downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the Earth presents; treasures of Nature—pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose-essences, elephants, lions, etc.—as also treasures of wisdom.
>
> —G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*

> The Orient, seen as the embodiment of sensuality, is always understood in feminine terms and accordingly its place in Western imaginary has been constructed through the simultaneous gesture of racialization and feminization.
>
> —Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*

> I have come to feel that the mind, which has been matured in the atmosphere of a profound knowledge of its own country and of the perfect thoughts that have been produced in that land, is ready to accept and assimilate the cultures that come from other countries.
>
> —Rabindranath Tagore, "The Way to Unity"

As editor of *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois held a great deal of critical and political power in creating a canon of appropriately uplifting Black literature, therefore, reviewing his literary work was fraught with danger for the critic with any desire to see her or his

own work favorably reviewed in the influential publishing arm of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As Claudia Tate observes in her introduction to the 1995 University Press of Mississippi edition of *Dark Princess*, "[Alain] Locke clearly struggled with balancing praise and censure in his review [of *Dark Princess*]. After all, the editor of *The Crisis* was a man with whom one still had to reckon."[1] As editor and literary critic for *The Crisis*, Du Bois, for example, praised Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, while condemning Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* for its focus on the "seamy" and "sexual." The novel, wrote Du Bois, "for the most part nauseates me, and after the dirtier parts of its filth I feel distinctly like taking a bath."[2] Since New Negro writers frequently addressed issues of sexuality, as Tate notes in *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels*, Du Bois's objections to McKay's novel must be read as something other than a prudishness about representations of sexual desire in the Black novels of the period. Rather, his harsh review of the novel invoked a normative aesthetic judgment of taste that highlights the difference between McKay's use of bawdy humor, satire, and parody—drawn from a rich Jamaican tradition of deploying cultural performances as critiques of the pretensions of those who strive to mimic the colonial elite—and Du Bois's politics of racial uplift that tended to reproduce the key social structures and aesthetic categories of aristocratic colonial power. McKay's elaboration of Bakhtinian carnivalesque obscene laughter poked fun at the sensibilities of the very ruling classes to which Du Boisian aesthetics aspired.[3] Moreover, Du Bois's understanding of the concept of culture differed from that of McKay and other New Negro Renaissance writers. Du Bois remained wedded to Kantian and Arnoldian understandings of culture as the aesthetic representation of all that is best and beautiful in a civilization, while McKay understood the concept in anthropological terms, that is, culture as a whole way of life.[4] In an effort to rescue Du Bois's novel from charges of elite aestheticism, literary scholar Arnold Rampersad contends that *Dark Princess* is "much more than a statement about aesthetics."[5] Indeed, but aesthetic judgment is much more than a statement about art and beauty; it is a philosophy of object relations, bodily value, and the relationship between the senses and objects of desire and sexual attachment.

Claudia Tate's psychoanalytic approach to the novel begins a valuable discussion of the relationship between desire and orientalism in the novel. Citing Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Tate argues,

> In *Orientalism*, Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' in which the latter is implicitly and explicitly understood as superior" (2). We late-twentieth-century readers no doubt recognize Orientalism as a discourse about the sovereignty of Western consciousness, a discourse about its "desires, repressions, investments, and projections"

> (*Orientalism* 8). This cultural discourse was/is intrinsic to the ideology of white supremacy that undergirded US slavery and post-Reconstruction black disenfranchisement and racial segregation, as well as Western imperialism.[6]

What Tate does not acknowledge in her reading of US white supremacy through Said's theory is the ways in which Black Americans are incorporated into orientalist discourse on the side of bourgeois masculinity and a class-based ideology of mastery even as they oppose US racism and white supremacy. If race thinking constructs a particular sort of body, which in turn promotes a particular scheme of bodily value, then so too do ideologies of gender, sexuality, and class.

Black feminist scholars acknowledge that while Du Bois publicly advocated equality for women, he tended to ignore the writings and teachings of Black women intellectuals, effectively silencing the very women for whom he sought equality.[7] In *Race Men*, Hazel Carby argues that, for Du Bois, "the figure of the black woman, whether prostitute or mother, has a surplus of symbolic value upon which he liberally draws in his illustrations of the denigration of the black man."[8] The status of Black men depended upon the symbolic, as well as bodily, value of Black women. In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois's Adamic quest for new origins is achieved through the erasure of Black women; protagonist Matthew Towns's ancient Black mother, a symbolic ancestral figure, is to be absorbed, dissolved in the ambiotic fluid of the Indian womb to create a new *volk*. If the wombs of Black women cannot become vessels for the American nation, in Du Bois's fantasy, the womb of the royal Indian woman does become the incubator for an imagined cosmopolitan body politic. India's independence struggle and a fictional Indian princess provided fertile soil for Du Bois's extended meditation on national, spiritual, and sexual passion and desire.

Scholars have long noted Du Bois's relationship to German and American social- political philosophy and aesthetic theory. As a Germanist who completed two years of doctoral study (between 1892 and 1894) at Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, including attendance at Max Weber's lectures, Du Bois was an acute and brilliant reader of Kant and Hegel, and well versed in German Oriental Studies. Since both Kantian and Hegelian aesthetic theory work through a phenomenological engagement with the world, it is hardly surprising that the heroic elitism of *Dark Princess* foregrounds a sensuous worldliness frequently opposed to quotidian politics—whether local, national, or international. Consequently, any analysis of Du Bois's aesthetic ideology must take account of the German philosophical traditions that underwrote his literary and critical judgments of taste. My concern here is to highlight the main features of Du Bois's gendered and sexualized interracialism and cosmopolitanism, and to argue that his figuration of women in the novel, particularly of Kautilya—the dark princess—is inflected by a double consciousness symptomatic of his attempts to subject an embodied aesthetic sensibility to theories of rational judgment. If, as his contemporary George Santayana insists, aesthetic and moral

judgments are judgments of value, while intellectual judgments are judgments of fact, then Du Bois's attempt to wed aesthetic and moral judgments with intellectual judgments produces tensions between his social and economic politics and his aesthetic and moral values.[9]

Although the scholarship has made evident Du Bois's relationship to Kant, Hegel, Weber, and Santayana, those scholars tend to ignore the rising influence of Indian thinkers on Western philosophy and literature during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Recent scholars of postcolonial and South Asian Studies have begun to devote serious study to Du Bois's friendship with Lajpat Rai, as well as the influence of Indian aesthetics on Du Bois's literary work.[10] Lajpat Rai may have been Du Bois's only Indian consultant, as Dohra Ahmad asserts, but Rai may not have been the only Indian influence on a thinker as widely read as Du Bois (787). A transnational reading of *Dark Princess* should take account of the larger global context of reading and writing in which Du Bois composed his 1928 novel. Notably, Rabindranath Tagore, India's leading poet and thinker, had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. The Prize brought Tagore's work to the attention of a larger German- and English-speaking audience, as more translations of his writing began to circulate. More importantly, Tagore began lecturing on nationalism throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas (including the United States) in 1916 and continued to do so through 1932. Tagore's essay "Nationalism and the West" was originally delivered as part of a series of lectures in the United States during the winter of 1916–1917.[11] Hence, a decade before Du Bois wrote *Dark Princess*, Tagore's ideas on nationalism and cosmopolitan had circulated in the United States: "Neither the colourless [*sic*] vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship is the goal of human history. . . . Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals" (15–16).

