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PLANTATION MODERNISM: IRISH, CARIBBEAN, AND

U.S. FICTION, 1890-1950

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by

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ABSTRACT

Although the plantation is most often associated with the antebellum U.S. south, the modern plantation complex was first introduced as a system of economic and cultural domination in sixteenth-century Ireland. This model of settler colonialism was soon exported to the New World and spawned a range of social institutions and cultural artifacts, including a genre of literature. While plantation fiction seemed to reach the height of its popularity in the United States after emancipation, the genre was revived in the twentieth century by Irish, Caribbean, and American writers. Indeed, the genre was revised with surprising frequency by modernists from a wide variety of national and cultural backgrounds, including Elizabeth Bowen, Liam O’Flaherty, Jean Rhys, Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, Arna Bontemps, and of course, William Faulkner. Serving as an important device of cultural linkage, plantation fiction offers a way of understanding the reverberations of empire in transatlantic modernity.

While writers of nineteenth-century plantation romance sought its origins in feudalism, the plantation in fact emerged out of the capitalist-imperial ventures of what C.L.R. James calls the “maritime bourgeoisie” of early modern Europe. Plantation ideology derived not from steadfast traditions, but rather from the demands of the market and the defense of property, often human. My project concentrates on Anglophone plantation culture from roughly 1890 through 1950. I track the vast changes in the plantation complex that took place during the modern period, including the transformations that occurred after emancipation, the shift from traditional colonial-settler (family owned) plantations to corporate ventures and state owned plantations, and the simultaneous rise of British decolonization and American imperial expansion. The

modernist era marks a shift in global production patterns, as the plantation complex adumbrates transnational agribusiness, and the literature of this period attempts to grapple with the clash between these residual and emergent capitalist agricultural forms.

Although the plantation complex is an institution of empire, it would be wrong to expect that all plantation fiction simply serves the ideological imperatives of empire (as it might when the archive is limited to nineteenth-century American writers). Broadening the definition of “plantation fiction” beyond the narrow confines of plantation romance reveals more ideologically diverse and critical representations of the plantation’s role in producing and sustaining empire. Modernist fiction underscores the plantation’s global socio-economic reach by tracing the flow of capital and people to the metropole from plantation cultures. I argue that plantation modernism uses modernist techniques to focus narrative through perspectives from postlapsarian plantation cultures: octoroon mistresses, exploited field hands, disaffected and dishonored planters’ daughters, and other characters burdened by the legacies of the plantation past. Works like Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September*, Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*, Claude McKay’s *Banana Bottom*, and William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* experiment with the generic conventions established by plantation romance in order to reveal the local manifestations of global capitalism and also to mediate between imperial centers and peripheralized regions. Plantation modernism’s cosmopolitan style embraces epistemological and political uncertainty, and foregrounds the forms of cosmopolitanism that emerge among plantation modernity’s voluntary and involuntary diasporas.

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Chapter One

Making the Plantation New: Modernist Studies and Plantation Fiction

“The Plantation is one of the bellies of the world, not the only one, one among so many others, but it has the advantage of being able to be studied with the utmost precision.” –Edouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation*

“On the run from the police a young Guianese, half-Chinese, half-Negro, discovers that all previous generations, Dutch, English, French, capitalists, slaves, freed slaves, white and black, were expatriates.” –C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins*¹

The genre of plantation fiction is typically associated with the reactionary writings of the nineteenth-century Plantation School in the United States, which advanced conservative, white supremacist ideologies and nostalgically mourned the lost Eden of American plantocracy. While plantation fiction seemed to reach the height of its popularity in the United States after emancipation, the genre was revived and revised in the twentieth century by Irish, Caribbean, and American writers. Indeed, contrary to the received wisdom that the plantation complex came to an end by 1900, the genre was deployed with surprising frequency by modernists from a wide variety of national and cultural backgrounds, including Ellen Glasgow, Elizabeth Bowen, Liam O’Flaherty, Jean Rhys, Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, Arna Bontemps, and of course, William Faulkner.

Modernist plantation fiction responds to nineteenth-century plantation romance, which casts the American plantation as an organic, static, and self-sustaining institution that safeguards archaic feudal structures, pre-modern ideologies, and aristocratic hierarchies of power. This plantation is a relic of the pre-capitalist past that somehow survived the industrial revolution to stagger into the modern world; out of sync with history, it becomes a semi-sacred repository for cultural nostalgia and reactionary

¹ See *The Poetics of Relation* pp. 75 and *Black Jacobins* pp. 416.

politics. Just as the plantation complex may be said to embody the values and economies of a bygone era, plantation fiction has typically been seen as the literary attempt to stave off the forces of a deracinating, atomizing modernity. In short, plantation fiction has been viewed as, at best, a nostalgic response to modernization and, at worst, the reactionary propaganda of an oppressor class bent on turning back the clock on the libratory promises of liberal democracy and staving off the social changes caused by emancipation, immigration, and race mixing.

Despite institutional narratives that locate its origins in a romantic feudal past, the plantation is a distinctly modern institution built upon, rather than existing in isolation from, the economic structures of capitalism. The plantation complex emerged out of the early capitalist-imperial ventures of what C.L.R. James calls “the maritime bourgeoisie” of early modern Europe—rather than from the remnants of an aristocracy shattered by those same socio-economic structures. Consequently, plantation ideology derived not from steadfast traditions, but rather from the demands of the market and the defense and justification of (often human) property. The plantation has always served a central role in the “progressive integration of the global economic system” (Tiffen and Mortimore 7). With origins in medieval Mediterranean sugar cultivation, the plantation did not take on explicitly colonial forms until the early modern era when Elizabeth I and later Cromwell used it to facilitate settler colonialism in Ireland. What began as merely one model for sugar production within Europe itself became the dominant mode of agricultural production the world over, spawning a range of socio-economic institutions, political ideologies, and cultural artifacts. By the end of the twentieth century, the plantation and its effects had saturated both the first and third worlds.

In the course of this geographic spread, the plantation complex underwent many permutations. Clearly, the Ulster plantation and antebellum American plantation offer different models of modernity/coloniality. For now though, I want to offer a preliminary definition for what I mean by *plantation*: farming estates associated with mono-crop agriculture that require large-scale production, sizeable labor forces, a high degree of capitalization, and an essential infrastructure for export. In this definition, I follow Mary Tiffen and Michael Mortimore, who characterize the late twentieth-century plantation according to its crops, which are usually mono-crop, require immediate processing, use vertically integrated facilities, and resist rapid change in production (8-10). However, I depart from Tiffen and Mortimore's focus on tropical and subtropical crops, and argue instead that historically the plantation has had a much wider distribution in temperate climates, including Ireland.² This definition will be both refined and complicated by the chapters that follow, as I trace the plantation's development in particular locations.

Plantation households share a common hierarchical structure, what Michael Bibler, in reference to the American south, calls the "meta-plantation": the "vertical system of paternalistic and patriarchal hierarchies that constitutes the core social structure of every individual plantation—whether it be slave or tenant, antebellum or modern" (6). Similarly, Glissant observes the hierarchical structure of the individual households that lead to distinctively hierarchical plantation societies, explaining that the plantation "is an organization formed in a social pyramid, confined within an enclosure, functioning

² Tiffen and Mortimore write "A plantation is not simply a large farm; it is distinguished from large farms or ranches because: it generally cultivates only one, or less frequently two, of a restricted range of crops; it has a higher capital to land ratio, due to its investments in tree crops, processing plants, and in large companies, research and development; it has a large labor force, which includes a large portion of permanent employees, unlike ranches or mechanized cereal farms" (10). This form of the plantation is distinctly modern, dating from circa 1500.

apparently as an autarky but actually dependent, and with a technical mode of production that cannot evolve because it's based on a slave structure” (64).

The framework of plantation modernity brings forward continuous features among plantation cultures across the circum-Atlantic world from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries: the prevalence of absentee landlordism, the importance of primogeniture in maintaining familial power and dynastic wealth, the forced displacement and transplantation of indentured servants and African slaves, ideologies of paternalism, the sexual exploitation of slaves and laborers, slave and worker revolts, environmental devastation, the growing role of middlemen, and the enclosure of formerly public lands. The consequences of these shared histories continue well into the twentieth century when new patterns can be found: apartheid, gerrymandering, mechanization, commercialization, growing surveillance, militarization, decolonization, and civil rights movements. These phenomena go beyond isomorphic coincidence, reflecting continuous economic and social structures.

I do not wish to suggest that any of these phenomena are coeval, interchangeable, or homogeneous. Rather they are global patterns refracted through and changed by local histories and conditions. Through the framework of plantation modernity, the slave ship finds a correlation in the coffin ships that followed the Irish famine; the deforestation of Ireland under Cromwell’s plantation parallels the deforestation of the Mississippi Delta’s piney woods during western expansion; and Anglo-Irish “rackrenting” bears a striking resemblance to American sharecropping. And then there’s the recurring iconography of the big house. Perhaps the most prominent and adaptable symbol of the global plantation complex, the big house varies dramatically in design from culture to culture, but serves

the same function the world over: to impress the lower classes with the planter family's wealth, prestige, and power.

The shared economic structure of plantation societies issues in the development of certain literary commonalities as well, such as the theme of servants and slaves guarding plantocratic honor. A Catholic servant, Thady Quick, narrates the history of an Anglo-Irish family in Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800). As the family slides further into debt and debauchery, Thady tries desperately—but unobtrusively—to help the Rackrents take fiscal responsibility and fulfill the imperatives of *noblesse oblige*. Thady's faithful guarding of the Rackrent prestige and planter protocol is mirrored by Mammy's incessant scolding in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, and even Uncle Julius's advice to his new northern employers, John and Annie, in Charles Chesnut's *The Conjure Woman*. These examples suggest both the correlations between and the heterogeneity of plantation fiction in its many transatlantic instantiations. Thady's loyalty can be viewed as honorably loyal or as false consciousness (or perhaps both). Mammy's protection of white feminine virtue and decorum has repeatedly been shown to be a racist white fantasy. And Uncle Julius's advice often takes subversive and self-serving forms. Nonetheless, these texts reflect the economic and social exchanges of the plantation complex.

In the nineteen eighties and nineties, following on the heels of revised historical accounts of the plantation complex and slavery, literary scholarship on plantation fiction focused on nineteenth-century instantiations in the United States.³ Critics noted the

³ Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan Roll*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household*, and Catherine Clinton's *The Plantation Mistress* are just a few of the works to significantly revise narratives of plantation history.

genre's early indebtedness to slave narratives and its later association with reactionary politics. Lucinda MacKethan's *A Dream of Arcady* acknowledges plantation fiction's start in John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but identifies the genre most closely with Thomas Nelson Page and the Plantation School of the 1870s and 1880s, which held to a sentimental "vision of order and grace to communicate a new myth of the lost cause" that often used the voice of the slave to "authenticate a version of the plantation system as tragic Eden" (211).⁴ In its earliest instantiations, nineteenth-century plantation romance often focalized narrative through the perspective of a white urban narrator from outside the plantation complex. These interregional cosmopolitan narrators provided an "objective" perspective, shared by the intended urban audience, from which to comment on the virtues and follies of the plantocracy and to depict slavery as a necessary and benign institution. By the turn of the twentieth century, this outside white narrator began to be replaced either by an outside narrator troubled by what he or she finds on the plantation or by an inside narrator who provides the perspectives of former slaves and freed black labor. To a large extent, the plantation produced and disseminated by nineteenth-century writers continues to shape the discourse on plantation life. As the transnational marketability of *Scarlett O'Hara* aptly demonstrates, the vestiges of the plantation still influence popular culture, and the

⁴ MacKethan cites as examples: Joel Chandle Harris's Uncle Remus stories, Irwin Russel's poem "Christmas Night in the Quarters" (1878), Sherwood Booner's "Gran'mammy tales", and most notably Thomas Nelson Page's novels *The Old South* (1892), *The Negro: The Southerner's Problem* (1904), and *The Old Dominion* (1908), as well as reconstruction novels *Red Rock* (1898), *Gordon Keith* (1903) and *In Ole Virginia* (1887).

ideological impact of romantic imagery is so pervasive that plantation modernism (and its readers) struggles to break with the vestiges of romantic conventions.⁵

With its origins in the radical transformations of the Atlantic world that led to the creation of the modern world system, plantation fiction is by definition a colonial genre. Because the plantation complex is an institution of empire, one would expect plantation fiction to serve the ideological imperatives of empire. This is indeed the case when the archive is limited to these nineteenth-century writers of American plantation romance like Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, and Thomas Dixon. These writers provide totalizing perspectives and knowable communities for the consumption of an urban public: their plantation is instantly recognizable—a bucolic estate, a dignified big house, childlike slaves, and a fatherly planter with dashing sons and coquettish daughters: images that have long supported imperial capitalism and white supremacy both at home and abroad. However, expanding the definition of “plantation fiction” beyond the southern U.S. to include all fictional narratives of plantation society dramatically shifts generic conventions and reveals a body of work that responds to the plantation’s role in producing and sustaining empire in more literarily nuanced and critical ways.

Influenced by postcolonial perspectives, plantation fiction scholarship has changed dramatically in the last ten years. Houston Baker’s *Turning South Again: Re-Thinking Modernism/Re-Thinking Booker T.* foregrounds the role of slavery and plantation economics in forging a distinctly *American* identity. His methodology centers

⁵ For instance, *Gone with the Wind*’s best selling sequel *Scarlett* (1992) and *Rhett Butler’s People* (2007). There have even been four musical adaptations, including *Scarlett* (1972). Of the three other musicals, all entitled *Gone with the Wind*, one was produced by the Takarazuka Revue in Takarazuka, Japan (1977, 2004) and most recently Trevor Nunn produced one at the New London Theatre in London (2008). For more on *Gone with the Wind* continuing appeal, see Helen Taylor’s *Scarlett’s Women: Gone with the Wind and its Female Fans*.

on the black body in the U.S., disciplined first by plantation slavery, then Jim Crow, and finally the prison industrial complex.⁶ The history of the black body, he argues, is “*the past of the Americas*” (10). Baker’s call for a new southern studies was met with excitement by critics already frustrated by the conservative, exceptionalist methodologies of the field and eager to integrate the U.S. south into global contexts. Subsequent articulations of the new southern studies also highlight the importance of plantation colonialism to southern culture and note its continuation after the ostensible abolition of slavery. John Smith and Deborah Cohn’s *Look Away: The U.S. South in New World Studies* strives to delineate the American south’s multiple allegiances: “in such a modified reading,” they argue, “the U.S. South comes to occupy a space unique within modernity: a space simultaneously (or alternately) center and margin, victor and defeated, empire and colony, essentialist and hybrid, northern and southern (both in a global sense)” (9). The American south, on this reading, is at one and the same time part of the global south, linked through colonialism to the Caribbean and South America, and globally north, linked imperially to northern American metropolises, as well as the Atlantic slave trade. The region occupies an overdetermined space of colonized and colonizer, white and black, industrial and agricultural, urban and rural that has long been glossed over.⁷ Transatlantic plantation fiction illustrates this geographic and cultural ambivalence.