With the publication of the novel *The Home and the World* serially (as *At Home and Outside*) in the *Modern Review* in 1918–1919, and in book form by Macmillan in 1919, Tagore fictionalized and extended his meditations on nationalism and the human spirit.[12] One cannot help but remark upon the thematic similarities between Tagore's novel and that of Du Bois, particularly the emplotment of a romantic triangle embedded within a story of political intrigue in the larger context of a people's struggle for liberation. However, the similarities end with the bare outlines of theme and plot. Whereas Tagore's novel is narrated in three different voices, corresponding to the perspective of the three parties to the romantic triangle—Bimala, Nikhil, and Sandip—Du Bois retains narrative authority through the deployment of a powerful omniscient third-person narrator. Moreover, Tagore's *The Home and the World* manages to avoid the fantastical mode so central to Du Bois's aesthetic sensibility inherited from his German and American intellectual forefathers.

As fantasy, *Dark Princess* romanticizes and aestheticizes Indian resistance to British colonialism; in its social-realist mode, the novel fictionalizes Black American radicalism and more conventional local machine politics. Du Bois's use of the

conventions of social realism in depicting Black American urban politics in New York and Chicago reaffirms the adage "we all write from somewhere"; Du Bois was far more familiar with the northern US political environment than that of Virginia or India. His resort to religious imagery and Adamic symbolism of new world beginnings when depicting India and Virginia suggests a more mythic relationship between the author and those two places. For example, Kautilya, the dark princess of the title, appears to Matthew as if descending from celestial heights: "And she came like a soft mist, unveiled and uncloaked before him," relates the third-person narrator. "Always she seemed to come thus suddenly into his life" (208). In this manner, the princess as India incarnate is both unveiled and shrouded in mist, a fantasy that appears suddenly and mysteriously then disappears just as suddenly. She is both an enigma and Du Bois's alter ego. This mystification continues in the novel's depiction of Virginia. Channeling Du Bois, the princess writes to Matthew from his native Virginia in language more grounded but no less mythical: "but life here seems symbolic. Here is the earth yearning for seed. Here men make food and clothes. We are at the bottom and beginning of things. The very first chapter of that great story of industry, wage and wealth, government, life" (278). Du Bois's princess imagines Virginia as Eden after the fall, where men engage in productive labor for life's necessities. It is Matthew, Du Bois's hero, who informs Kautilya of the reality of forced labor and racial terror in the South. But it is Kautilya's vision that prevails when she insists on the possibilities of a mythical rise from the ashes of racial hatred. In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois resolves the dialectical tension between romantic mysticism and social realism in favor of the mythic.

It is difficult to discuss Du Bois's omniscient third-person narrator without considering the situatedness of knowledge, or the appropriation of voice in the author's rendering of the hero Matthew Towns's mother's silences, or the thoughts, letters, and speeches of Princess Kautilya, the novel's title character, or of Sara Andrews, with whom Matthew enters into a brief political marriage. Du Bois never really departs from the authority of the third-person narrator. As a consequence, no character is developed fully; Matthew and Kautilya are vehicles for the elaboration of Du Bois's political and aesthetic views, and the other two women are drawn from archetypes rehearsed in his 1920 essay, "The Damnation of Women," published in *Darkwater*.[13] Unlike Rabindranath Tagore, whose *The Home and the World* attempts to convey a young woman's voice and perspective as she struggles to choose between the duties to home and husband and her passion for the anticolonial nationalist movement and its Bengali leader, in *Dark Princess*, Du Bois never masters the art of relinquishing narrative authority. In form and style, *Dark Princess* is embedded in European (German) and American narrative structures of mastery; structurally, it is far less cosmopolitan and anticolonial than its plot.

Set between August 1923 and April 1927, the novel is divided into four parts: "The Exile," "The Pullman Porter," "The Chicago Politician," and "The Maharajah of Bwodpur." *Dark Princess* charts a course between local political machinations in New

York, Chicago, and the American South, and anticolonial "radicals" gathered in cosmopolitan Berlin. As Dohra Ahmad points out, Du Bois conveys each of the novel's "locale[s] through a representative female figure: Chicago through the calculating and materialistic Sara Andrews; India, of course, through our eponymous revolutionary; and the American South through protagonist Matthew Towns's nameless but eternally wise mother."[14] More importantly, women's bodies are valued in *Dark Princess* for their ability to symbolize places and aesthetic ideologies: the sterile urban-built environment; the marvelous fecundity of the rural ancestral homeland of the American South, which must be redeemed and cultivated, not by a sterile and corrupt American North, but by a postcolonial India imagined as both sensuous mistress and nurturing mother.

In the opening scene of W. E. B. Du Bois's melodramatic operatic novel, Matthew Towns, "in a cold white fury," stands on the deck of the *Orizaba* bound for Europe after he is forced to leave medical school because he is prohibited from registering for obstetrics. Looking east to Europe as an avenue of escape from American racism, Matthew recalls his humiliating encounter with the dean: "Well—what did you expect? Juniors must have obstetrical work. Do you think white women patients are going to have a nigger doctor delivering their babies?" (3–4). As valuable producers of a nation—imagined as white—white women's bodies, their wombs in particular, are forbidden territory for Black hands. Clearly, Du Bois rewrites much of D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* as a teleological movement from a birth of Black nationalism, with Matthew Towns's southern mother as the paradigmatic ancestress, who in giving birth to Matthew enables the birth of the darker races of the world as a transnational family. The novel's messianic ending erases the stain of Matthew's humiliating dismissal from medical school by raising him up to the status of the father of the messiah who will lead his people out of Egypt land. The hero's rendition of "Go Down, Moses" at his initial meeting with "The Council of the Darker Races" foreshadows this ending. After all, Matthew stands and belts out the song in response to the council members' conversation about the relationship among talent, art, civilization, and readiness for freedom. After the song's conclusion, the princess voices a major problematic of Du Bois's "Criteria of Negro Art": the association of aesthetic culture with the ability to rule. "'You assume then,' said the Princess at last, 'that the mass of the workers of the world can rule as well as be ruled?'" (26). Of course, the novel's conclusion suggests otherwise, that the ruled would require the guidance of a messianic leader, a subject to which I return later in this essay.

Du Bois's novelistic unveiling of women's bodies provides a blueprint for reading culture through the body. As Susan Bordo argues, "the body . . . is a medium of culture."[15] "Bodies are trained, shaped, and impressed with the stamp of prevailing historical forms of selfhood, desire, masculinity, femininity," continues Bordo (165–66). The novel's metonymic reduction of southern Black workers to the laboring hands of Matthew's mother in Virginia is consistent with the rescue fantasy inherent in Du Bois's politics of racial uplift. Again it is the princess who channels Du

Bois's aesthetic valuation of the Black ancestress: "Oh, Matthew, you have a wonderful mother. Have you seen her hands? Have you seen the gnarled and knotty glory of her hands? . . . Your mother is Kali, the Black One; wife of Siva, Mother of the World!" (220). Those gnarled and knotty hands are metonymic of southern Black laborers, but those hands also are coterminous with the gnarled and knotty trees that surround the old Virginia farm. Matthew's mother is, at once, cultivator of the soil and a natural body born of the soil itself. Du Bois feminizes the archaic Black South as an ancient mother who is rescued from the stain of racial othering by Princess Kautilya's religious narrative transforming that mother and motherland into the Hindu goddess Kali.