⁶ Baker’s conclusions are supported by Douglas A. Blackmon’s *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Blackmon shows how the leased convict system recreated the structures of slavery in the wake of emancipation.

⁷ We might consider how this statement may apply to Ireland’s own precarious place in Europe, as both an internal colony of Britain (Northern Ireland) and post-Celtic Tiger tourist mecca (The Irish Republic).

Situating the south in relation to the Americas, recent scholarship has begun to account for the transnational character of the plantation complex. George Handley's *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas* first placed southern plantation fiction within a circum-Caribbean context. Comparing novels from Cuba and the United States, Handley focuses on how nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers reconstruct the genealogical ties obscured by plantation ideology. In the last two years, Handley's reevaluation of the plantation has been joined by Brannon Costello's *Plantation Airst: Racial Paternalism and Southern Fiction, 1945-1971*; Valerie Loichot's *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse*; Ellen Crowell's *The Dandy in Irish and American Southern Fiction: Aristocratic Drag*; Jessica Adams' *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation*; and Michael Bibler's *Cotton's Queer Relations: Same-Sex Intimacy and the Literature of the Southern Plantation, 1936-1968*. While this recent criticism has taken plantation studies in new, often transnational directions, the links between Atlantic plantation cultures are so numerous and intricate that many have yet to be articulated, and the plantation's full role as a global, economic institution of modernization and colonialism—and its ideological and aesthetic manifestations—remains to be considered.

In addition to the new southern studies, this project contributes to the new modernist studies, which of late has sought to expand the temporal, spatial, geographic, ideological, and disciplinary purview of modernist criticism. Current scholarship has effectively replaced outdated concepts of a monolithic European "Modernism" with a plethora of alternative modernisms, expanding beyond "international" and "transnational" methods to "global" or even "planetary" concepts. Recent monographs

radically decenter metropolitan models, while acknowledging their influence on non-European literary production. This geographic expansion moves beyond Euro-American culture to consider work from Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East.⁸

Much of this scholarship is influenced by postcolonial studies. Modernist criticism has long been attuned to the constitutive relations between modernist form and British imperialism. Although they place modernism's origin in European cities, Raymond Williams and Frederic Jameson linked its emergence to shifts in global capitalist production wrought by colonialism abroad. For Williams, modernism emerged from imperial effects at the core and then expanded outside European metropolises to the whole world. He admonished critics to see high modernism's promotion of "its own processes as universals" and look "from time to time, from outside the metropolis: from the deprived hinterlands, where different forces are moving, and from the poor world which has always been peripheral to the metropolitan systems" (47). Jameson took up William's challenge to look critically from the periphery, arguing that metropolitan modernism's formal innovation was necessitated by the lost social totality that occurred as imperialism exported vital aspects of the production of daily life to the colonies.

More recently, critics like Charles Pollard, Simon Gikandi, Jed Esty, and Jahan Ramazani have sought to transform understandings of the relations between modernist literature and Anglo-American colonialism. Ramazani's "Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity" examines literary "translocations" that allow for "cross-cultural, transhistorical exchange" between European, Caribbean, and African poetics (289). In

⁸ Under the influence of hemispheric studies, modernist scholarship uncovers not only the exchanges between New World cultures, but the Atlantic and Pacific basins (for instance, the forthcoming collection *Pacific Rim Modernisms* edited by Mary Ann Gillies).

colonial contexts, techniques of the Anglo modernist establishment (T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and W.B. Yeats) are recalibrated by postcolonial writers struggling against “local instantiations of the imperium” (292). Ramazani’s work suggests that, by no means a static entity, modernism is a polymorphous construct with fluctuating sociopolitical meanings and often unpredictable effects.

Along with this geographic expansion comes a shift in modernism’s temporal boundaries. Some recent scholarship constructs a long twentieth century model that extends from mid-nineteenth century French decadence to twenty-first century fiction by writers like Junot Diaz and Kazuo Ishiguro.⁹ These critics claim that modernism was declared dead just as colonized peoples began to achieve statehood and encounter their own modernities. As Susan Stanford Friedman appealingly declares, “Multiple modernities create multiple modernisms” (427). Certainly, the modernisms considered in this study—Irish, Caribbean, and the U.S.—exceed the temporal boundaries of Anglo-European frameworks and reach well into the 1960s. For this reason, southern literature, for instance, has rarely been conceptualized within the context of international modernism. Rather the “Southern Renaissance” has been considered in isolation from European modernism in general, and American modernism in particular, except in an antagonized relationship. As John Duval notes, regionalism has often been used as a term to relegate writing to a second tier of simplistic literature, while the critical label of modernism has been used to denote abstract sophistication and complexity.

⁹ This expansion includes considerations of 1930s modernism by Tyrus Miller and Jed Esty, but most recently, Susan Stanford Friedman and Rebecca Walkowitz have also argued for radically expanding modernism’s temporal boundaries.

Like Ramazani, in their edited collection *Geomodernisms*, Laura Doyle and Laura Winkel provide a model for more locational approaches to modernist studies that also account for “marginal” and “regional” literatures: “If, from these locales, we look back toward Anglo-European modernisms, we can begin to glimpse [...] how canonical white Anglo modernism is itself determined by contact-zone clashes and reversals and how it, too, is haunted by ghosts—the repressed ghosts of an African modernity, an Atlantic modernity, a subaltern modernity” (3). This locational approach looks at modernist writing in particular locales, contracting the lens of criticism like a kaleidoscope so that new facets of familiar writers and new webs of connection appear. The plantation provides one such lens and allows us to draw meaningful connections among diverse cultures, as well as between core and periphery, but rarely in a linear fashion. If, as Jameson has argued, metropolitan modernism’s formal innovation was necessitated by a socioeconomic void left by the exportation of essential aspects of the production of daily life, then modernist plantation novels represent a subset of remote sites of imperial production unavailable to metropolitan writers and artists. In short, plantation modernism effectively reorders the interdependencies of core-periphery relations. A “poetics of relation” in Glissant’s sense, plantation fiction creates a web of associations between those places forgotten by metropolitan conceptions of modernism.

One of my basic assumptions in this project is that the critical acknowledgement of the relations between regionalism and metropolitan norms can provide a useful starting point for reintegrating peripheralized modernisms into considerations of international modernism. In *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, Stephanie Foote insightfully observes that regionalism is a discourse *about*

difference.¹⁰ Not merely an attempt to fend off an encroaching industrializing modernity, regionalisms—like plantation fiction—are most productively viewed as a response to “metronormativity”—that is, the attempt of urban elites to both homogenize and integrate rural particularity (to “modernize” or “norm” it with the standards of the metropolis), and also to harness the particularity of subordinated locales in order to bolster metropolitan universals (as Foote describes, providing American “folk” who create “our” national identity). A transnational lens dismantles binaries that pit the cosmopolitan/global against parochial/local—as do plantation modernists themselves. While nineteenth-century plantation fiction in the U.S. often presents the plantation as essentially and uniquely local and national, plantation modernism challenges this exceptionalist pose.¹¹ Indeed, a comparative lens suggests, rather incontrovertibly, that those things that we think of as quintessentially American are actually constitutively international.

Plantation modernism, as I will construct it in this study, decenters the metropole from considerations of twentieth-century literature and produces a modernism that accounts for “regional” literatures like the respective “renaissances” of Irish, Caribbean,

¹⁰ There is significant overlap between plantation fiction and regionalism, particularly in the U.S. See, for example, the work of Sherwood Bonner, Kate Chopin, and Charles Chesnut.

¹¹ Ironically, even as many U.S. writers posit the plantation as distinctly American, Caribbean writers like Edouard Glissant and C.L.R. James see it as distinctly Caribbean. For Glissant, this means considering the plantation of the U.S. south as the northern border of the Caribbean, “The Plantation system spread, following the same structural principles, throughout the southern United States, the Caribbean islands, the Caribbean coast of Latin America, and the northeastern portion of Brazil” (63). Similarly, James argues that “Where ever the sugar plantation and slavery existed, they imposed a pattern. It is an original pattern, not European, not African, not a part of the American main, not native in any conceivable sense of that word, but West Indian, *sui generis*, with no parallel anywhere else.” (391-2). Others, like J. Michael Dash, see the plantation taking more extreme forms in the Caribbean, where it was “marked by an extermination of the original population, were subjected to repopulation, and became totally dependent on the metropole because of their plantation economies, the Caribbean archipelago witnessed the extremes of the New World Experience” (5). The New World experience that Dash associates so closely with the Caribbean is, fundamentally, a plantation experience. Although the Caribbean plantation does have unique characteristics, as my project will show, the plantation structure has taken hold the world over and each of its local iterations has “unique” characteristics.

southern, and African American letters so often excluded by metrocolonial models. This requires establishing a framework of plantation modernity that, more than simply comparing plantation fiction from a variety of countries (Ireland, the U.S., Dominica, Jamaica, and potentially dozens of others), takes the plantation as a cohesive culture across national boundaries even while it acknowledges differences between its various iterations.

Modernist plantation fiction strikingly registers the plantation's multiple instantiations in Ireland, the Caribbean, and the United States. Glissant argues that in all its incarnations within the Caribbean, the plantation produces "the same trajectory and almost the same forms of expression. We could mark out three moments: literary production—first as an act of survival, then as a dead end or delusion, finally as an effort or passion of memory" (68). Although he focuses on West Indian literary production, Glissant's comments provide a useful starting point for understanding plantation cultural production transatlantically. His first phase of literary production as "survival" entails the cultural expressions of slavery, those oral and written narratives that sought to preserve African traditions and articulate resistance through language that circumvented the mandated silences imposed by plantocracy. Glissant's second phase of literary production as a "dead end" involves colonial meta-narratives and romance, discourses of plantation history which present the oppressor's perspective: the ideology of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, the Caribbean Creole sugarocracy, and the American plantocracy. Finally, the "effort or passion of memory" that Glissant addresses takes shape with literary modernism, which gives voice to a host of counter-hegemonic narratives of plantation life.

The modern period saw vast changes in the plantation complex, including those that occurred after emancipation, the shift from traditional colonial-settler (family owned) plantations to corporate ventures and state ownership, and the simultaneous onset of British decolonization and American imperialism. While the plantation played a formative role in the initial period of capitalist-imperial expansion that followed the discovery of the New World, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mark the plantation's involvement in new imperial ventures led by multinational corporations and the U.S. military. The period also marks the so-called "Belle Époque" of globalizing markets, an historical "high point of globalization" (Held and McGrew 52).¹² Furthermore, many modernists either came from or aspired to the planter class. According to local legend, Elizabeth Bowen's family acquired their estate from Cromwell himself. In 1930, Faulkner purchased a Greek revival house and assumed the stance of a landed southern gentleman. By the time Jean Rhys left Dominica at the age of 16, her family had been Creole plantocracy in Dominica for five generations. And Arna Bontemps was descended from West Indian planters and slaves, possibly from Haiti.¹³ Plantation modernists—such as Eudora Welty and Elizabeth Bowen, and Evelyn Scott and Jean Rhys—also maintained transnational networks and friendships with each other, recognizing their common histories.

This period saw an explosion of fiction that registers socioeconomic changes associated with plantation production: southern writers alone published *Penhally* (1931),

¹² Like Held and McGrew, Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson also point to this period as one of expanding global markets, noting that "in some respects, the current international economy is *less* open and integrated than the regime that prevailed from 1870 to 1914" (98).

¹³ Bontemps's family was notoriously reluctant to discuss their origins, but he suspected that they originated in Haiti. See Michael Bibler and Jessica Adams' introduction to *Drums at Dusk*.

So Red the Rose (1934), *Black Thunder* (1936), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *Gone with the Wind* (1936), *Old Mortality* (1937), *The Fathers* (1938), *The Unvanquished* (1938), and *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939). The plantation also haunts even canonical texts like Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, as John Matthews argues, particularly "if we grant that the emergence of U.S. neo-imperialism was a pivotal component of such modernization [...] then the matter of plantation colonialism becomes central rather than incidental to the modern American novel" (293).

Like modernism itself, the plantation defies easy definition: it constantly expands, contracts, shifts, and adapts; it booms, busts, and moves on. Both ecologically unsustainable and ethically reprehensible, the plantation disrupts Enlightenment promises of progressive development: it becomes tenant farming, agribusiness, or heritage tourism; it may be Old World or New World, corporate or state owned, elitist or populist, a modern nightmare or pre-modern Eden. Shoring fragments against plantation ruin, modernist fiction recreates these disruptions and disjunctures in narrative, registering the cognitive and social dissonance of the plantation as an ever-shifting colonial model. While nineteenth-century fiction presents a knowable plantation—enduring, hierarchical, orderly—modernism disrupts the certainties and pieties of romance, revealing new strata of plantation life, and occluding others, by generating new voices and perspectives. In this, plantation modernism shares continuities with Anglo-American high modernism: both invest in formal experimentation, disrupt narrative conventions, celebrate increased subjectification, and explore the ethical and thematic concerns of cosmopolitanism.

I argue that modernist writers revise the parochial genre of plantation fiction to expose the plantation's role as an institution of colonialism and to explore the many

“actually existing cosmopolitanisms” that arise in the context of settler colonialism—cosmopolitanisms, that is, which emerge out of imperial coercion, slavery, and violence. For these writers, even forced international exchanges bring about cosmopolitan perspectives or ethical quandries. This focus on cosmopolitanism is manifested in modernist narrative techniques, which give a highly subjective and fragmented account of plantation life. These novels make use of first person narration and free indirect discourse to focus on protagonists from postlapsarian plantation cultures. Twentieth-century plantation fiction undoes the epistemological certainties offered by nineteenth-century instantiations of the genre by making use of a cosmopolitan narrative style that privileges previously silenced voices: octoroon mistresses, doomed insurrectionists, exploited field hands, disaffected and dishonored planters’ daughters, and other perspectives occluded by plantation romance. The daughters of planters, who in boilerplate fiction figure as coquettish belles, appear in modern fiction as exiles from the remnants of their family’s plantations and wander aimlessly in metropolitan centers (e.g. *Barren Ground*’s Dorinda Oakley or *Voyage in the Dark*’s Anna Morgan). By adopting the perspective of a “backwards” place, plantation modernism revises history from the perspective of the periphery, or what Walter D. Mignolo calls the zone of “modernity/coloniality.” Bursting through plantation stereotypes and creating highly idiosyncratic narrative perspectives, modernist plantation fiction renders the plantation unknowable.