Sara Andrews, the third Black woman in the novel, stands in stark contrast to Kautilya and Matthew's mother and is depicted as a sterile, castrating materialist, who models the asceticism imposed on (and by) the mulatto bourgeoisie. As Bordo points out, "in the late Victorian era . . . those who could afford to eat well began systematically to deny themselves food in pursuit of an aesthetic ideal" (185). Kautilya's polar opposite, Sara, the ascetic puritan subject, demands the renunciation of the sensuous erotic body. This stereotype of successful Black American women as sterile and castrating has had lasting effects on societal perceptions of powerful Black women as unfeeling, manipulative, and angry.[16] Du Bois's Kautilya, in contrast, inhabits the sensuous aristocratic body unaffected by the demands of bourgeois subjectivity; for the novel's hero, she is simultaneously the absent erotic object of sexual desire and the lost nurturing mother of the nation. Through this play of opposition in aesthetic ideals, Du Bois constructs and privileges a vigorously fertile nobility against a corrupt and sterile bourgeois state.

Cosmopolitan Aesthetics and Desire

One of the grand projects of philosophies of the aesthetic is to come to some sort of dialectical resolution of the tension between the particular sensuous pleasures of the aesthetic and universal reason. Du Bois works through those tensions in his emplotment of anticolonial and antiracist struggles through the mode of romantic fantasy. Kant's "critique of aesthetic judgment," Schiller's "aesthetic State," and Hegel's philosophy of aesthetics[17] are at the core of Du Bois's 1926 speech, "Criteria of Negro Art," published in *The Crisis*, and the symbolic structure and style of *Dark Princess*.[18] Ideas about the aesthetic have acquired a set of connotative associations with beauty, desire, and pleasure. From a psychoanalytic perspective, then, sensuous pleasure and desire underwrite the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German theories of the aesthetic that inform Du Bois's essay. In a frequently cited passage from "Criteria of Negro Art," Du Bois acknowledges reading all art, including his own creative writing, as propaganda: "I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used

for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent" (288). This emphasis on pleasure and love is consistent with aesthetic theory's privileging of beauty as the most appropriate subject for artistic representation. If beauty signifies pleasure and love, then it always exists in a tense oppositional relation to fear, pain, and horror, or the sublime.

Although Du Bois's "Criteria of Negro Art," read as a whole, acknowledges all art as propaganda, it is the general understanding of the term that informs his aesthetics. Coined during the seventeenth century to refer to the Church's propagation of the faith, propaganda referred to art that delivered Christian teachings to an illiterate population.[19] Instruction is the goal of all propaganda. If, as Du Bois himself argues in "Criteria of Negro Art," "all art is propaganda and ever must be," what are the lessons of *Dark Princess*?[20] Arguably, the novel functions as a primer on the aesthetic education of "Negro Men," to paraphrase Schiller, as well as a revision of Hegelian narratives of the birth of nations. For Du Bois, this notion of art as propaganda echoes the teleological mystification of German Idealism, particularly Hegel's idea of the Absolute, of Truth and the Divine.

Paradoxically, it is the absence of any coherence between Du Bois's social activism and his romantic fiction that continues to trouble many scholars. In her psychoanalytic reading of the essay and *Dark Princess*, Tate remarks, "Du Bois seems unconsciously to associate propaganda for social reform with erotic desire."[21] There are certainly inconsistencies that arise with any programmatic reading of the novel. But *Dark Princess* does emplot the defining tension in Du Bois literary and scholarly endeavors: between, on the one hand, an empiricism that sought to document the pain and suffering of Black folk and, on the other hand, an elite idealism indebted to an early modern understanding of the emancipatory universality of an aesthetic education. On the face of it, this tension between pain and suffering, and pleasure and beauty seems irreconcilable, but it is the nature of dialectical argument to work through such oppositions. Contrary to Tate's reading of Du Bois's unconscious linking of sexual desire and social reform, one of the underlying premises of this essay is that the unconscious relationship between sensuality, sexual desire, and the social is embedded in bourgeois theories of the aesthetic. As Terry Eagleton argues in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, "human life is aesthetic for Freud in so far as it is all about intense bodily sensations and baroque imaginings, inherently significatory and symbolic, inseparable from figure and fantasy. The unconscious works by a kind of 'aesthetic' logic, condensing and displacing its images with the crafty opportunism of an artistic *bricoleur*."[22] Freud's theory of desire, argues Eagleton, seems "to operate in something of an anonymous, law-like manner, [complicating . . .] the classical aesthetic model, where desire is generally conceived of in terms of individual needs or wishes" (279). If, as Tate concludes, the goal of social reform and the power of the erotic do not cohere in *Dark Princess*, the failure is a consequence of the duality between the practical and the aesthetic that lies at the core of German Idealism, and of the aesthetic logic of the unconscious. Postcolonial theorists of colonial desire

appear to support Eagleton's interpretation of Freud's theory of aesthetics and desire.

Not surprisingly, postcolonial feminist theorists of the aesthetic stress the ways in which gender, race, and class are textually articulated through the vocabulary of aesthetics.[23] Put differently, notions of aesthetic beauty in art tend to work through the bodies of women. As Meyda Yegenoglu insists in the second epigraph of this essay, an aestheticized orient, as the embodiment of sensuality, is always understood in strictly feminine terms. Here, I foreground the bodily value of women as aestheticized objects of both desire and repulsion in Du Bois's fictionalization of his national and international political ideologies, as well as his "ideology of the aesthetic." Nowhere is the feminization of the orient more apparent than in Du Bois's trans/gendering of the fourth-century BCE male Indian philosopher Kautilya into a twentieth-century Indian princess, which, accordingly, allows him to traverse borders between art and politics, and between individual desire and social unity. This fictionalization of Kautilya as an erotic lover for the African American character, Matthew Towns, as well as mother of the "darker world," is a translation—through German philosophy—of both the gendered, sexualized body and body politic.

In two narratives of origin, *Dark Princess* revises Hegel's *Philosophy of History* by replacing ancient Greece with ancient India: the birth of civilization and the evolution of the autonomous subject. I am not suggesting that Du Bois's novel is merely derivative of Hegelian or German philosophy in general; nevertheless, Du Bois does not escape the orientalism in which Hegel's aesthetic theory was entangled. For Du Bois, India remains the land of desire onto which he projects longings for access to its treasures, marvels, and wisdom. As the bearer of the crown jewels of Bhodpur, Princess Kautilya is synecdoche for India and the birth of a new civilization: "Some of them always travel with the heir to the throne," the princess tells Matthew. "I have carried these since father's death. Some of the jewels are beautiful and priceless. Others, like the great ruby, are full of legends and superstitious memory. The great ruby is by legend a drop of Buddha's blood. It anoints the newborn Maharajah. It is worn on his turban. It closes his eyes in death" (249). Kautilya's narrative of royal lineage foreshadows the birth of Madhu, the child she conceives with Matthew, who will be anointed the newborn Maharajah and "Messiah to all the Darker Worlds" (311).