This extreme subjectivity denies the narrative closure and familiar stereotypes of plantation romance. Focalizing narrative through characters burdened by the legacies of the plantation past, modernism underscores the plantation’s global socio-economic impact by tracing and critiquing the global flows of capitalism and people to the

metropole from plantation cultures. Modernism's portrayals of plantation modernity challenge the insularity and distortions of nineteenth-century idealizations, placing emphasis on the intercultural exchanges wrought by settler and corporate colonialisms. These works implode established generic conventions in order to reveal the local manifestations of global capitalism and mediate between imperial centers and peripheralized regions—be it Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, Elizabeth Bowen's County Cork, or Jean Rhys's West Indies. In so doing, they undermine the mythos and stereotypes of plantation romance: all that is certain is that the plantation must burn.

Modernist writers undertake a revisionary project, one that critiques the ideological conservatism and mythmaking of romance by unearthing the horrors of modern imperial capitalism lurking beneath its pastoral surface. Writers like Rhys and Evelyn Scott have markedly different styles, yet both bring a revisionary lens to the genre that adds new perspectives, narrative techniques, and histories. In *Voyage in the Dark*, Rhys assembles the disjointed metropolitan perceptions of Anna Morgan, the daughter of a Dominican planter, while in *The Wave* Scott assembles a novel from over a hundred characters. Denying closure, both writers bring together narrative fragments that cannot recreate an organic social or perspectival totality from the individual experience of plantation horrors. Producing non-teleological historical narratives, plantation modernism uses the formal techniques of metropolitan fiction to critique colonialism and recreate the imperial ties that plantation ideology obscures, reconstructing history and documenting its continuing legacies.

Not all plantation fiction from the early twentieth century is modernist. Some writers from this period reproduce romantic conventions without formal experimentation.

Allen Tate's politically conservative *The Fathers* (1938) stages the violent clash of Jeffersonian agrarianism and agricultural capitalism in a style laden with Faulknerian ambiguity. In contrast, Stark Young's immensely popular *So Red the Rose* (1934) remains immersed in sentimental style and plantation stereotype.¹⁴ Conversely, when modernist authors like Liam O'Flaherty and Arna Bontemps forego formal innovation and strategically adapt romance for libratory purposes, the results are more politically ambivalent and less critical of plantation culture than more experimental texts. Like canonical modernism, plantation modernism has a diverse political agenda that may be leftist or conservative. Handley argues that postslavery fiction demonstrates a "narrative anxiety to control and mitigate the disruptive effect of these new voices. [...] This seemingly impossible tension consequently pulls narrative in multiple ideological directions" (32). Bowen's austere elitism is strikingly different from Rhys's radical individualism, while Tate's reactionary politics bear comparison to Ezra Pound's and Wyndham Lewis's quasi-fascism. While a few, such as Glasgow, advocate the reformation of the plantation as a viable model, most of the writers that I consider in this study reject it as a socioeconomic structure that is either beyond reformation or whose historical viability has passed. Regardless of this political diversity, when brought to bear on plantation history—so tidily Manichean in romance—modernist formal experimentation has an essentially critical effect.

In the chapters that follow, I aim to reconstruct the long-view of plantation modernity through an examination of modernist plantation fiction. I begin by looking at the plantation in the U.S. South. While the region underwent integration through internal

¹⁴ Before *So Red the Rose*'s popularity was eclipsed by *Gone with the Wind* two years after its release, it was made into a lavish Hollywood movie and underwent twenty printings in its second year alone.

colonization, plantation romance underscored the south's colonial difference from the industrialized north, providing "authentic" American, if already vanishing, folk imagery for nationalist discourses. Far from being a relic of a bygone past, American plantation ideology—and its aesthetic counterpart, plantation fiction—is largely a creation of the progressive era. I use Liberty Hyde Bailey's *The Country-Life Movement* (1911) to show how both rural reform and plantation ideology made the internal colonization of the U.S. south possible, by creating vital infrastructure for the transportation of goods, services and people, as well as by furthering urban hegemony and the spread of metropolitan perceptions. Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* (1925) demonstrates how cosmopolitanism serves as the cultural arm of American imperialism at home and abroad. Spanning the 1880s to the 1920s, the novel documents the immense changes undergone by the American plantation during the progressive era, and shows how metropolitan norms hail white southerners into compliance with the imperial project, even as it manifests ambivalence towards social reform discourse. Inserting Virginia into a national context, the novel reveals that imperialism is not a distinctly northern enterprise; rather it is an American enterprise that interpellates even rural-southern citizens. Responding to plantation romance, Glasgow demythologizes the plantation past by documenting the brutal conditions of daily life on the Oakley plantation, but also characterizes their black employees as "naturally" unable to modernize or be cosmopolitan. Her novel mediates the south's liminal position in a global context, as both a region within an imperial-core nation and an imperialized colony within that nation, and illustrates how internal colonization in the U.S. south during the progressive era set the stage for American expansionism in the circum-Caribbean. In so doing, Glasgow foreshadows the critical

lens turned on the plantation complex by novelists from across the Atlantic world in the modernist period and beyond.

Next, I look at how Irish plantation fiction registers the changes brought about by decolonization. The “big house” forms an important and largely unrecognized connection between Irish and New World studies. The history of Irish involvement in the plantation complex demonstrates the intricate (often coercive) intercultural exchanges between these Old World and New World plantation cultures. I trace plantation fiction’s development to Ireland at least a generation before American instantiations of the genre. Not surprisingly, the Irish had their own version of plantation romance in nineteenth-century “big house” novels that centered on the social foibles and marriage plots of the Ascendancy class. Like American plantation fiction, which became popular after the supposed destruction of the U.S. plantation complex during the civil war, the Irish plantation novel became even more popular after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 and through the outbreak of the Troubles in the 1960s. Twentieth-century writers like Elizabeth Bowen, Liam O’Flaherty, and Margaret Mitchell wrote fiction that deals thematically with plantations and plantocracy. While the generic conventions of plantation fiction have not yet been applied to Irish contexts, one of the innovations of my study will be to displace the assumptions that usually attend considerations of big house fiction, a category that fails to recognize that the structures which undergird the Irish “big house” form part of a larger, transnational economic phenomena.

African American writers in particular sought to revise the narrative conventions of plantation fiction developed by white authors. I argue that W.E.B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* revisits and revises the nineteenth-century generic convention of the

cosmopolitan narrator in order to foreground African American experiences. In contrast to Du Bois' realist ethnography, Eric Walrond adopts gothic conventions to portray the decline of the plantation in Barbados. His story "The Vampire Bat," overturns the colonial hierarchy of the plantation, as its victims rise up from the insolvent sugar cane fields to wreck havoc on the languishing plantocracy. While Walrond gives white fears of black revolt a supernatural twist, Arna Bontemps revises the conventions of romance to portray the Haitian revolution, presenting a new bourgeois plantation controlled by former slaves.

Recent theorizations of coercive or constrictive cosmopolitanisms have particular relevance to plantation fiction as a genre, populated as it is by transregional and transnational travels, tourism, transplantations, and other forms of mobility that are compelled, coerced, or forced. Indeed, cosmopolitan perspectives form an intrinsic part of plantation fiction, both thematically and formally. In my final chapter, I look at narrative constructions of cosmopolitanism and transnational mobility in three plantation novels: William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, and Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom*. Providing the raw materials not only for commodity production and cultural production, the plantation allows us to think cosmopolitically, to "think beyond the nation," because it is an intrinsically transnational, trans-continental phenomena. As Glissant observes, it is here that "the meeting of cultures is most clearly and directly observable, though none of the inhabitants had the slightest hint that this was really about a clash of cultures" (74). Finally, I end with a brief coda outlining the historical development of the plantation after World War II and its relation to contemporary plantation fiction.

Chapter Two

Plantation Realism: Social Reform and Internal Colonization in the U.S. South

Introduction: Vanishing Frontiers

In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner proclaimed the American frontier closed. Defining the frontier as “the line of most rapid and effective Americanization” (3-4), Turner characterized American history as the “history of the colonization of the Great West” (1), thereby placing colonialism at the center of American national identity. Because the 1890 census documented the sporadic settlement of previously uninhabited lands, a frontier line could no longer be distinguished. With the era of North American settler colonialism ostensibly at its end, all that remained was to put these unevenly settled lands to more efficient use. Because the plantation played a formative role in shaping American frontier colonialism, Turner's declaration marks a critical turning point in the history of the plantation complex in the New World. Driven westward by soil exhaustion, higher land values in the east, and the tendency to entail estates to first born sons, many men and women sought to recreate familiar east coast plantation institutions in the old southwestern frontier. This expansion of the plantation complex in the early nineteenth century led to an ever westward cycle of migration. When the soil of Georgia became exhausted, settlers raced to acquire newly opened lands in Alabama. When these lands in turn became exhausted, they moved on to Mississippi, then Texas, and beyond.¹⁵ Even as the settlement of the southwest brought the plantation into competition with other colonial institutions, such as the Mexican hacienda and ranches, the plantation also took root in newly irrigated lands in California. With continental sources of “unsettled” lands colonized by 1890, this boom and bust cycle of soil exhaustion and migration was

¹⁵ Don Doyle's *Faulkner's County* details this boom and bust cycle.

forced to an end.¹⁶ Henceforth, American planters would have to make do with already settled lands or seek new lands through colonization overseas. This situation generated a sense of economic uncertainty and considerable anxiety for planters, farmers, and the American populace in general, who seemed to recognize the importance of the wilderness to the economy and national identity at the very moment of its disappearance. For the first time in United States history, more people lived in cities than in the country. Faced with urban problems like overcrowding and pollution, metropolitan reformers feared what would become of American white racial stock—the national folk of country life—without new lands to fuel now ecologically and economically unsustainable models of colonialism, including the plantation.

Consequently, metropolitan reformers—politicians, teachers, social workers, and other professionals—put their energies to fixing the “problems” of rural agricultural and social inefficiency. Seeking to transform all aspects of rural life, they initiated reforms for rural beautification, domestic relations, sociability, education, and agriculture. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Country Life Movement exemplified what amounted to the internal colonization of rural areas by the metropolitan northeast. Motivated by both altruism and self interest, metropolitan reformers advanced an urban-rural dichotomy, imperialized rural regions, and enforced metronorms. In what follows, I look at the work of agricultural reformer Liberty Hyde Bailey, leader of the Country Life Movement, who used capitalist methods to preserve rural life, and vice versa. In upholding urban standards of agriculture and lifestyle, Bailey inadvertently denigrated

¹⁶ Indeed, historian Phillip Curtin dates the end of the plantation complex to approximately the same era, circa 1900, despite the continuities between nineteenth-century plantation agriculture and twentieth century agribusiness.

the very rural values that he wanted to popularize. Indeed, the Country Life Movement demonstrates how progressive reformers and policy makers facilitated the internal colonization of rural America in general and the plantation south in particular by measuring rural life against urban standards and creating infrastructure that allowed metropolitan corporations to exploit the region.

At the same time that urban superiority seemed to go unchallenged, metropolitan audiences developed an appetite for regionalism that often took the form of plantation fiction. As the plantation was transformed by metropolitan hegemony, urban audiences demanded sentimental portrayals of white columned big houses, coquettish belles, and happy slaves, stereotypes that writers of plantation romance were only too happy to promulgate. While the region underwent economic integration through internal colonization, plantation romance underscored the south's colonial difference from the industrialized north. Even as the south came to be seen as an aberration, Old South imagery provided "authentic" American—if already vanishing—folk imagery for nationalist discourses. In this chapter, I look at how Ellen Glasgow responded to internal colonialism and the pressures of a regionalist publishing industry that catered to stereotypes and nostalgia. Her novel *Barren Ground* shows how white southerners are hailed into compliance with the imperial project at home and abroad. While Glasgow's plantation materialism counters romantic Old South imagery, she upholds the emerging rural-urban dichotomy and suggests that the rural is an aberration to be controlled and capitalized on. *Barren Ground* illustrates how cosmopolitanism operated as the cultural arm of postslavery internal colonialism in the United States and even as it manifests ambivalence towards social reform discourse.

Re-Defining Internal Colonialism: The Case of the U.S. South

For many years, scholars have worked to debunk the assumptions of Lost Cause rhetoric by tracing the causes of the civil war and revealing the brutal and dehumanizing conditions obscured by plantation ideology. More recently, however, the new southern studies has begun to reexamine regional relations through the lens of postcolonial theory and within the context of American imperial history. Framing the north as an imperial power may seem like a return to southern apologism, as Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn note in their introduction to *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies*. However, applying postcolonial perspectives to the south does not require an idealization of colonial “natives” (5). In the south, the issue of the “colonial other” proves particularly complicated, as “local elites” used their racial privilege to control disadvantaged others for the ends of imperial capital (3).

Concepts of internal colonialism can be traced to the modernist era itself. While nineteenth-century journalists used the term casually to describe American western expansion, it was not until the 1920s, when Gramsci and Lenin redefined it to describe intra-national relations between industrialized metropolises and agricultural regions under capitalism, that internal colonialism gained currency as a theoretical framework.¹⁷

American Marxist scholars in the 1960s used the term to analyze the oppression of ethnic

¹⁷ This untheorized use of the term is demonstrated by Nicholas Patrick Wiseman: “The Americans are a nation of colonizers, sprung from colonists, and developed into a mighty people through the power of a great and wise system of internal colonization. The policy of the Government, the interests of the country, the spirit of the people, and the character of the climate and soil, all combine to ensure the success of undertakings of this kind.” (Wiseman 106). In his exhaustive history of the southern colonies, *The Colonization of the South* (1904) Peter Joseph Hamilton use term in this sense, “In the meantime there might arise another form of colonization, that of emigration from one colony to another, or to new territories adjacent to the older provinces. [...] This might be called internal colonization, and was a process which was to continue with ever increasing rapidity as the means of transportation improved” (460).

groups by the white majority in the United States, for instance Chicanos and African Americans, but it fell out of use by the 1970s because, as Linda Gordon explains “The theory could not bear the weight of having to explain the evolution, operation, appeal, dominance, and persistence of racism against blacks in the United States” (433).¹⁸ The theory of internal colonialism first articulated at the close of the nineteenth century coincides with the beginning of a century of American dominance in foreign policy. Traditional settler colonialism by European nations arguably came to an end with the Berlin conference of 1884-5. In dividing the African continent amongst the European imperial powers, the Scramble for Africa marked the closure of the global frontier. With no more “unsettled” lands available, European nations looked to their internal peripheries for imperial exploitation. While the U.S., Russia, and Italy did not take part in the division of Africa, all three nations had begun to see themselves as potential imperial powers. The exploitation of the U.S. south by the metropolitan north parallels the exploitation of rural Russia and Italy by their respective national metropolises, as Lenin and Gramsci noted.

Internal colonialism theory can be productively used to analyze the relationship between the U.S. metropolitan northeast, the “megalopolis” where capitalist-imperial power is concentrated, and areas over which this region exerts direct and indirect domination. In *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), Lenin documented the “colonization of the outer regions” by Russia’s industrialized centers (363). Saturating the countryside in capitalist modes of relation, internal colonization transformed rural populations into the “deepest and most durable foundation of capitalism,” segmenting

¹⁸ See Linda Gordon's "Internal Colonialism and Gender" for an overview of the usage of the term (427-441).

rural society into a minority petit bourgeoisie of landowners and a mass of peasant proletariats (173-8). A quarter of a century later, Gramsci's "The Southern Question" (1926) recognized a similar phenomenon taking place on the Italian peninsula, as the industrialized north sought to exert economic control over the agrarian south. In both cases, industrialized-capitalist centers sought to exploit rural areas as colonies within the nation, troubling distinctions between imperial core and periphery. While Lenin looked at the destructive "depeasanting" of rural Russia (178), Gramsci noted the "extreme social disintegration" wrought by internal colonialism in southern Italy (42). Lenin's and Gramsci's conceptions of internal colonialism in the modern period suggest that the internal colonization of the U.S. south by the metropolitan northeast forms part of a larger global pattern taking place at the turn of the century in the wake of the so-called "belle époque" of expanding markets that lasted from 1890-1914 (Held and McGrew 52).

Internal colonialism denotes power differentials within a nation's boundaries and also characterizes colonial systems of relation between regions with economic and cultural differences. Foregrounding crucial geographical dimensions of coloniality, internal colonialism refers to the expansion of power from a dominant—usually industrialized—locality over another, through a combination of military occupation, economic exploitation, cultural hegemony, and ethnic-racial ideologies. Unlike external or settler colonialism, however, the term more precisely locates the spatial power relations that emerge within national boundaries, and explores how colonialism functions both inside and outside national boundaries with an awareness that internal and external colonization are mutually constitutive. Internal colonization doesn't "work strictly internally, that is, unconnected to international imperialism. External military economic

conquest helps construct race and class systems domestically, and vice versa,” as Gordon notes (435). The interconnections between internal and external colonialism are complex. Intriguingly, Irish studies scholars have argued that the internal colonization of Ireland by the English served as a model for the colonization of the New World. The Ulster plantation, Nicholas Canny’s “The Origins of Empire” argues, “both popularized the concept of ‘British’ as opposed to ‘English’ colonization, and provided the first example of how a British colony and Empire might function” (12). Similarly, Mark Netzloff shows how English imperialism in the Mediterranean influenced the internal colonization of Ireland, Scotland, and minority groups in Britain, such as Gypsies and pirates, in the early modern period.

The origins of internal colonialism lie in uneven development, a point made by both theorists of internal colonization and progressive era urban reformers. The uneven development of modernity within a nation divides its citizens into more or less modernized factions and causes the irregular distribution of its resources and wealth. As Michael Hechter argues in his seminal work on the subject *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (1975), the urban core “seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages” over the internal rural periphery “through policies aimed at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system” (9). Urban intelligentsia, reformers, and social scientists play a vital role in this process.

The U.S. south provides a complex case study for internal colonization theory, which applies to the relationship between the northeast and southeast in its combination of military conquest with the proliferation of sectional discourses that relegated the occupied region to global south backwardness. The term also accounts for the south's

liminal status as globally northern—linked to United States metropolises and a participant in the colonization of the Caribbean and Mexico—and globally southern—colonized by U.S. metropolises, as well as economically and culturally linked to the circum-Caribbean world. Furthermore, the south troubles previous understandings of the racial dimensions of internal colonialism. Historically, the term has been used to describe the relations between a white majority and racial minority, for instance, under South African apartheid. In contrast, the American south as a whole became subject to northern-urban colonization at the same time that the Jim Crow system of apartheid operated in the region. Consequently, internal colonization theory must account for the ways that black, white, native, and other southerners experienced colonization through military occupation and corporate exploitation, while white southerners of all classes benefitted from the systematic oppression of African American southerners. Conceptions of internal colonialism must also be adapted to the economic history of the U.S. south, which early in the nation's history had the advantage of agricultural resources and wealth. With the region's defeat in the civil war, the south's agricultural productivity waned until it lagged last in the nation, even as northern capital began to pour into New South cities like Atlanta and Jacksonville. By the turn of the twentieth century, southern agriculture declined and southern cities boomed. The history of the region suggests rather than uneven development creating internal colonialism as Hechter theorizes, internal colonialism can create or exacerbate uneven development—a point supported by Ellen Glasgow's fiction.

The complex dynamics of internal colonization in the U.S. materialize in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature, particularly plantation fiction. The

work of historians like Grace Elizabeth Hale suggests that plantation ideologies and imagery—far from being transparent relics of the antebellum past—were actually created, circulated, and popularized in the modern era to uphold segregation and integrate both southern and northern markets for participation in a developing consumer culture. As Hale argues, “The culture of segregation became the means of the region’s integration within modern America and yet difference from it” (144). As such, Old South plantation imagery brought the divided nation together, even as it underscored the region’s colonial difference and helped to sustain racial apartheid. In the case of the plantation south, romanticized notions that pit the unscrupulous colonizer against the exploited colonized, the oppressive imperialist against the oppressed native, fail to encapsulate the complex regional dynamics of privilege and power in which intra-national colonization overlaps with inter-racial oppression.¹⁹ By definition a colonial genre, most plantation fiction from this period reflects the impact of increasing agricultural commercialization and the strengthening of often exploitive economic and social ties with the north; it also reflects, supports, or critiques regional nostalgia for the antebellum world, rigid class hierarchies, and racial apartheid. At the turn of the century, a new theme began to emerge: the role of metropolitan social reform in laying the groundwork for internal colonization. As progressive reformers debated how best to solve the problem of the rural, black and white writers alike responded critically to the enforcement of metronorms in the plantation south, ironically often adopting reformist rhetoric and frameworks in their work.

¹⁹ Gordon notes that whereas internal colonialism theory has traditionally been discussed in relation to mixed race oppression, the concept could benefit from the examination of situations in which a nation internally colonizes “others of the same ‘race’”, as in the case of United Kingdom and Ireland (444). The U.S. south provides such a case, but its history of slavery and segregation further complicates traditional conceptions of internal colonization.

Solving the Rural Problem: The Country Life Movement

With the western frontier closed, the United States began to establish itself as an imperial power with the expansionism of the Spanish-American war. As the nation gained territories in the plantation Caribbean, including Cuba and Puerto Rico, corporations began to export American-style capitalist practices into overseas regions.²⁰ Despite the compensation of this imperial expansion, the closure of the frontier created a sense of anxiety in popular discourse. With the nation's continental borders firmly established, Americans worried that the nation was becoming over industrialized and feared urbanization would lead to degeneration. Urban overcrowding, immigration, and the growth of a black middle class contributed to a sense that white Americans had lost the eugenic fitness, racial vigor, and social power provided by rural life. Metropolitan professionals believed that the countryside and its folk could play a key role in reinvigorating white national culture. Previously the metropolitan northeast had attempted "to regulate the frontier [...] through its education and religious activity, exerted by interstate migration and by organized societies" as Turner argued (35). This role now fell to the social sciences, which worked to diagnose and programmatically solve "the rural problem." With the close of the frontier, Progressive reformers turned a scrutinizing eye to the nation's interior and helped facilitate the internal colonization of rural America.²¹

The plantation south was an area of particular concern. While the plantation complex has never been synonymous with the "rural problem," the plantation south

²⁰ Cesar Ayala's *American Sugar Kingdom* provides a detailed history of this process.

²¹ My argument is informed by Danbom's *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*, particularly chapters six through nine, which cover the Civil War through the New Deal.

served as a metonym for the discrepancies between rural and urban quality of life. For many metropolitan intellectuals, the region represented the most egregious example of rural inefficiency and cultural backwardness. The origins of the south's socioeconomic problems at the fin de siècle can be traced back to the civil war, an economic disaster for American plantocracy with repercussions that lasted far into the twentieth century. The loss of slave labor and domestic animals, decreasing land fertility and property values, overpopulation, and the absence of liquid capital wrought by four years of war contributed to the destruction of the south's economic institutions, transportation infrastructures, and connections with both domestic and foreign markets.²² The planter caste aggrandized in nineteenth-century plantation romance made up only a small percentage of the region's population before and after the war, and emancipation—with the resultant loss of slaves as liquid capital, as well as the loss of labor when freed people fled plantations—threatened to topple the plantation complex in the United States entirely.²³

Enabled by the absence of southern representatives during the war, congress enacted legislation to ensure “an agricultural vision somewhat different from Jeffersonian agrarianism. These actions foresaw a dynamic, rapidly expanding, and increasingly commercial, scientific, and technologically complex agriculture in the nation's future”

²² Danbom describes how, during the war, European markets had cultivated alternative sources for cotton in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and tenants soon discovered that the world supply of cotton equaled and finally surpassed world demand, leading to falling prices and a cycle of poverty that lasted through World War II.

²³ Donbom writes that "Freedom for slaves resulted in a capital loss estimated conservatively at \$1.5 billion in 1860 dollars. To put that amount in perspective, consider that the total federal budget in 1860 was under \$70 million" (115). Instead, planters dealt with the uncertainty wrought emancipation by attempting to recreate the structures of slavery in all but name through segregation. Hale also notes, segregation provided the illusion of continuity between the antebellum and postbellum periods that helped white southerners adjust to the vast economic and social change sweeping the region in the modern period.

(Danbom 113). During Reconstruction, urban reformers, policy makers, and educators began to implement new agricultural theories, techniques, and technologies in a southern context. Northern bureaucrats and cooperative southern politicians occupied public offices throughout the south and northern capital poured into New South cities like Atlanta, Mobile and Nashville.²⁴

However, this regional colonization remained incomplete and fitful. The southern plantocracy rebuffed many of these efforts after the failure of Reconstruction. Despite the destruction of regional agriculture, the planter elite made some gains in landownership in the post-bellum period. Not only did most planters retain ownership of their land after the war, but many consolidated by buying up smaller adjacent farms. Substituting the tenant system for slave labor, planters established a “semi-captive” black and white labor force by providing furnish—agricultural equipment, seed, fertilizer—in return for a percentage of the next year’s crop. While the sharecropping system divided their plantations into forty acre plots farmed by tenant families, the southern planter elite retained ownership of their land, consolidated by buying their neighbors’ smaller farms, and regained power in state legislatures after Reconstruction. The postbellum period also saw the emergence of a southern white middle class that claimed descent from the planter class. This developing middle class buttressed the extant plantation system through law, banking, business, and other professions. The planter elite joined with this emergent white middle class to implement a sociopolitical framework that desperately clung to romanticized images of antebellum plantocracy and slavery. As C.Vann Woodward wrote “One of the

²⁴ See Doyle *New Men, New Cities*.

most significant inventions of the New South was the Old South—a new idea in the eighties, and a legend of incalculable potentialities” (154-5).

Together, this new class of southern whites controlled the modes of production in the region in the postbellum era, but continued to rely largely on out of date, prewar technologies, labor intensive mono-cropping, and other outdated agricultural methods. While the civil war initiated technological innovations and accelerated the commercialization of agriculture in the nation as a whole, southerners reverted back to familiar modes of agricultural production in the postbellum period, embracing a tenant system remarkably like slavery. This clinging to the past contributed to the region’s loss in status relative to other parts of the nation, even as it kept control of agricultural modes of production in the hands of local white elites. Southern planters had also lost pace with their northern counterparts in wealth, standards of living, and purchasing power. As the U.S. entered a “golden age in agriculture,” by 1900, the south was still dealing with postwar overpopulation, underemployment, undercapitalization, and underindustrialization at a time of immense agricultural expansion in the rest of the nation (149, 131).

Thus, the civil war marks the inauguration of internal colonization by the industrialized, metropolitan north, an interregional imperialism that would accelerate after the close of the frontier. As Smith and Cohn point out “the U.S. civil war, crucially in parallel with the War of 1898, represents not a decisive break in southern (or U.S. or New World) history but merely one more step in wresting control of this global-southern region’s land, (largely black) labor, and capital from local elite white [...] men by other elite white men in global-northern metropolises” (3). The internal colonization of the

south took on new life at the turn of the century as progressive reformers sought to maximize rural efficiency. Without the resources of an uninhabited frontier, the American plantation needed a dramatic overhaul to integrate it more fully into northern-metropolitan capitalism. Outmoded, albeit familiar, agricultural techniques and racial apartheid proved economically ineffectual in the context of postwar internal colonialism and later post-Fordist capitalism. At the start of the twentieth century, metropolitan reformers sought to supplement corporate exploitation of the region socially and culturally, and to optimize the internal colonization of not only the south, but rural America as a whole.

Internal colonization took many forms including planned irrigation communities, extension agency services, and other reform programs. Not coincidentally, the progressive impulse to imperialize rural spaces is perhaps most evident in so-called “colonization ventures,” which sought to implant urbanites in highly supervised, planned rural communities (Danbom 164). Urban organizations like the Salvation Army and Jewish philanthropic societies created “farm colonies” to fight urban unemployment, overpopulation, anti-semitism, and encourage healthy rural living (164). Reformers were also attracted to communities planned for lands “reclaimed” through new irrigation technologies. Although ostensibly designed in cooperation with farmers, reformers built irrigation communities from the ground up “in conformity with correct principles,” including schools, churches, libraries, and other organizations (181). Two planned communities in California, Durham and Delhi, began auspiciously but soon failed as community managers micromanaged “breeds of livestock to be raised, types of fencing to be erected, styles of houses that could be built, and colors of paint residents could use on

their buildings" (181). Planners and policy makers generally set to work with the best of intentions, but settlers chafed under micromanagement. Irrigation communities also proved vulnerable to cooption by opportunistic companies that established large scale, highly capitalized, and mechanized agricultural ventures worked by underpaid Asian and Mexican migrant workers.