Du Bois's Kautilya embodies beauty as the locus of truth and right, which is dialectically opposed to evil. "I am one who tells the truth and exposes evil and seeks with Beauty and for Beauty to set the world right," writes Du Bois in "Criteria of Negro Art." "That somehow, somewhere eternal and perfect Beauty sits above Truth and Right I can conceive, but here and now and in the world in which I work they are for me unseparated and inseparable."[24] In a similar vein, Du Bois's hero of *Dark Princess*, Matthew, utters an analogous aesthetic sensibility to Kautilya after she returns to rescue him from the corrupt political career mapped out by his wife Sara Andrews: "Your body is Beauty, and Beauty is your Soul, and Soul and Body spell

Freedom to my tortured groping life!" (210). Kautilya's nearly celestial body performs a symbolic detaching of Matthew from Chicago, the city of "Fear" and "Death" to which he has been attached through the cold ascetic body of Sara (210). "Beauty" will transform Matthew's world to "Truth" and "Right."

In a similar vein, Du Bois's "Envoy," the poetic coda to *Dark Princess*, with bows to Scheherazade and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, echoes the dialectical opposition outlined throughout the novel and in "Criteria of Negro Art":

> *The tale is done and night is come. Now may all the sprites who, with curled wing and starry eyes, have clustered around my hands and helped me weave this story, lift with deft delicacy from out the crevice where it lines my heavy flesh of fact, that rich and colored gossamer of dream which the Queen of Faërie lent to me for a season. Pleat it to a shining bundle and return it, sweet elves, beneath the moon, to her Mauve Majesty with my low and fond obeisance. Beg her, sometime, somewhere, of her abundant leisure, to tell us hard humans: Which is really Truth—Fact or Fancy? the Dream of the Spirit or the Pain of the Bone?* (312, emphasis original)

Oppositions between fact and fancy, spirit and body, dream and pain, reiterate the novel's dialectical movement between social realism's racism and counterracism, Klan terrorism and Black radical counterterrorism, and aesthetic fantasy's embrace of the sensuous. Du Bois dissolves the dialectical tension through an imaginative synthesis of the world spirit.

Passages like this one recall chapter 2 of Hegel's *Introduction to Aesthetics*, "Limitations and Defence of Aesthetics": "the beauty of art is *higher* than nature. The beauty of art is beauty *born of the spirit and born again*, and the higher the spirit and its productions stand above nature and its phenomenon, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature."[25] Putting aside for the moment the elevation of art over nature characteristic of philosophies of the aesthetic, Hegel further conjoins freedom with fine art and beauty in chapter 3 of the *Introduction*: "Now, in this its freedom alone is fine art truly art, and it only fulfills its supreme task when it has placed itself in the same sphere as religion and philosophy, and when it is simply one way of bringing our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit" (4). Revising Hegel, Du Bois urges Black American artists to turn to this tradition when creating art: "it is the bounden duty of black America to begin this great work of the creation of Beauty, of the preservation of Beauty, of the realization of Beauty, and we must use in this work all the methods that men have used before."[26]

In his novel, the idea of the beautiful that dominates adumbrates the conclusion of Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful," published in his *The Critique of Judgment*. In the "beautiful views of objects," "taste appears not so much in what

the Imagination *apprehends* in this field, as in the impulse it thus gets to *fiction*, *i.e.* in the peculiar fancies with which the mind entertains itself, whilst it is continually being aroused by the variety which strikes the eye. [Those objects] bring with them a charm for the Imagination, because they entertain it in free play."[27] "The *beautiful*," in contrast, "is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept" (67, emphasis original). In the process of universalizing beauty, the rational male subject must transform his perception of the thing as beautiful into an object of his knowledge: "The *beautiful* is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a *necessary* satisfaction" (96, emphasis original). Thus, it is through reason that "man" moves from the aesthetic (and therefore subjective) apprehension of the beautiful to the universal understanding of beautiful objects. Finally, Kant proposes as universal, "the Beautiful [as] the symbol of the morally Good, and it is only in this respect (a reference which is natural to every man and which every man postulates in others as a duty) that it gives pleasure with a claim for the agreement of everyone else. By this the mind is made conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through sense, and the worth of others is estimated in accordance with a like maxim of their Judgment" (250–51). Despite beauty's symbolic representation of morality, Kant, as Terry Eagleton argues, "has no truck with the heady Romantic impulse to aestheticize morality: the moral law is a supreme court of appeal elevated above all mere beauty."[28] One might argue that Du Bois's fictional hero raises the possibility of sublimation of sexual desire into higher spiritual channels: "I suppose that all this feeling is based on the physical urge of sex between us," Matthew confesses to Kautilya. "I suppose that other contacts, other experiences, might have altered the world for us two. But the magnificent fact of our love remains, whatever its basis or accident. It rises from the ecstasy of our bodies to the communion of the saints, the resurrection of the spirit, and the exquisite crucifixion of God" (260). At the very least, Du Boisian aesthetics attempts to reunite the sexual with the sacred. However, this reunion alone is insufficient to engage the political.

For Du Bois, it is Friedrich Schiller's conjoining of political and aesthetic theories that offers a model for the relationship between art and politics. "Criteria of Negro Art" and the symbolic structure of *Dark Princess* echo Schiller's theory of the aesthetic state as a solution to the chaos of political and social barbarity. According to Schiller, "if man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom."[29] "All improvement in the political sphere," as Schiller contends, "is to proceed from the ennobling of the character—but, how, under the influence of a barbarous constitution, can the character become ennobled? We should need, for this end, to seek out some instrument which the state does not afford us, and with it open up well-springs which will keep pure and clear throughout every political corruption" (50). In a different register than that of Kant and Hegel, Schiller's art is free from both positive law and human lawlessness; Truth and Beauty

will ennoble the character. In Schiller's aesthetics, argues Eagleton, "social unity must be generated in a sense from 'below' from an aesthetically transformed or ideologically constituted civil society, not legislated arbitrarily from above."[30] Du Bois's transformation of the fourth-century BCE male Indian political philosopher Kautilya into his twentieth-century beautiful dark princess, Kautilya, reworks Hegel's and Kant's theories of aesthetic judgment, as well as Schiller's aesthetic state; in the process he aestheticizes morality and India's imperial past. As fictionalized by Du Bois, empirical knowledge in the form of social realism must yield to the aesthetic; the senses will eventually yield to Reason and Freedom. Du Bois, following Schiller, anthropologizes the aesthetic in the erotic figure of Kautilya, who serves his aesthetic and political ideal of the relationship between Beauty, Freedom, and Truth; she is the vehicle for his aesthetic ideal, hardly a real woman. Leaving aside for the moment Du Bois's aesthetic practices, here I briefly sketch some of the allusions to Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* in the plot of *Dark Princess*.