Metropolitan interest in intranational rural affairs culminated in the Country Life Movement from 1900-1920. Composed of a variety of interest groups, the movement was spearheaded by young, urban, white, middle class professionals, including academics, bureaucrats, farm organizers, bankers, merchants, transportation companies, chambers of commerce, and social workers.²⁵ These reformers designed and implemented a series of programs for the "urbanization of farmers" (Bowers 29) that tried to integrate the countryside efficiently into American capitalism and simultaneously preserve the agrarian ideal. Concerned with over industrialization and overpopulation, reformers fervently believed that rural values could save the nation from the evils of modernization and urban life, even as those values were disappearing from rural communities (4). The movement coupled a sentimental ideal of the virtuous farmer's connection to the land with a desire to make the farmer into a businessman (30). Seeking to keep people from migrating from rural areas to cities, Country Lifers undertook the transformation of all aspects of country life, including familial relations, community sociability, economic institutions, and agricultural methods. They worked to beautify homes, enliven churches, and improve school curricula in order to facilitate standardization and build a capitalist infrastructure (170-1).

²⁵ See Bower's Appendix for a thorough demographic analysis of the activists and reformers that lead the Country Life Movement.

The movement gained momentum in August 1908 when Theodore Roosevelt created the Commission on Country Life, selecting as its chairman the Dean of the New York College of Agriculture at Cornell University, Liberty Hyde Bailey (1858-1954). The commission conducted a hurried investigation and presented its findings to an uninterested congress just months later in January 1909. Frustrated by the commission's failure to initiate government response, Bailey sought to capture the popular enthusiasm generated by the commission with the publication of *The Country-Life Movement* (1911), which carefully documents the history of the nascent movement, outlines its goals and ideals, and then proceeds to elucidate proposals for rural rejuvenation. As chair of the commission, Bailey spoke authoritatively for the movement as a whole. At the same time, his particular perspective and personality inflect the arguments in *The Country-Life Movement*. Therefore, the book explores the general goals and attitudes of reformers, at the same time that it reveals Bailey's own *modus operandi*. *The Country-Life Movement* decries the effects of out migration, inefficient farming, the underdevelopment of human capital, and a tradition of agrarian individualism that prevents rural uplift. Bailey privileges urban innovation and quality of life, while lamenting the breakup of traditional rural communities and modes of sociability, and seeks to humanize capitalism for both urban and rural inhabitants, attempting to integrate the countryside into capitalism. In effect, Bailey's program rests on the corporatization of a sustainable agricultural capitalism in which each farmer has the opportunity to become an entrepreneur, according to his talents and abilities. These goals are in many ways at odds with each other, and *The Country-Life Movement* aptly demonstrates not only Bailey's often contradictory impulses, but the movement's as well.

The Country-Life Movement approached the country as a rural problem in need of urban diagnosis. Remarking that “rural society has made relatively less progress in the past century than has urban society” (178), Bailey categorizes rural decline as “a scientific problem” (183) and provides “a program of evolution” drawing on the emergent human sciences (130). Although American farming had reached new levels of productivity, this productivity required more capital and less labor, which to reformers seemed to foretell inevitable economic collapse. Despite their relative prosperity in the first two decades of the twentieth century, farmers still earned less than their urban counterparts. Many moved to cities to escape the agricultural slump; nationally, 6.25 million Americans moved from the countryside to cities, particularly the young. Those who remained found their communities in decline and felt left behind, increasingly seen as backward vestiges within a modernized America. Presaging internal colonialism theory, the Country Life Commission’s report termed this emerging urban-rural divide “unequal development” (37).

Worse yet from Bailey’s perspective, city values and perspectives had begun to infiltrate and change rural values. The changes wrought by urban hegemony, including the development of a “world outlook,” were largely irreversible (92). Despite their provincial locality, rural people in turn of the century America adopted cosmopolitan perspectives carried to the country by new telecommunications, including telephone, radio, and film. The communication of metropolitan perception to rural people carried with it new desires for a commodity culture already available to their urban contemporaries. A new wave of consumer goods, mail-order houses, and media led to, among other things, “rural conformity to urban standards of culture, taste, and value”

(Danbom 133). The south joined the developing American marketplace and with this economic change came a change in local consciousness for both black and white southerners.

Even as they were acquiring metropolitan perceptions, rural people came to be seen as increasingly inferior in urban discourses on rural life. H.L. Mencken's indictment of southern culture in "The Sahara of the Bozart," with its scathing condemnation of the region as a cultural waste land, offers an obvious example of these negative urban attitudes towards rural life. Like Mencken, Bailey saw the country as remaining outside of modern life, deficient and backwards, even as urban values tainted its agrarian ideals. Rural people around the nation increasingly "felt like strangers in their own country" as government, standards, and values became more and more defined by urban norms (Danbom 134). As Danbom writes, "To live in the countryside in 1900 was to have the sense that the nation was passing you by, leaving you behind, ignoring you at best and derogating you at worst" (134). In other words, the rural south appeared increasingly unmodern, a prime example of uneven development in one of the most industrialized, prosperous countries in the world.

While he bemoans the spread of metropolitan perceptions to the periphery, Bailey advanced a sort of cosmopolitanism that asserts "no man has a right to plunder the soil" due to the co-inhabitation of the surface of the earth by all of humankind.²⁶ In place of metropolitan perceptions, Bailey substituted a globalized rural perspective; "We are escaping our localism, and we look on all problems in their relation to all mankind. Brotherhood has become a real power in the world" (55). In opposition to the "world

²⁶ In this, Bailey echoes Kant in "Toward a Perpetual Peace."

outlook” provided by metronorms and commodity culture, Bailey’s cosmopolitanism entailed a world perspective based on global fellow feeling and shared ownership of the planet. This Country Life cosmopolitanism placed value on cooperation, conservation, *Gemeinschaft*, and sociability—the traditional values of the American farmer. In this way, Bailey inverted the urban-rural binary, in effect privileging and globalizing American country perspectives; the countryside, he argued, has much to teach the city, and indeed the industrialized world, if only Americans could protect their agrarian roots. This expansion of rural values would help temper the brutal excesses of global capitalism.

At the same time that he privileged country values, Bailey nonetheless reinforced metropolitan hegemony. Mourning that "We shall never again be a rural people" (36), he lays out a systematic program for rural rejuvenation that more efficiently integrates country life into global-metropolitan capitalism. Through industry, agricultural reform "brings the people of the world together in consultation and in trade" (55). Because traditional agriculture presents a largely inefficient economic model, the scientific methodologies of urban reformers and policymakers must be brought to bear on rural social problems—whether rural people want that expertise or not. The city must become more like the country in sociability and community, but the country must also become more like the city in economic efficiency, business acumen, and faith in progress. The country also needed to be brought in line with urban standards of life, including punctuality, hygiene, sanitation, and education. In approaching the country as a “recognized set of problems” (1), Bailey upheld the dichotomizing perspective that categorized the rural as an aberration in need of metropolitan reconfiguration.

Despite his claim that the improvement of rural life must come from within the region and his suspicion of government centralization, Bailey's reconfiguration of rural life relied upon the massive mobilization and management of urban reformers, policymakers, teachers, and social scientists, and the imposition of an enormous external-urban bureaucratic apparatus, early forms of NGOs. He proposed that the population be evenly distributed, farming methods improved, farm lands created and reclaimed, and that a series of well managed, cooperative, "federation" agencies and commissions be created with the goal of improving rural life (72). He particularly advocated the extension and systematization of agricultural experimentation, land-grant colleges with agricultural curriculums, extension agencies, and conferences on country life. He supported the development of rural schools with highly trained teachers, churches, libraries, rural organizations, country stores, colleges, state fairs, field laboratories, winter and night schools, along with trade, highways, experiment stations, veterinary colleges, farmer's institutes, voluntary societies (71). He also encouraged the development of local industry, like creameries, country stores, hotels, and chambers of commerce, as well as the involvement of "great corporations" such as the railroad industry. These organizations along with churches, fairs, libraries, hospitals, fraternal orders, business organizations, and the press would be hailed to undertake extension work within their rural districts. Bailey's comprehensive designs for rural communities incorporated community health and sanitation programs, including health inspections from urban experts. He argued for meat and milk inspection, fruit associations, milk organizations, poultry societies, farmers' grain elevator and cooperative farming.²⁷

²⁷ Many of Bailey's designs for food reform would be implemented later in the decade, as urban regulation

Furthermore, Bailey advocated the expansion of the extension agency system already in place in many rural areas. Reformers used extension agents to gain access to local communities, uncover and assist cooperative farmers, and disseminate knowledge of new agricultural techniques. Bailey advocated a network of extension agents to saturate every county, aided by communication technologies like highways, phones, delivery services, cars, and the new national postal service. "Eventually there should be an agricultural agent resident in every county," he opines, "[to] give advice, to keep track of animal and plant diseases and pests, secure the services of experts in their control, to organize conferences, winter-courses, and the like, and otherwise to be to the agricultural affairs what the pastor is to religious affairs and the teacher to educational affairs" (78). Extension programs overtly sought to replicate metronorms in a rural context, particularly urging that the gendered division of labor within the middle class urban home be transferred to farms (174). No detail escaped Bailey's supervising gaze. His plans require the participation, mobilization, and supervision of urban reformers.

Like many Country Life Movement treatises, Bailey's book exhibits a tension between nostalgia for the agrarian ideal and capitalist imperatives. He critiqued those who would seek to use the country instrumentally, to generate more commodities to "be secured for the world's markets" (2), but also used corporate methods to standardize the land and "effectualize rural society" (2). He wanted a sustainable agricultural capitalism that would keep the land productive for generations to come, but implied that land

of the food supply would reach a fever pitch when the United States entered WWI, passing the Food Production Act and Food Control Act, extending the extension agent program, granting the Department of Agriculture the right to allocate agricultural production supplies and giving the president control over food. The Food Administration's mission that "Food Will Win the War" decreased farmer autonomy and led to further urban interference in rural community organization and agricultural economy. For more, see Dandom 176.

depletion and capitalist exploitation of land were a necessary step towards progress, because they served as catalysts for progress and innovation.²⁸ He emphasized respect for the farmer as the basis of American economy, but also held faith in "economic law" (34) and the idea that the market—with some voluntary tweaking—would draw people back to a holistic life in the country. Favoring market liberalization, he argued against the control or manipulation of markets, but also urged congress to legislate reform in order to humanize capitalism. In this way, *The Country-Life Movement* is emblematic of Progressive era reforms that attempt to recuperate traditional values through business acumen. At the turn of the century, urban thinkers increasingly moved away from the ideal of the simple farmer of Jeffersonian agrarianism to "the educated professional possessing a specialized and esoteric body of knowledge" (Danbom 150). This new ideal required education and made agriculture "a scientific endeavor practiced by educated professionals" (150). Even as he hoped that the corporatization of agriculture would temper the violent excesses of capitalism, Bailey feared that the current inefficiency of the agricultural system would be detrimental to the national economy and therefore capitalism required safeguarding.

The capitalist imperatives behind the Country Life Movement can be seen in Bailey's lionization of Theodore Roosevelt, the president whose fame originated with his exploits in the Spanish American war. The war, and Roosevelt's Country life Commission, both mark a fin de siècle anxiety of American identity and feature as reoccurring themes in *The Country-Life Movement*. Bailey's conservationism and

²⁸ Bailey writes "Thus far in history, it is only when the virgin fatness begins to be used up, speaking broadly, that we put our wits to work. Then the rebound comes. The best agriculture thus far has developed only after we have struck bottom, and we begin a constructive effort rather than an exploitative effort; and this comes in a mature country" (49-50).

concern with rural life sprung from a latent anxiety regarding American eugenic fitness and health. Not coincidentally he embraces Rooseveltian masculinity and underscores the role of conquest in shaping American identity, "When man ceases to be conqueror, he will lose his virility and begin to retrograde. As localism gives way to brotherhood, militarism will pass out; but this does not mean that mankind will cease to contend" (57). Sharing Roosevelt's fears of degeneration, he noted that "the race" needed to save the "heritage" of the soil in order to save itself from becoming "flabby" (58). More than simply believing that colonization plays an important role in maintaining eugenic fitness, for Bailey American fitness was intricately tied to the perpetual colonization of land itself, within the continental United States and abroad. Bailey advanced a more efficient colonialism that dominates not through military occupation, but through social work, philanthropy, and the social sciences. He also advocated further global "exploration" and colonialism through new feats of environmental engineering and agricultural development, praising the Panama Canal. "We have scarcely begun even the physical conquest of the earth" (58), he observes, and there is much earth left to irrigate, canalize, drain and "subdue by means of local engineering work" (58). "The farmer is to contribute his share to the evolution of an industrial society" (57) by "conquering" his own farm, just as the United States conquered weaker nations abroad (58). Bailey's focus on the sustainable subjugation of land itself overlooked the repercussions of these conquests for subaltern peoples. Rather he suggested that all Americans—regardless of race, class, or region—are obligated to participate in the Enlightenment project of ecological conquest, even as he connected that conquest to the buttressing of an implicitly white urban identity. *The Country-Life Movement* demonstrates the mutually constitutive relations

between internal and external colonialism, providing a program for how the internal colonization of the nation's interior can serve as a model for colonialism abroad, and vice versa. In this way, Bailey inadvertently reinforced the idea of colonial difference that separated rural areas from the nation's metropolitan core.

Bailey's program appealed to many American professionals and *The Country-Life Movement* was republished in 1913, 1915, 1916, and again in 1920. However, the Country Life Movement lost momentum after World War I. One of the reasons that the movement failed is that rural people were less than enthusiastic about urban reformers' calls for the complete overhaul of their schools and social institutions and rejected new methods of "book farming" from urban reformers (Bowers 12). Rural distrust of urban outsiders and community insularity also contributed to the movement's failure to garner local or popular support and most rural households remained unchanged.