Kautilya's *Arthasâstra*

In a brilliant reading of Du Bois's novel, Dohra Ahmad points out in an endnote that Kautilya is a male name, specifically of the fourth-century BCE author of *Arthasâstra* (circa 300 BCE).[31] Ahmad argues that Du Bois's shifts between social realism and romanticism coincide with the novel's geographical movements from Chicago to the American South; both the American South and India are merged in the orientalized figure of Kautilya.[32] A better understanding of Kautilya, the political philosopher, and *Arthasâstra*'s publication history offers a key to Du Bois's strategic naming of his heroine and his gendered articulation of aesthetics as Beauty.[33] Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* was widely read from its initial publication through the twelfth century; it then disappeared until 1904 when it was given to R. Shamasastry, the librarian at the Mysore Government Oriental Library. Shamasastry published the treatise in Sanskrit in 1909, followed by an English translation in 1915.[34] Both Shamasastry's English translation and J. J. Meyer's German translation were available when Du Bois penned *Dark Princess* in 1927. Weber, an admirer of Kautilya's science of politics, compared him favorably to Machiavelli: "Truly radical 'Macchiavellianism' [*sic*], in the popular sense of that word, is classically expressed in Indian literature in the Arthashâstra of Kautilya (written long before the birth of Christ, ostensibly in the time of Chandragupta): compared to it, Macchiavelli's [*sic*] 'Prince' is harmless."[35] Kautilya concerned himself with acquiring and maintaining monarchal power for the benefit of a just and orderly society, an aspiration Du Bois echoes in the messianic conclusion to *Dark Princess*.

Known as a work of practical political philosophy or political realism, Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* reads as a detailed textbook on government administration, covering everything from war to economics and accounting practices to the treatment of slaves and servants. As a guide for wise kings, *Arthasâstra* is intended to sustain the

monarchy, understood as the best way to maintain order and prevent a descent into chaotic nature. Kautilya's reading of nature as chaos predates modernity's Hobbesian view of civilizational progress. However, Kautilya's treatise never contemplates anything close to a democratic or republican form of government, nor does it call for the elimination of *varna* (classes or castes), however sympathetic Kautilya may have been to the plight of servants and slaves.[36] In an intertextual allusion to the philosopher, Du Bois's Princess Kautilya learns to empathize with the working class by working alongside Black laborers in the southern United States.

As a foreign policy advisor, Kautilya, the philosopher, wrote extensively on what might be referred to as the waging of just wars, and the use of torture and assassination against enemies. Whereas King Chandragupta (ca. 317–293 BCE), under Kautilya's guidance, united the Indian nation through warfare, Du Bois's Princess Kautilya, by giving birth to Matthew's child, Madhu, bodies forth a new world uniting descendants of royalty and slavery in body and spirit. In contradistinction to Kautilya's philosophical writings, Du Bois's novelistic conclusion rejects *Arthasâstra*'s practical politics in favor of a physical and metaphysical solution to social and racial injustice. Throughout the novel, every attempt at a violent solution to the problem of racial violence is thwarted. The novel's radical Black leader fails in his attempt to defeat Ku Klux Klan racial terrorism by blowing up the train carrying Klan leaders to a Chicago convention. Instead, the reproductive body of a woman, Kautilya, becomes essential to the advancement of Du Bois's idealist philosophy of unity of the darker races of the world.

Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* is best remembered in the west as a detailed guide for recognizing and employing spies at all levels of government and society. As Roger Boesche and other political scientists have pointed out, Kautilya believed in a spy state. Much of book one of the treatise, titled "Concerning the Topic of Training," consists of instructions on how to select and employ secret agents as spies, from the highest ministers to travelers and roving monks and nuns to forest dwellers. Here is just one example of Kautilya's advice on the importance of espionage to governance: "With the body of ministers proved upright by means of secret tests, the (king) should appoint persons in secret service, (viz.), the sharp pupil, the apostate monk, the seeming householder, the seeming trader and the seeming ascetic, as well as the secret agent, the bravo, the poison-giver and the begging nun."[37] There are some obvious parallels between Du Bois's use of espionage in his novel and Kautilya's instructions to a wise king. The novel's plot unfolds in the shadow of the Bolshevik Revolution, and India's resistance to British colonialism. In Berlin, the novel's hero, Matthew Towns, meets the Princess Kautilya of Bwodpur, India, who declares, after much debate among her Chinese, Japanese, Arab, and Egyptian male committee members, "If the [Moscow] report is true, they ["the Negroes of America"] are a nation today, a modern nation worthy to stand beside any nation here" (22). Against the protests of other committee members, Kautilya enlists Matthew in a scheme to spy on Manuel Perigua, the leader of a radical group of American Blacks who plan to

overthrow white supremacy and the Ku Klux Klan's monopolization of violence and terrorism through counterterrorism. It is the Japanese member of the council who attempts to convince Matthew of the recklessness of Kautilya's espionage scheme:

> "In her interview with you she told you a story she had heard in Moscow, of a widespread and carefully planned uprising of the American blacks. She has intrusted [*sic*] you with a letter to the alleged leader of this organization and asked you to report to her your impressions and recommendations; and even to deliver the letter, if you deem it wise.
>
> Now, my dear Mr. Towns, consider the situation: First of all, our beloved Princess introduces you, a total stranger, into our counsels and tells you some of our general plans. Fortunately, you prove to be a gentleman who can be trusted; and yet you yourself must admit this procedure was not exactly wise. Further that, through this letter, our reputations, our very lives, are put in danger by this well-meaning but young and undisciplined lady." (29)

Immediately, Matthew surmises that, just as Kautilya has enlisted him to spy on radical American Blacks, "she is evidently well spied upon," by the other members of the "Council of the Darker Races" (29). In order to travel to meet Perigua, Matthew becomes a Pullman porter, which permits him to travel between the northern cities of New York and Chicago and the cities of the American South. The novel is shot through with allusions to Kautilya's instructions on the use of spies at all levels of society. When his reports to Kautilya are intercepted by agents of the Japanese and Indian delegates to the Council of the Darker Races, Matthew discovers that he, himself, is well spied upon by the Council (72). The espionage plot, Du Bois's naming of the princess, and the invocation of the name Chandragupta at the end of the novel, a subject to which I return later in this essay, all suggest the author's awareness of Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* and its significance to India's history.

As military advisor to Chandragupta, Kautilya played a central role in the unification of India as an empire. Chandragupta is credited with defeating the Nanda kings, who, according to historical accounts, were cruel and incompetent, and descended from a lower caste. Chandragupta's defeat of Alexander the Great's successors stopped the advance of the Greeks on the subcontinent. Historians of ancient India argue that the extreme measures advocated by Kautilya and implemented by Chandragupta were necessary to bring order and the rule of law to India. M. V. Krishna Rao asserts, "As a result of the progressive secularisation [*sic*] of society due to the innovations contemplated by [Kautilya] and the administration of Chandragupta, the country was prepared for the reception of the great moral transformation ushered in by Asoka [Chandragupta's grandson] and his administration."[38] So interpreted, Chandragupta's imperial consolidation of India,

under the guidance of Kautilya, was necessary to bringing about a civilizational transformation two generations later.

The historical Kautilya provides Du Bois with an entry into an ancient Indian tradition of nation-building and statecraft through military conquest. But Du Bois's *Dark Princess* works through *Arthasâstra*'s practical politics only to reject the practical in favor of the romantic. His decision to render Kautilya as a female love-interest in a transnational romantic triangle, however, acts as a screen with which to veil the international violence and suppression of indigenous populations inherent to nation-building and statecraft. As Arun Mukherjee remarks, classical Indian texts were written by Brahmins for the royals: "Dalits today condemn the entire corpus as upholding class and caste hegemony."[39] In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois veils class and caste antagonism in a fantasy of desire that transcends the subject–object divide. The novel offers a utopian image of ethnic, class, and gender reconciliation that mystifies activist movements to overcome real political and economic divisions. Nevertheless, the critical reception of *Dark Princess* suggests that cosmopolitan structures of feeling depend upon this cosmopolitan fantasy, one that relies on the inscription of women's bodies into romances of communalism, social cohesion across class lines, and cross-cultural solidarity. Put differently, theories of cosmopolitanism might more usefully be read through the lens of fantasy and desire.

Cosmopolitan Fantasies of the "Real"

Despite the allusions to the fourth-century BCE Kautilya, the critical reception of Du Bois's operatic novel reveals a fascination with the real woman who might have been the model for the Dark Princess Kautilya of Bwodpur. In her frequently cited 1928 *Chicago Bee* review, Mary White Ovington offers what scholars have since read as an eyewitness account of the woman: "I think I saw the dark Princess in 1911 as she came down the steps of the ballroom at the last meeting of the First Universal Race Congress in London. By the Princess's side was one of the most distinguished men at the Conference, Burghardt Du Bois. They were talking earnestly of the race problem. Did this Indian Princess remain in the American Negro's memory to become the Titiana of his midsummer night's dream?"[40] More recently Paul Gilroy, in his 1993 book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, gestures toward Ovington's speculative account.[41]

Since the 1994 University Press of Mississippi publication of the novel, *Dark Princess* has been enlisted to the cause of Marxist internationalism, transnationalism, South Asian Diaspora Studies, and cosmopolitanism. In a chapter he dubs "W. E. B. Du Bois's Afro-Asian Fantasia" in his *Afro-Orientalism* (2004), Bill Mullen reads the novel through a Marxist-Leninist internationalist framework, arguing that the novel is Du Bois's "most pronounced, if veiled, statement of his interest in what he called in 1933 the 'Russian experiment.'"[42] Mullen reads the domestic romance as incidental to Du Bois's larger political agenda: "Du Bois's rendering of nationalist struggle as

domestic (or familial) dispute and his deep aspiration for easy ethnic affiliation across Pan-Asia bespoke remnants of the romantic realism lingering from Afrocentric influences" (23). To the contrary, feminists have long argued that the family romance is central to modern nationalisms, even oppositional nationalist discourses. Moreover, Mullen's domestication of the sensuous ignores the centrality of the trans/gendered Kautilya and her polar opposite, Sara Andrews, to Du Bois's dialectic of aesthetic judgment. A more nuanced Marxism informed by corporeal feminism would note that capitalism expels sensuous pleasure from the laboring body, producing an ascetic body as represented by Sara Andrews, thus, bifurcating the rational from the sensuous aesthetic body represented by the figure of Kautilya.[43] Du Bois's omniscient narrator informs us that the well-to-do Sara Andrews, who parlayed her secretarial skills and puritan thrift and efficiency into a political career, "was thin, small, well tailored. . . . She was not beautiful, but she gave the impression of cleanliness, order, cold clean hardness, and unusual efficiency. She wore a black crêpe dress, with crisp white organdie collar and cuffs, chiffon hose, and short-trimmed hair. Altogether she was pleasing but a trifle disconcerting to look at" (109). As a model of lean capitalist efficiency, Sara Andrews's disciplined, ascetic, puritan body appears in stark contrast to Kautilya's more exotic appearance. Societies' aristocracies—traditionally exempt from bourgeois codes of morality imposed on upwardly mobile women like Sara Andrews—have been free to experience sensuous pleasures associated with the aesthetic. For the aristocracy, morality is aestheticized as Beauty. Exempt from the disciplining power of capital production, the aristocratic Kautilya enters Du Bois's novel in the form of a figuration of Matthew Town's erotic fantasy at precisely the moment he (self-exiled in Berlin) longs for the intimacies of home:

> Oh, he was lonesome; lonesome and homesick with a dreadful homesickness. After all, in leaving white, he had also left black America—all that he loved and knew. God! he never dreamed how much he loved that soft, brown world which he had so carelessly, so unregretfully cast away. What would he not give to clasp a dark hand now, to hear a soft Southern roll of speech, to kiss a brown cheek? To see warm, brown, crinkly hair and laughing eyes. God—he was lonesome. So utterly, terribly lonesome. And then—he saw the Princess. (7–8)

Trans/gendered as the dark princess, Kautilya enters the frame of the hero's fantasy and longing for sexual intimacy, thereby becoming an aestheticized object of desire.

The novel's description of the princess is akin to a formal analysis of a colorfully exotic unseeing painting, an object of the male gaze:

> First and above all came that sense of color; into this world of pale yellowish and pinkish parchment, that absence of

> negation of color, came, suddenly, a glow of golden brown skin. It was darker than sunlight and gold; it was lighter and livelier than brown. It was a living, glowing crimson, veiled beneath brown flesh. It called for no light and suffered no shadow, but glowed softly of its own inner radiance. . . . She was slim and lithe, gracefully curved. Unseeing, past him and into the struggling, noisy street, she was looking with eyes that were pools of night—liquid, translucent, haunting depths—whose brilliance made her face a glory and a glory and a dream. (8)

In his transhistorical cross-dressing of Kautilya, Du Bois conceals actual social, religious, and economic differences within India. As Simon Shepherd points out, "each body implies a type of society."[44] Tricked out as a beautiful woman, Kautilya represents a society where the aesthetic has not been alienated from Kant's practical reason. The aristocratic Kautilya, transformed by her visit to revolutionary Russia, embodies both beauty and wisdom. Her body signifies a society of sensuous pleasures that have not been completely expelled by British colonialism. However, by training his eye on the aristocratic body, Du Bois's hero occludes those lower-caste Indian bodies that are subject to the disciplining power of colonial capitalism.

Moreover, *Dark Princess* concludes on a mythic-aesthetic note, not with materialist solutions to problems of social and racial injustice, suggesting a dialectical synthesis that absorbs the material and political within the spiritual. Kautilya's frequently cited ceremonial ending—both a wedding and an anointment of a new messiah—captures the synthesis of the world spirit:

> "Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva! Lords of Sky and Light and Love! Receive from me, daughter of my fathers back to the hundredth name, his Majesty, Madhu Chandragupta Singh, by the will of God, Maharajah of Bwodpur and Maharajah-dhirajah of Sindrabad."
> Then from the forest, with faint and silver applause of trumpets:
> "King of the Snows of Gaurisankar!"
> "Protector of Ganga the Holy!"
> "Incarnate Son of the Buddha!"
> "Grand Mughal of Utter India!"
> "Messenger and Messiah to all the Darker Worlds!" (311)

In this penultimate speech, delivered just before the narrator's "Envoy," it is Beauty—the Dark Princess—that dissolves social and ethnic difference. Significantly, Kautilya invokes the name of Chandragupta in her ritual confirmation of the birth of the new messiah to all the "Darker Worlds." Madhu's birth enacts the physical and metaphysical evolution to Hegel's Absolute. In the Hegelian dialectical system, the

aesthetic moves up the evolutionary stage to religion, which, in turn, reaches toward the Absolute.[45] But the text of Kautilya's sermon suggests that classical India, not Greece, provides the narrative of civilization's origin. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* translates the metaphysical movement of the particular into this Hegelian universal by appeal to the corporeal process of sexual reproduction. Difference is dissolved into a spiritual and embodied unity or identity; in this coupling of concept and body, Madhu becomes the instantiation of universal essence.