The Country Life Movement inverted the new rural-urban dichotomy. As Danbom notes, "For most of the history of the country rural had been normal, and urban had been peculiar. The typical person was a farmer, the atypical person was not" (175). In the wake of the movement, the rural went from "paragon to problem," from "backbone to backwater" (175). Relegated to backwardness and out of sync with metropolitan temporality, the rural became aberrant and marginalized. Urban life became the standard against which rural life was measured, quantified, and judged inferior. In seeking to make farmers into businessmen, reformers encouraged this "urbanization of rural life" (Bowers 130). Ironically, while Bailey strove to globalize country values, the movement actually facilitated the spread of metronorms and perceptions. As such, it proved a largely ineffectual response to modernity's socioeconomic ills. Yet, in its attempts to reform the

excesses of capitalism and its questioning of the ineluctable march of progress, Country Life reformers like Bailey preceded the more radical, and more conservative, anti-industrialism of the Twelve Southerner's *I'll Take My Stand*. The Country Life Movement forms an important, if largely forgotten, moment in agrarian thought

The Return of the (Cosmopolitan) Native: Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground*

The agricultural downturn of the 1920s exacerbated many of the problems identified by Country Life Movement reformers and the countryside plunged into a period of economic hardship that adumbrated the Great Depression of the 1930s (Danbom 183). Many farmers mortgaged their farms, while others sold to consolidating neighbors (196). As farm sizes increased dramatically, the number of farms fell (196).²⁹ The squeezing out of small farmers and the shift to larger estates reflects the transition from traditional farming to a vertically streamlined agribusiness that developed out the plantation complex. While the planter caste had always been a small elite within southern society, the model of monocrop agriculture that they developed became the dominate corporate agricultural model by World War II, a model that had already begun to be exported abroad at the turn of the century. The plantation, which had once served as the model for imperial-capital expansion from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, was now deemed a failure by the standards of modern-industrial efficiency. While W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* underscored that the solution lay in

²⁹ Danbom writes half a million lost their farms (189). "Overall, average farm size rose from 145 acres to 157 acres during the 1920s, and there were 160,000 fewer farms in 1930 than there had been ten years earlier. [...] Meanwhile, the number of farms between 50 and 175 acres decreased by 206,000. In what would become a pattern in twentieth-century American agriculture, the middle was getting squeezed out" (196).

black education and cosmopolitanism, for others like Ellen Glasgow, the commercialization of the plantation seemed to be the only solution.

Barren Ground traces a regional history of the south, from the settlement of Virginia through the 1920s. While her fiancé serves as an extension agent proselytizing for the New Agriculture, the novel's protagonist Dorinda Oakley uses these methods for her own profit. Glasgow grapples with the at times seemingly irreconcilable cultural impulses of transregional relations—in this case, the circulation of ideas, technology, capital, and subjects between the peripheralized south and metropolitan north. The novel contains contradictory impulses: it critiques the sharecropping system and dehumanizes black subjects, it embraces modern technologies and romanticizes the land. Glasgow represents metropolitan reformist impulses as part of the imperial project, imagines how they can be used to restore local prosperity in the context of an increasingly global economy, and demonstrates how white southerners are hailed into extension labor within their own communities. When these efforts are rebuffed by a local populace prejudiced against urban agricultural methods and technologies, the tools of extension work are used in the service of generating capital, regardless of its deleterious effect on the community. Ultimately, however, the inter-regional cosmopolitanism of extension service and reform serves as the cultural arm of imperialism, and continues the standardization of Southern agriculture and the disciplining of the black body that began within the original transplantation of the Middle Passage. The novel suggests that the south—and the plantation—must embrace change and integrate more efficiently into imperial-capitalism, even as it critiques plantation romance's sentimental portrayals of both black and white labor, particularly women's labor. Glasgow's attention to agricultural materialism

deromanticizes the plantation, breaks up superficial stereotypes and nostalgia, and places it within a historical context of rapid industrial change. In the process, she sets the stage for later modernist plantation fiction that focalizes their critiques of the plantation complex through more subjective perspectives.

Glasgow's novel shares with twentieth-century plantation fiction from across the circum-Atlantic world a preoccupation with cosmopolitan thematics. Her New Woman protagonist flees the parochialism of rural Virginia for New York City after being jilted by a local planter's son. There she undergoes a quintessentially immigrant experience in the city and later earns a metropolitan education that prepares her for her return to Virginia. Emerging from the train back home in Pedlar's Mill, Virginia, her perspective is very much that of an metropolitan outsider. With her new cosmopolitan perspective, Dorinda effectively becomes a local agent of internal colonialism who facilitates the unequal distribution of resources and wealth. She uses cutting edge scientific knowledge that she acquired in the city to rejuvenate her father's dilapidated plantation, the quaintly named Old Farm. In short, Dorinda's cosmopolitanism allows her to accelerate the county's transition to agribusiness, become a successful entrepreneur, and economically dominate her neighbors. She works diligently to strengthen the infrastructure linking Pedlar's Mill to northern metropolises and integrate the county more efficiently into the economic flows of global capitalism.

While the greater part of *Barren Ground* takes place in rural Queen Elizabeth County, Glasgow sends Dorinda to New York City to learn independence and gain

worldly experience and knowledge.³⁰ Jilted and pregnant when her fiancé Jason Greylock marries the daughter of the country's only powerful planter, Dorinda rushes to the train, determined to leave Pedlar's Mill, regardless of destination. On her way to the station, she catches a ride from a passing wagon. Characteristic of Glasgow's adherence to naturalism, this seemingly small coincidence changes Dorinda's life significantly, allowing her to make the train to New York: "It occurred to her, while [the wagon driver] stepped off nimbly on his long legs, which reminded her of stilts, that if she had not met him in the road, she would have missed the early train and taken the later one that went to Richmond. So small an incident, and yet the direction in which she was going, and perhaps her whole future, was changed by it" (197). Yet Dorinda's destination is governed by the infrastructure linking the plantation south to metropolitan centers. The train's very schedule indicates Pedlar's Mill's strong economic ties, physical proximity, and triangulation by America's imperial centers—Glasgow's Pedlar's Mill is a south already geographically and economically determined. In the course of the novel, the narrator refers to three destinations for the train through Pedlar's Mill: Richmond; Washington, DC; and New York City. These cities all had important socioeconomic and historical bearing on Queen Elizabeth county. Rather than arriving in the decayed former capital of the Confederacy and antebellum western expansionism, Richmond, or the

³⁰ In a letter to Signe Toksvig dated February 4th, 1944, Glasgow wrote "The reason, I suppose, that your husband missed *Barren Ground* is not far to seek. It came out in 1925, and in the decade of the lost generation, most American novels (all the popular fiction, in fact) were rooted, not in the American soil, but in the boulevards of Paris" (235). In light of this criticism, it is somewhat surprising that, like many of Glasgow's protagonists, Dorinda seeks autonomy in the northern metropole. Similarly, the heroine of *The Descendent* (1897) moves from rural poverty in Virginia to paint in New York City, while the protagonist of *Phases of an Inferior Planet* (1898) falls in love with a singer in New York, although the marriage ultimately fails. In *Life and Gabriella* (1916), the heroine tries to become a fashion designer in NYC (where the novel was written) (MacDonald 266-8). Glasgow herself went to NYC to "charm someone into publishing her" (Skaggs 341).

formerly southern, federal city of Washington, Dorinda leaves the south, and liminality, entirely. The mobility of the train allows Dorinda the itinerancy through which she acquires imperial knowledge of the New Agriculture.³¹ Not coincidentally, standardization of train schedules and increased train traffic plays a central role in Dorinda's economic success upon her return to Queen Elizabeth County, as her dairy relies on daily trains to Washington to sell high quality, high cost butter to metropolitan hotels.

Once in New York City, Dorinda goes through what is essentially an Americanizing immigrant experience. Isolated in the city, she lives in squalor, gets hit by a car during a fainting spell brought on by starvation and morning sickness, miscarries, and undergoes a mysterious brain surgery before finding a patron in her doctor and his family, the Faradays. After this initial defeat, Dorinda utilizes the opportunities of the metropole to gain the scientific knowledge that will help propel her to agricultural success. This female Horatio Alger plot requires access to the privileges of not only urbanity, but an imperial core that venerates scientific positivism and directly supports imperial-capitalism by generating agricultural discourses, costly machinery, and rigid standardization that accelerates the transformation of plantocracy into agribusiness. In the metropole, Dorinda gains faith in the modern narrative of scientific progress; interpolated by metronorms, she adopts a missionary stance towards her former home. Although Glasgow positions the Faradays as Dorinda's surrogate family and their loan as a repayment of her dedication to nursing their sick daughter, her mission relies upon

³¹ Transportation studies of the South and the Good Roads Movement. Railroads are a recurring motif of American plantation fiction, like Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding* and Katherine Anne Porter's *Old Mortality*. For instance, Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* portrays the psychological and material devastation wrought by the destruction of the railroad during the civil war. See Joseph R. Millichap's *Dixie Limited: Railroads, Culture, and the Southern Renaissance* and Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*.

northern capital. In this metropolitan conversion narrative, Dorinda takes over extension work under the guise of “missionary” work, a rhetoric commonly adopted by reformers.³²

Dorinda’s former fiancé Jason Greylock first associates the New Agriculture with colonial enterprise when he expresses his impulse to bring “civilization to the natives” of the county, in this case the poor white landowners (113). Yet Jason lacks the Oakley “vein of iron” and fails to follow through with his convictions when his attempts to enlighten the locals are rebuffed due to “prejudice in favor of the one crop system,” which they look upon as a “sacred institution” (113). Instead, like his own father and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, he goes “native,” falling into the grotesque moral dissolution of alcoholism, miscegenation, and perhaps infanticide.³³ The Greylock’s predisposition towards degeneration derives from their Old South plantocratic lineage. Like poor whites, Glasgow’s plantocracy is tainted by their physical proximity to and sexual contact with blackness.

Dorinda’s mother Eudora Oakley also fantasizes about missionary work, thus connecting colonialism with both the antebellum and postbellum south. Eudora illustrates how in previous generations marriage not only limited women’s mobility, but their influence on empire. She envisions herself as a civilizing missionary, like her father who worked in India and Ceylon, and tells her daughter of her dreams of “coral strands and palm trees and ancient rivers and naked black babies thrown to crocodiles” (123-4). This fantasy of Christianizing African natives represents a longing to join actively in the narrative of empire, to give structure and achieve agency within a patriarchal world that limits the opportunities available to affluent white southern women to mere altruism and

³² Cite Jeremy Wells.

³³ Footnote James Clifford on the racist construction of the native that Jason subscribes to.

philanthropy, underscoring the gendered realities of antebellum plantation households. Eudora's defeated longing to become a missionary underscores the literal restrictions on her mobility. This dream of mobility requires an exotic locale, a colonial geography of alterity that lacks modern specificity: colorful India or mysterious Africa. In contrast to Dorinda's New Woman independence, Eudora's missionary fantasies cannot be fulfilled except through the marriage plot, wherein she can trade her body and labor in return for limited itinerancy. When her missionary fiancé dies suddenly, Eudora's father decides that she is too young to choose a "vocation." Unlike her daughter, who can follow a masculine course to self fulfillment in the city, Eudora's mobility becomes restricted by her gender within the rural southern context, but her colonial fantasies set the stage for her daughter's extension work at home.

In contrast, Dorinda turns the colonial impetus inward, taking over Jason's mission to the natives of Pedlar's Mill and directing her mother's missionary fantasy towards the south. She fuses agrarianism and capitalism, consolidating power by buying up other farms, including the Greylock plantation, and becoming a "missionary to Broomsedge." This mission includes destroying the literal broomsedge that grows in her fields, but also achieving dominance over Pedlar's Mills' white and black residents. Like a Christian missionary in an imperial outpost, she presumes to have a paternally civilizing, modernizing influence on her neighbors and employees. In this way, she takes part in the imperial discourses that justified slavery as an extension of white supremacist colonialism from the Christian motherland, as well as the modernizing discourses of turn of the century urban reformers like Bailey.

While *Barren Ground* downplays the obvious financial incentive to missions, Glasgow was well aware of the importance of agriculture to the southern economy. With the increasing commercialization of agriculture, farmers found themselves in need of new machinery, and because local banks could not provide capital, they relied on credit from banks in the northeast, which charged interest rates as high as 36 to 50%. Falling prices, coupled with a decline in per capita income spent on food and growing operation expenses, served as a catalyst for the move from a cash economy to one predicated on credit and distant markets (Garkovich and Bokemeir 219). By 1930, a significant number of farm families—white and black—worked on land they did not own. Between the 1850s and 1930 the number of white farmers who worked on land that they did not own grew from 20 percent to 63 percent. By the 1930s, 9 million southerners lived as tenants, including 1 million white families and 700,000 black families (Jones 17). In the 1920s, the economic downturn and rise in tenancy meant that women like Dorinda were relied upon more to supplement their family's incomes (22).

Glasgow's novel clearly situates Queen Elizabeth County in this economic context. Poverty proves to be a leveler that effects not only black Southerners, but white families like the Oakleys. As a result, the women of the novel become central to the maintenance of their families in a way that destabilizes separate spheres ideology, even as reformers sought to transfer urban domesticity to rural contexts: Eudora's incessant labor remains limited to the domestic sphere, but her daughter works at Nathan's general store (as does his own daughter, Minnie May) before taking over control of the farm and becoming an agricultural entrepreneur.

While the novel undermines the prescriptive gender roles and marriage plot associated with the plantation mythos, Dorinda's agricultural techniques align her with colonial power, a new hierarchy that tolerates some white women. Her implementation of the New Agriculture constitutes a break with Old South nostalgia and also an acceleration of the process of metronormative standardization that began with the antebellum plantation and transformed into the sharecropping system after the civil war. The novel begins with a genealogy of the Scotch-Irish Oakley family, following John Calvin Abernethy, Dorinda's great grandfather, who retires to Virginia after a life spent as a missionary in India and Ceylon. This narrative inserts the Oakley family into the history of Anglo-American empire, as Abernethy turns barren ground into a successful antebellum plantation. The war interrupts this prosperity, wresting control of the land from local elites. While Abernethy manages to hold on to his land, the war breaks up all but three of Queen Elizabeth county's plantations into unproductive small farms and tenancies, leaving the land once again barren. Dorinda's use of scientific methods imported from the metropole involves a distancing from her great-grandfather's methods, but they also allow her to restore the Oakley's to power and prosperity. In other words, as northern reformers and industry continue the process of wresting power from local elites, Dorinda must harness the methods of industry to regain local control of the county. Yet in so doing she not only replicates northern imperialism, but essentially operates as an agent of empire, bringing Pedlar's Mill further under the control of metronorms and modernization.