In the process of narrating African Americans' rise from the archaic South in the blood and soil imagery of Matthew's nameless mother, and India's anticolonial struggles for national independence as acts of giving birth, *Dark Princess* emplots nationalist and antiracist struggles as strategies for containing women's sexuality. Through the emplotment and embodiment of Indian political philosopher Kautilya as the fictional Princess Kautilya, Du Bois exoticizes and feminizes India as Mother India, who, in conceiving and giving birth to Matthew's son Madhu, becomes mother to a future divine king and to the darker races of the world. Hegel's theory of civilization, like that of Freud, distrusts the abilities of the working classes, supporting, instead, the need for a strong charismatic leader. Similarly, Du Bois's messianic reading of freedom as a teleological progression to transcendent humanism reflects a loss of faith in secular redemption.

In a similar ideological frame to that taken by Mullen, but in an unabashed tribute to Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, Vijay Prashad's *The Karma of Brown Folk* (2000) reads Du Bois's creation of *Dark Princess* in the context of his association with the "community of Indian radicals (under the leadership of Virendranath Chattopadhyay, who founded the League Against Imperialism in 1928) and he [Du Bois] certainly knew Lala Lajpat Rai."[46] Although he disagrees with Du Bois's representation of the group as aristocrats, Prashad argues that this community provided the social and historical basis for the character Kautilya. "If Du Bois was able to grasp the significance of these radical Indians," Prashad contends, "perhaps he felt the need to exoticize them and to gender Asia female" (174–75). Prashad's materialist approach, like that of Mullen, ignores Du Bois's aesthetic politics and the novel's indebtedness to Hegel's reading of India as an exotic jewel, a marvel to which all nations must journey. *Dark Princess* reveals (contrary to current readings of Black radicalism) that Du Bois was far more ambivalent about Marxism's promise of freedom for "the darker races."

More recently Homi Bhabha has suggested that Du Bois must have heard of Madame Bhikaji Cama in 1907 while vacationing in England and Europe:

> Had he perchance, heard tell that very summer of a diasporic Indian revolutionary daughter of a well-to-do Parsi family from Bombay, Madame Bhikaji Cama, who had lived in exile in Europe since 1902, finally settling in a small pension in Paris. . . . In August 1907, while Du Bois was in Europe, Madame Cama

> attended the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, where she famously unfurled the Indian national flag with its middle band bearing emblems to represent the Hindus, Mohammedans, Budhists [*sic*] and Parsis—emblems that echo the passage in which Du Bois's Princess Kautilya gathers the many peoples of India, Africa, and the Americas around the rice dish.[47]

In a series of interrogatories, Bhabha seems to want to keep alive the cosmopolitan fantasy of a romance between like-minded revolutionaries across divides of nation, ethnicity, class, and gender—even if mediated by the virtual world of print technology: "Was this figure of romance and revolution the inspiration for Dark Princess? Had Du Bois read of Madame Cama as he was traveling in Europe in the summer of 1907, turning frequently to German newspapers as was his wont when in Europe? Or was Madame Cama mentioned to him by her comrade and compatriot, Du Bois's faithful friend, Lala Lajpat Rai, to whom he sent the manuscript of *Dark Princess* for comment and advice?" (187). Bhabha's account is no less speculative than that of Ovington, but what I find intriguing is the tendency of critics across interpretative communities—from social-realist to poststructuralist—to read Kautilya as a mimetic representation of an actual woman.

Efforts to turn fantasy into fact attest to the continuing tendency to read African American literature through a narrow social-realist lens. Perhaps the curiosity generated by Du Bois's novel of romantic fantasy and political intrigue answers Prashad's question, at least in part. The exoticized romantic encounter between a feminine India and a masculine African American masks some of the more problematic aspects of what Du Bois claimed as his favorite novel. Madame Cama may very well have been the woman who inspired Kautilya's politics, but it is more likely that Du Bois's Kautilya is a composite character, cobbled together out of bits and pieces of classical literature (Indian and Greek), German aesthetic philosophy, and contemporary Indian agents residing in the United States and Europe. If no woman could fulfill Du Bois's aesthetic requirements for "Beauty," "Truth," and "Right," he would have to manufacture one. I am less concerned with the identity of the "real" woman who inspired Princess Kautilya than with Du Bois's propaganda and how a feminized Kautilya advances a particular ideology of the aesthetic as truth. This question raises larger issues about the gendering and sexing of cosmopolitan theories of the aesthetic, in general, and the political practice of imagining the postimperial nation as a nurturing mother.

Du Bois's cosmopolitan aesthetics may be understood as an ideological fantasy, as articulated by Slavoj Žižek: "The fundamental level of ideology . . . is not an illusion masking a real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself."[48] With respect to cosmopolitanism, social reality, in this formulation, is "guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion"; the self-

proclaimed cosmopolitan misrecognizes the illusion of universality, which structures his or her local social actions (32). Žižek maintains, "the stake of social-ideological fantasy is to construct a vision of society which *does* exist, a society which is not split by an antagonistic division, a society in which the relation between its parts is organic, complementary" (126). For example, Marxist feminist scholars of nationalism argue that the exchange value of women's reproductive bodies becomes central to the social-ideological fantasy of the nation as an organic, homogenous whole.[49] In his Lacanian "salvation" of Hegel's dialectic, Žižek concludes that "the notion of social fantasy is therefore a necessary counterpart to the concept of antagonism: fantasy is precisely the way the antagonistic fissure is masked. In other words, *fantasy is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance*" (126, emphasis original). Likewise, the failure of Hegel's dialectical synthesis—absolute spirit—is masked through fantasy.

Dark Princess reads as a fanciful realization of Hegel's absolute spirit, the self-consciousness of the whole of humanity (read as "the darker races") through the reproductive body of a woman, Kautilya. But it is a Kautilya trans/gendered through Du Bois's German Idealism and classical imagination. For it is the author's engagement with Kantian aesthetics and Hegel's *Philosophy of History* that sets the novel's overall tone, style, and plot. Despite his reading of his Indian contemporaries, Du Bois's fantasy of India cannot seem to escape the exoticism imported from his German philosophical forebears. Hegel famously read India as an object of desire. In the Hegelian thesis, if Du Bois is to found an African American nation, he must travel through India, an exoticized and feminized land of desire. This reading of *Dark Princess* as a constellation of cosmopolitan fantasies concludes with the observation that Du Bois navigates the distance between colonial India and racially oppressed Black America through the womb of an imagined woman, the trans/gendered figure of his orientalized heroine, Kautilya.

Notes

[1] Claudia Tate, introduction to *Dark Princess: A Romance*, by W. E. B. Du Bois (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995), xxiv. Hereafter quotations from *Dark Princess* are cited in text.

[2] Quoted in Claudia Tate, *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 54.

[3] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 11–12, 275.

[4] See Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). For other literary examples of the anthropological notion of culture, see Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Philadelphia: J. B.