Glasgow uses realist techniques to document the external world and engage in a project of reconstruction, reconfiguring the socio-economic context of Old South

stereotype and Lost Cause rhetoric. Her attention to plantation materialism is especially forceful in the novel's catalogues of economic and material changes taking place within the plantation complex. *Barren Ground* documents the influence of finance capital on plantation agriculture at the turn of the century when northern capital poured into the traditional plantation economies of the U.S. south and the Caribbean. At the same time that she emphasizes the emergence of a highly capitalized agriculture in the changing economic scene of finance capital, Glasgow describes the technologies developed to harness the land—and conquer the local agricultural nuisance, broomsedge—for capitalist production. The novel details the increasing industrialization of turn of the century agriculture. This so-called “second industrial revolution” coincided with vertical and horizontal consolidation that transformed nineteenth century plantation agriculture into corporate agribusiness (Ayala 26).³⁴ The influx of northern capital necessitated the creation of “essential infrastructure, [the] building [of] ports and railroads to support the production of agricultural raw materials for the export economy” (Ayala 24). It also required that plantations be highly capitalized. Dorinda's participation in this new phase of finance capital is enabled by northern capital. Once she repays the loan that she receives from the Farradays, she commences horizontal consolidation by buying up the surrounding farms and plantations—including the Greylock plantation—and investing in the latest agricultural technologies. As the novel progresses, these modern conveniences become plantation necessities, playing a growing role in the management of Old Farm:

³⁴ As Cesar Ayala notes, the second industrial revolution included “The introduction of the electric motor, the invention of Bessemer steel, transatlantic steam navigation, refrigerated railroad and sea transport, the launching of telephone and wireless communication, the internal combustion engine, electric lighting, and the modern chemical industry all formed part of this revolution” (25).

“She had installed an electric plant, and whenever it was possible, she had replaced hand labour by electricity. In the beginning she had dreaded the cost, but it was not long before she realized that the mysterious agency had been her safest investment. The separator in the dairy was run by electricity. With the touch of a button the skimmed milk was carried by pipes to the calf-yard or the hog-pen. Pumping, washing, churning, cooling the air in summer and warming it in winter, all these back-breaking tasks were entrusted to the invisible power which possessed the energy of human labour without the nerves that too often impeded it, and made it so uncertain a force.” (468)

Glasgow’s attention to material detail reconstructs the changing southern agricultural economy through narrative. More than simply realistically documenting material changes and objects, *Barren Ground* demonstrates her commitment to a historical particularity that rejects the nostalgia and stereotypes of plantation romance. Despite these efforts, Dorinda’s control of the land and her workers is tenuous at best, requiring constant supervision.

Dorinda’s eternal struggle to conquer the land is costly, economically, personally, and socially. Her participation in internal colonialism restores the Oakley family’s former wealth and stature, but is detrimental to the wellbeing of those around her. The people who stand in Dorinda’s way conveniently die or disappear: her brothers Rufus and Josiah, who would otherwise inherit or break up the plantation; the Faradays, who do not reappear in the novel after their initial investment; and even her husband, Nathan, who becomes “scarcely more than a superior hired man on the farm” (387).

Yet the people most effected by Dorinda's insatiable drive for success are her black workers. Houston Baker's reinterpretation of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute as an offshoot of plantation culture's colonial disciplining of the black male body in *Turning South Again* provides a useful framework in which to read Dorinda's emphasis on conformity, uniformity, and cleanliness that goes beyond agricultural efficiency to imperialism and internal colonialism. The Oakley's Old Farm follows in the tradition of the colonial plantation system that produced the standardization at the Tuskegee. Furthermore, while Dorinda modernizes the farm with cutting-edge machinery, her workers remain essentially untrained; despite being surrounded by modern equipment, Dorinda's (largely anonymous) black employees remain remarkably unmodern. The novel suggests that the pre-modernity of the black community of Pedlar's Mill extends beyond their lack of training in modern farm technologies to a psychological, racialized inability to modernize:

Only by doing the work herself and keeping a relentless eye on every detail could she hope to succeed in the end. If she were once weak enough to compromise with the natural carelessness of the negroes, she knew that the pails and pans would not be properly scalded, and the milk would begin to lose its quality. Fluvanna was the superior of most ignorant white women; but even Fluvanna, though she was, as Dorinda said to herself, one in a thousand, would slight her work as soon as she was given authority over others. (310)

The workers "natural" traits render them inefficient within a commercial agriculture modeled on Taylorism and Fordism. Later, Glasgow writes, "The negroes were cheerful and willing workers, but ten years of patient discipline on her part had failed to overcome

their natural preference for the easiest way” (380). This racist depiction of African American southerners goes beyond the standard colonial enterprise of keeping natives untrained and uneducated. Glasgow’s African American characters cannot be modernized, because they harbor a racial predisposition towards laziness that even Dorinda’s manic supervision cannot eliminate. The novel’s black characters fail to internalize the methods of standardization and temporality appropriate to agricultural modernization, in contrast to Dorinda’s own strident self denial. Their failure to conform to Dorinda’s “discipline” places them outside modernity and outside cosmopolitanism. Favoring a naturalistic, biological, and racialized determinism, Glasgow occludes the possibility that Dorinda’s workers’ behavior constitutes a form of resistance to her systematic control.

Glasgow’s novel illustrates how internal colonialism operates by making colonial subjects into its agents through cosmopolitan mobility and education. Inserting Virginia into a national context, the novel reveals that imperialism is not a distinctly northern enterprise, rather it is an American enterprise that interpellates even rural-southern citizens. *Barren Ground* approvingly presents Dorinda’s new found metropolitan consciousness as a kind of instrumental cosmopolitanism—like everything else (workers, family, relationships, technology), cosmopolitanism becomes a tool that she uses to achieve economic and social dominance. Not simply a feminist entrepreneur or imperialist, Dorinda serves as a metonym for the south’s ambivalence towards its complicit role in internal colonialism. In order to retain her family’s tenuous hold on their ancestral home, Dorinda must corporatize and mechanize to remain productive and competitive in domestic markets. Glasgow advocates the adoption of more efficient

metropolitan agricultural methods and technologies, which keep Old Farm economically viable, yet the novel also underscores the sacrifices made by Dorinda and the Oakley family, and the impact of the corporate model on the Pedlar's Mill community and the land itself. While Glasgow retains a nostalgic, almost mystical link between Dorinda and the land reminiscent of plantation romance's pastoralism, she avoids much of the conservatism and nostalgia usually associated with plantation romance.

Conclusions: Plantations, Narrative, Materialism

Even as they embraced metropolitan hegemony, many white southerners embraced what they saw as the values of the antebellum planter elite. As Hale has shown, the middle class was largely responsible for generating the plantation myths that upheld segregation and provided the illusion of continuity between the antebellum past and postbellum present. "Segregation," Hale tells us, "is modern" (p), so too is Old South imagery. Far from being a relic of a bygone past, American plantation ideology—and its aesthetic counterpart, plantation fiction—is largely a creation of the progressive era. At the very moment that reformers sought to use the tools of the modern sciences to improve rural life, the decaying plantation took on new life in cultural mythologies that appealed to postbellum calls for regional reconciliation. Both rural reform and plantation ideology made the internal colonization of the U.S. south possible, by creating vital infrastructure for the transportation of goods, services and people, as well as by furthering urban hegemony through the spread of metropolitan perceptions. But even as plantation romance idealized antebellum life, it acknowledged its irrecoverability. The pastoralism of plantation culture covered over the vast material changes taking place in southern

agriculture. As Americans enjoyed new commodities emblazoned with Old South imagery, the plantation complex entered a new phase of commercialization and corporation.³⁵ Whereas the antebellum American plantation had evolved out of a Circum-Atlantic genealogy from Ireland to the Caribbean and South America, and finally to North America, the modern era would see American-style corporate plantations exported abroad at the very moment that Lost Cause rhetoric bemoaned the plantation's demise. Glasgow recognized the changes transforming American plantocracy and sought to demythologize the plantation past and mediate the south's liminal position in a global context, as both a region within an imperial-core nation and an imperialized colony within that nation. Her emphasis on documenting plantation materialism foreshadowed the critical lens turned on the plantation complex by novelists from across the Atlantic world in the modernist period and beyond.

³⁵ See Hale's chapter on the development of this consumer culture in relation to Old South imagery.

Chapter Three

Old World and New World Plantations: The Irish, Romance, and Colonialism

“With the deep hunger of an Irishman who had been a tenant on the lands his people once owned and hunted, he wanted to see his own acres stretching green before his eyes. With a ruthless singleness of purpose, he desired his own house, his own plantation, his own horses, his own slaves.” –Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (63).

As a young man, Gerald O’Hara murders a landlord’s agent and, like his Fenian brothers before him, flees Ireland with a price on his head. Arriving in the U.S. south, he works diligently in a Savannah shop, but dreams of joining the Georgian plantocracy. Soon enough, his perseverance and cool head for whiskey pay off when he wins a slave and, later, a plantation in a high stakes game of poker. Gerald’s new estate in northwestern Georgia skirts the wild edge of Cherokee lands, but within ten years he builds a thriving plantation out of the frontier and marries into the entrenched coastal Francophone gentry. Yet, after decades of success, the civil war leaves him a ruined man: his lovely wife dies, Sherman’s armies ravage his crops, and his sanity hangs in the balance. Plantation management falls to the eldest of his three daughters, Scarlett. Drawing on her innate Irish resilience, she carries her family through the travails and indignities of Reconstruction. Scarlett O’Hara, the most iconic figure of the global plantation complex, is the daughter of an Irish rebel.

Gone with the Wind reconstructs the conflicted role played by the Irish in the formation and development of the global plantation complex, demonstrating the intricate (often coercive) intercultural exchanges between the Old World and New World plantation cultures of Ireland and the United States. First introduced in Counties Laois and Offaly in 1556, the colonial design of the plantation complex was perfected in a

series of “transplantations” in which native Irish landowners were forcibly relocated to the infertile lands of Connaught or to sugar plantations in Barbados. At the same time, the British exported the structure of the plantation complex to the Caribbean, where it initially relied heavily on the forced labor of Irish indentured servants and slaves throughout the seventeenth century.³⁶ Despite this early history of subjugation, by the nineteenth century, a surprising number of Irish immigrants served as members of the planter and managerial classes in the American south.

This chapter examines the literary artifacts produced by Irish involvement in the plantation complex. I begin with an overview of plantation history in Ireland, arguing that the Irish “big house” needs to be reconsidered within a global context. Then, I discuss Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September* (1929), which follows an Ascendancy family and their guests through the Irish War of Independence. The novel shows how the Anglo-Irish used their cosmopolitan tradition of hospitality to avoid the inexorable end of plantocratic hegemony, but even as they welcome British soldiers into their homes for parties and visits, the Ascendancy as a social class distances itself from English imperialism and values. Next, I examine the relationship between plantation fiction and romance. Turning to fiction that looks at the big house from outside the demesne walls, I show how Liam O’Flaherty’s *Land* (1946) rewrites plantation romance in the service of anti-colonialism. While O’Flaherty was a Marxist and nationalist, his novel ironically reinscribes planter ideologies that construct feudalism as a means of justifying modern colonial hegemony. Finally, I return to Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* (1936) to demonstrate how the plantation’s Irish roots and the framework of plantation modernity change our

³⁶ See *To Hell or Barbados* by Sean O’Callaghan.

understanding of the most popular plantation novel ever written, showing how plantation colonialism replicates itself in the American south.

Towards an Irish Plantation Fiction

The “big house” forms an important and largely unrecognized connection between Irish and New World studies.³⁷ While the generic conventions of plantation fiction have not yet been applied to Irish contexts, the isolationist assumptions that usually attend considerations of big house fiction must be displaced, since the category fails to recognize that the structures which undergird the big house developed out of a larger, transnational economic phenomenon. In an Irish context, landed estates and big houses take the place of plantations; landlords replace planters; and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy supplants the North American plantocracy. This difference in terminology between American and Irish studies obscures the commonalities among Old World and New World plantations. What is needed in Irish studies is both this conventional definition of the plantation as a model of settler colonialism and also a new conception borrowed from American and Caribbean studies that views big house culture and the plantation within a global economic framework. Integrating the Irish big house back into considerations of plantation culture demonstrates the ways that Ireland served as a testing ground for British colonial practices later exported abroad. Thus we can see in the Irish plantation an early stage of what would soon become a global institution. Although the agricultural model provided by the Irish plantation is different from later, more corporatized New World models, Irish plantations are recognizably large-scale, capitalist

³⁷ See Ellen Crowell, Vera Kreilkamp, and Kieran Quinlan.

enterprises that focus on monocrop agriculture and export raw materials for commodity production. Ireland's temperate growing season also lent itself to the cultivation of many of the same crops associated with North American plantations, including tobacco. Like its New World counterparts, Irish plantations began as a form of settler colonialism before becoming increasingly corporatized and specialized throughout the nineteenth century.

The earliest documented use of the term "plantation" emphasizes its colonial imperatives. In the sixteenth century, Elizabeth I forcibly removed native Irish landlords in order to "plant" settlers imported from Britain.³⁸ Seventy years later, Cromwell's invasion both depopulated the island through transplantation and brought a new wave of Welsh, Scottish, and English settlers. Early modern entrepreneurs could purchase lands cheaply from the remaining Irish landlords. These "planters" would eventually evolve into the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class. The loss of the native Irish aristocracy after the flight of the Earls in 1607, and later the Wild Geese in 1691, reinforced British hegemony in Ireland. These plantation schemes formed part of a nascent circum-Atlantic agrarian capitalism fueled by colonial imperatives. Cromwell's invasion inaugurated agrarian capitalism in Ireland, destroying the island's native economy.

The plantation complex had an immense ecological, economic, and social impact on Irish culture. Agricultural backwardness and inefficiency marked Irish plantations from the beginning. Because forests provided refuge for rebels, leases often required tenants to cut down a number of trees per year and the island was quickly deforested. The plantation also facilitated the introduction of non-native plant species, including New

³⁸ OED "The settling of people, usually in a conquered or dominated country; *esp.* the planting or establishing of a colony; colonization." My argument draws heavily on Terence Dooley's history of the Irish big house and Pakeham.

World transplants like the potato, introduced in County Cork by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1589. As in the U.S. south, estates varied dramatically in size and cache. Early plantations were rough “frontier” institutions, but after the Cromwellian invasion, the ramshackle accommodations of previous generations began to be replaced by permanent dwellings. These sparsely furnished structures tended to be modest in size or little more than fortified houses built in a hodge podge of styles as necessity demanded. Despite their aesthetic shortfalls, early big houses fulfilled their central design function by creating a self-enclosed world that isolated colonial landlords from the native Irish outside their demesne walls.