Lippincott, 1937), as well as her ethnographies *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935) and *Tell My Horse* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1938); Eric Walrond, *Tropic Death* (New York: Collier Books, 1972); and Claude McKay, *Banana Bottom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1933), in addition to his *Home to Harlem* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1928). This often-heated conversation between Du Bois and New Negro Renaissance writers continued in the pages of *The Crisis* until Jessie Fauset was installed as literary editor and mediator between Du Bois and the creative writers who depended on the journal's readers.

[5] Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 162.

[6] Tate, *Psychoanalysis*, 205n33.

[7] See Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Farah Jasmine Griffin, "Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (2000): 28–40; Joy James, *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Lawrie Balfour, "Representative Women: Slavery, Citizenship, and Feminist Theory in Du Bois's 'Damnation of Women,'" *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 127–48.

[8] Carby, *Race Men*, 33.

[9] George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Dover, 1955), §3, 16.

[10] See Dohra Ahmad, "'More than Romance': Genre and Geography in *Dark Princess*," *ELH* 69, no. 3 (2002): 775–803.

[11] "Nationalism and the West" was first published by Macmillan in 1917, is now in the public domain, and has been reprinted in Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2009).

[12] Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World* (London: Penguin, 2005), vii.

[13] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 127–44.

[14] Ahmad, "'More than Romance,'" 776.

[15] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 165.

[16] See Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in "Culture and Countermemory: The 'American' Connection," ed. S. P. Mohanty, special issue, *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81; and Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic,*

the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[17] See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000); Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, trans. Reginald Snell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 137–38; and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Introduction to Aesthetics: Being the Introduction to the Berlin Aesthetics Lectures of the 1820s*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

[18] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," *Crisis* 32 (1926): 290–97.

[19] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Propaganda."

[20] Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," 288.

[21] Tate, *Psychoanalysis*, 50.

[22] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 262.

[23] See Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Aisha Khan, "Portraits in the Mirror: Nature, Culture, and Women's Travel Writing in the Caribbean," *Women's Writing* 10, no. 1 (2003): 93–118.

[24] Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," 292.

[25] Hegel, *Introduction to Aesthetics*, 2, emphasis original.

[26] Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," 296.

[27] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 100, emphasis original.

[28] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 81.

[29] Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education*, 137.

[30] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 116.

[31] Ahmad, "'More than Romance,'" 776n6. Arnold Rampersad made the same observation in "Du Bois's Passage to India: *Dark Princess*" but did not take the observation any further. Arnold Rampersad, "Du Bois's Passage to India: *Dark Princess*," in *W. E. B. Du Bois on Race and Culture*, ed. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 161.

[32] Ahmad, "'More than Romance,'" 776.

[33] For interpretations of Kautilya's *Arthasâstra*, see Roger Boesche, "Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India," *Journal of Military History* 67, no. 1 (2003): 9–37; Roger Boesche, *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*

(Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002); M. V. Krishna Rao, *Studies in Kautilya*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1958); and Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, 4th ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988 [1966]).

[34] Boesche, *First Great Political Realist*, 8.

[35] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 220.

[36] See R. P. Kangle, trans., *The Kautiliya Arthasâstra, Part II, an English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972).

[37] Kangle, *Kautilya Arthasâstra*, 1.11.7: 21.

[38] Rao, *Studies in Kautilya*, 232.

[39] Arun Mukherjee, email message to author, March 1, 2008.

[40] Mary White Ovington, review of *Dark Princess*, by W. E. B. Du Bois, *Chicago Bee*, August 4, 1928; quoted in Rampersad, "Du Bois's Passage," 165.

[41] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 144–45.

[42] Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 22. Notwithstanding Du Bois's later interest in the Russian experiment, as late as July 1921, Claude McKay, as editor of *The Liberator*, wrote to Du Bois, as editor of *The Crisis*, complaining of the latter's editorial "The Drive" and its "sneer at the Russian Revolution." Claude McKay, letter to the editor, *Crisis* 22 (1921): 102.

[43] For a reading of Marxist aesthetics, see Eagleton's "The Marxist Sublime" in Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 196–233.

[44] Simon Shepherd, *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* (London: Routledge, 2006), 32.

[45] See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

[46] Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 174.

[47] Homi K. Bhabha, "Global Minoritarian Culture," in *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 186–87. See also Bhabha, "The Black Savant and the Dark Princess," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 50, nos. 1–3 (2004): 137–55.

[48] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 33.

[49] See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review

Press, 1975); June Nash, "When Isms Become Wasms: Structural Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Postmodernism," *Critique of Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (1997): 11–32; and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Selected Bibliography

Ahmad, Dohra. "'More than Romance': Genre and Geography in *Dark Princess*." *ELH* 69, no. 3 (2002): 775–803.

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Balfour, Lawrie. "Representative Women: Slavery, Citizenship, and Feminist Theory in Du Bois's 'Damnation of Women.'" *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 127–48.

Bhabha, Homi K. "The Black Savant and the Dark Princess." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 50, nos. 1–3 (2004): 137–55.

———. "Global Minoritarian Culture." In *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, 184–95. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Boesche, Roger. *The First Great Political Realist: Kautilya and His Arthashastra*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002.

———. "Kautilya's *Arthasâstra* on War and Diplomacy in Ancient India." *Journal of Military History* 67, no. 1 (2003): 9–37.

Bohls, Elizabeth A. *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716–1818*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Carby, Hazel V. *Race Men*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Du Bois, W. E. B. "Criteria of Negro Art." *Crisis* 32 (1926): 290–97.

———. *Dark Princess: A Romance*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995.

———. *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*. New York: Washington Square Press, 2004.

Eagleton, Terry. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (2000): 28–40.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Hegel's Introduction to Aesthetics: Being the Introduction to the Berlin Aesthetics Lectures of the 1820s*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

———. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Mules and Men*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1935.

———. *Tell My Horse*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1938.

———. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1937.

James, Joy. *Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Kangle, R. P., trans. *The Kautiliya Arthasâstra, Part II, an English Translation with Critical and Explanatory Notes*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000.

Keeling, Kara. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Khan, Aisha. "Portraits in the Mirror: Nature, Culture, and Women's Travel Writing in the Caribbean." *Women's Writing* 10, no. 1 (2003): 93–118.

McKay, Claude. *Banana Bottom*. New York: Harper & Row, 1933.

———. *Home to Harlem*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1928.

Mookerji, Radha Kumud. *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, 4th ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.

Mullen, Bill V. *Afro-Orientalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Nash, June. "When Isms Become Wasms: Structural Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism and Postmodernism." *Critique of Anthropology* 17, no. 1 (1997): 11–32

Prashad, Vijay. *The Karma of Brown Folk*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

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

———. "Du Bois's Passage to India: *Dark Princess*." In *W. E. B. Du Bois on Race and Culture*, ed. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart, 161–76. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Rao, M. V. Krishna. *Studies in Kautilya*, 2nd ed. New Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1958.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter, 157–210. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.

Ryan, Mary P. *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Santayana, George. *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Dover, 1955.

Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*. Trans. Reginald Snell. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954.

Shepherd, Simon. *Theatre, Body and Pleasure*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Home and the World*. London: Penguin, 2005.

———. *Nationalism*. Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2009.

Tate, Claudia. *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Walrond, Eric. *Tropic Death*. New York: Collier Books, 1972.

Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." In *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman, 212–25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.