The agrarian capitalist dimensions of British plantations in Ireland were fully formed by the eighteenth century, when the term “plantation” gave way to landed estates that were compared to the English country houses rather than American or Caribbean plantations. Having eradicated the native aristocracy, planters strove to imitate English nobility. This period saw a frenzy of big house construction in the grand European style with increasingly lavish interiors and formal gardens. As historian Terence Dooley notes, ostentatious big houses were meant “to announce the economic and social strength of their owners in their localities and as a class as a whole, and to inspire awe in social equals and possibly encourage deference in the lower classes” (9). Still, Irish big houses failed to meet metropolitan standards of hygiene and comfort. They remained badly heated, had faulty plumbing (if any), few water closets, and most were not wired for electricity until the mid-twentieth century. Although they built grandiose and ostensibly permanent homes, many landlords were of the absentee variety. Ascendancy families maintained strong relations with English society, sending their children to London for

education, employment, and marriage. The wealthiest landlords often spent as much time in England as in Ireland, if not more. However, despite their identification with English culture, the Anglo-Irish were already evolving into a separate culture known for a certain coarseness in behavior that included dueling, drinking, and violence.

Plantation maintenance required large indoor and outdoor staffs, drawn from an Irish population that often found themselves tenants on lands formerly owned by their families. Anglo-Irish planters divided their land into plots of varying sizes that were farmed by predominantly Irish Catholic tenants, a system of tenancy that adumbrated share-cropping by over a hundred years. Under the Penal Laws, Catholics could not vote, serve in the legal professions, attend school, hold political office, serve in parliament, marry Protestants, or buy land previously owned by Protestants. Some Catholic landowners seeking to retain their land converted to sidestep these restrictions. Estates were managed by agents and sub-agents, often younger sons from Ascendancy families.³⁹

The eighteenth century also saw the growth of a middleman system, and the formation of a small class of socially ambiguous Catholic “squirearchy” or “semi-gentry” landlords. These Catholic families tried to circumvent the Penal Laws by leasing large tracks of land for long durations and renting them out in small plots. The middleman system relieved landowners of many estate management responsibilities, but the subdivision of estates led to neglect, poor agriculture, indigent tenants, and a lack of modernization. This economic instability catalyzed agrarian unrest, often in the form of

³⁹ Dooley details the landlord agent’s many responsibilities: “Agents were responsible for collecting rents (which were usually collected twice a year on appointed gale days in May and November and often in local hotels or estate offices in nearby towns), eliminating arrears, keeping accounts, drawing up leases and ensuring that their covenants were adhered to by tenants, choosing new tenants, supervising estate expenditure, overseeing improvements, carrying out evictions, and valuing property” among other duties (19).

class struggles between laborers and the petit bourgeoisie subletters. By 1790, Catholic landlords owned only 5 per cent of landed estates, and a small elite of 6,500 landlords controlled approximately 7,000 estates.

It was not until 1792 that the terms “Ascendancy” and “big house” came into common usage, as W.J. McCormack has shown (49-50). This “retrospective naming” indicates a “high degree of nervousness—Ascendancy arises at the moment of energetic plans for Catholic Emancipation, and the Big House is scarcely large in any objective measure of things” (49-50). The Ascendancy’s refusal to grant Catholic rights was in many ways its downfall, leading to the Act of Union of 1800 which shifted political power from the now dissolved parliament in Dublin to Westminster. Thus, the Ascendancy lost much of its political efficacy, and the big house entered into a period of slow decline. Despite their identification with the English, Ascendancy families now occupied a subordinate position in the colonial hierarchy. At the same time, they resisted assimilation into the native Irish population. The Anglo-Irish position was one of liminality: not-quite-Irish and not-quite-English, they became both colonizer and colonized.

The Catholic Emancipation bills of 1829 repealed many of the Penal Laws. Predominantly concerned with rent collection, landlords overlooked agricultural development. Rents outpaced crop prices, plummeting tenants into an economic downward spiral. The Great Famine of 1845-52 exacerbated the already tense relations between landlords and tenants. The poor agricultural practices wrought by 300 years of colonialism caused an overreliance on the potato as a food source, and when a blight struck the potato crop in 1845, widespread famine soon followed. The poor and working

classes experienced dramatic population increases, but the famine caused a million deaths from starvation or disease, quickly depopulating the island. The west, where native Irish landowners had been transplanted two hundred years earlier, was particularly hard hit. Facing illegal evictions, another million and a half people emigrated, undertaking a dangerous middle passage on overcrowded “coffin ships.” Many landlords assisted in this massive, and often coercive, out-migration either through a sense of altruism or in an effort to consolidate their lands for agricultural development. These estate clearances led to the evictions of at least 70,000 families. Small Catholic landowners were also squeezed out and forced to sell, when the Poor Law Act of 1847 refused public assistance to families owning more than a quarter of an acre of land. The Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 allowed indebted landlords, and the government, to sell mortgaged estates.

The subdivision fostered by the middleman system had proven agriculturally disastrous and many landlords sought a more stable agricultural model after the famine. This restructuring of estates was usually detrimental to Catholic tenants. Although estate management remained inefficient, those landlords who were successful often turned to corporate models and became more exacting. With lower rents and larger estates, landlords increasingly turned to grazing and ranching, but still found themselves burdened by debt and bankruptcy as revenues fell. For the first time, the rise of middle class farmers with more than thirty acres began to outpace the holdings of the Ascendancy. Although relatively prosperous for some, the early 1860s saw another economic depression, yet this time, there was less agrarian unrest as those classes most likely to revolt had already been devastated by famine and immigration.

Beginning in the 1870s, the Land Wars brought renewed security concerns for the landlord class as Ireland entered a thirty-year long period of agrarian unrest. Agricultural depression punctuated the end of the century. Founded in 1879, the Land League built a broad social base, from laborers to the priesthood, around the mantra “Fair Rent, Fixity of Tenure, and Free Sale.” When falling incomes effected commerce, townspeople joined in with the Land League, objecting that “The money the country produces is spent out of it” (qtd. Dooley 43). Protestant landlord and MP Charles Stewart Parnell allied with the Fenians, whose “the land for the people” platform coupled land reform with republicanism. Landlords once again faced diminishing economic and social status, as well as the loss of their remaining political clout as politicians curried favor with Catholic voters. England began a policy of “killing home rule with kindness” by trying to improve conditions in Ireland. These reforms included a series of Land Acts (1870, 1881, and 1891) that attempted to answer the “Irish Question” by ensuring fair rents and allowing tenants to buy land. In this period of swift economic change, many landlords sold their estates to their own tenants.

The land question continued to dominate politics in the early twentieth century. Many small farmers’ holdings were too small to be economically viable, particularly in the congested areas of the west. Sinn Fein argued that independence was the solution to the land question. World War I closed down the question of home rule, stopped outward emigration, and revived the economy, but agrarian and republican unrest continued, as the Easter Uprising of 1916 demonstrated. During the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) that followed, the Anglo-Irish found their loyalties divided between Ireland and Britain. In the chaotic years of the civil war which followed the Anglo-Irish Treaty that

partitioned the island, Irish insurgents burned 70 big houses, out of a total of 2000. In 1911, members of the Ascendancy in the 26 counties that later became the Free State numbered 327,179. By 1926, their numbers were down to 220,723 and, Protestants owned only 28% of estates over 200 acres.⁴⁰ After the war, many Anglo-Irish left for Northern Ireland or London. Those that remained were absorbed into middle-class professions.

Fictionalizing the Big House

The plantation complex had an enormous impact on Irish culture, as Dooley observes. By the end of the seventeenth century, “the vast majority of people living in Ireland belonged to landed estate communities” in some capacity, either as laborers, servants, agents, middlemen, or planter families (9). Given this vast reach, it’s hardly surprising that the plantation spawned a range of cultural artifacts, including fiction. Early forms of plantation fiction by Irish authors imitated English literary conventions, particularly country house poetry. Anglo-Irish authors who identified with English metropolitan forms and tastes were most likely to write about big house culture.⁴¹ In the nineteenth century, “big house” novels often centered on the social foibles and marriages of the Ascendancy class. Novels like Sydney Owenson’s national tale *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) sought to reconcile landlord-tenant tensions through traditional marriage plots between Protestant and Catholics. Just as American plantation romance imagined national re-union in the wake of the civil war, the national tale reconciled colonialism

⁴⁰ By 1991, Protestants were only 111,699 of the Irish population. These statistics are drawn from Coogan (711).

⁴¹ Krielkamp outlines this lineage.

between Ireland and Britain after the Act of Union, often for metropolitan audiences. Criticism of big house literature traces a well-established genealogy from Edgeworth to Charles Lever, John Banim, Charles Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, George Moore, Somerville and Ross, Lennox Robinson, Elizabeth Bowen, Molly Keane, Aidan Higgins, William Trevor, John Banville, and Jennifer Johnston.⁴² These authors virtually always focus on a particular Ascendancy family and its estate, or as Krielkamp argues, “the setting of a beleaguered and decaying country house collapsing under the forces of Anglo-Irish improvidence and the rising nationalism of the Irish society outside the walls of the demesne” (7). Like American plantation fiction, which became popular after the supposed destruction of the U.S. plantation complex during the Civil War, the Irish plantation novel grew in popularity as agrarian unrest increased, and remained popular after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 and through the outbreak of the Troubles in the 1960s.

Critics often read big house fiction as dramatizing the conflict between a neo-feudal landlord class and a crassly materialist bourgeoisie. This reading originates with Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800), the first important plantation novel.⁴³ Based on the history of her family’s estate in County Longford, Edgeworthstown, the novel manifests Edgeworth’s own ambivalence as the daughter of an Anglo-Irish landlord who

⁴² Despite the many authors that draw upon the genre, criticism on the literature of the big house remains limited. See edited collections by Jacqueline Genet’s *The Big House in Ireland* and Otto Rauchsauer’s *Ancestral Voices: The Big House in Anglo-Irish Literature*. Also see monographs by Malcolm Kelsall (*Literary Representations of the Irish Country House: Civilisation and Savagery under the Union*) and Vera Kreilkamp’s *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*.

⁴³ Kathryn Kirkpatrick has also called *Rackrent* “the first regional novel, the first socio-historical novel, the first Irish novel, the first Big House novel, the first saga novel” (vii). *Castle Rackrent* is not Edgeworth’s only plantation novel. She wrote three more: *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812) and *Ormond* (1817). For readings of these subsequent novels, see Vera Kreilkamp’s *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* and Sharon Murphy’s *Maria Edgeworth and Romance*.

supported the French and American revolutions, but implemented reformist measures to stave off revolution in Ireland. *Rackrent* tracks the rise and fall of a Catholic family that has converted to Protestantism in order to inherit land and join the upper class. The novel is recounted by a classic unreliable narrator, Thady Quirk, a loyal Catholic servant who serves the Rackrents over several generations. Thady's voice is undercut by a more educated, cosmopolitan voice in a Preface and Glossary that frame his narrative. Erudite and decorous, this second voice introduces Thady's "plain unvarnished tale" (2) and apologizes for his crude "vernacular idiom" (4). Set before the rebellious 1790s, the preface speaker dismisses Thady's story of landlord profligacy by claiming that the novel is a "tales of other times" and "not of the present age" (5).

Many critics read Edgeworth's novel as tracing the advance of bourgeois materialism, arguing that the neo-feudal relations enjoyed by the Rackrents are challenged by the materialism of an emergent entrepreneurial Catholic class in the form of Thady's son, the Snopes-like Jason Quirk. This interpretation accepts plantation ideologies that see the Anglo-Irish as the true feudal stewards of the land. A comparative study of transatlantic plantation cultures offers a different perspective, however. Plantations have always been predominantly bourgeois institutions.⁴⁴ Indeed, Edgeworth presents the novel as a tale about "Irish Squires," a term that suggests that the Rackrents merely aspire to aristocracy and neo-feudalism.⁴⁵ As Ellen Crowell has shown, such "sham" aristocracies characterize the upper classes of both Ireland and the U.S. south. But I want to depart from this assumption: I want to suggest that *Rackrent* tracks

⁴⁴ The exception being twentieth-century post-colonial state run plantations and corporate plantations. The estate described in *Rackrent* is clearly an earlier settler model.

⁴⁵ Crowell, draws comparisons between the "sham" aristocracies of Ireland the U.S. south.

competing models of imperial-capitalism: on the one hand, a receding agrarian capitalism inaugurated by early modern Elizabethan and Cromwellian plantations, and on the other, an emergent mercantile capitalism more closely aligned with industrialized centers.

Edgeworth describes and critiques the new importance of law in successive estate management, which allows the well-educated Jason to acquire the Rackrent lands, but she also describes the family's poor estate management, which ranges from negligent to avaricious. The Rackrents alternately lavish gifts upon and exploit their poor tenants, and prioritize short term profit over long term prosperity to the detriment of the community. Indeed, the name Rackrent indicates the charging of extortionate rents and a predatory attitude towards tenants despite paternalistic pretenses. Even as he critiques Jason's capitalist acquisitiveness, Thady reveals the economic forces driving estate management: the cycle of indebtedness, absenteeism, and dilapidation that underpins Ascendancy gentility and hospitality. His unique position as a loyal retainer and Catholic Irishman gives him both insider and outsider status on the Rackrent estate, where he is privy to the family's domestic life and the inner workings of land management. Thady's narrative demystifies the plantation, describing both the luxurious lifestyle of the family and the material aspects of its day to day operation. This is not to say that Edgeworth's sympathies lie with Jason; her allegiance is clearly with the doomed Rackrents. *Castle Rackrent* nonetheless responds to an important shift in the relation between globalism capitalism and Irish agriculture, from the agrarian capitalism and faux aristocracy of the Rackrents to the mercantile capitalism of Jason Quirk.

Castle Rackrent is a typical big house novel in its exploration of the inner-workings of empire in Ireland. Like southern plantation fiction, the big house novel has

been read as an insular and conservative form. Despite the diasporic wanderings and affinities of the Irish, the genre is often seen as parochial and local. These readings fail to fully recognize its colonial dimensions and ignore the themes of displacement inherent to the genre, as well as the role of cosmopolitanism in the production and reproduction of the plantation complex. Placing the big house novel within the context of circum-Atlantic plantation fiction reveals that, far from being merely local, the genre mediates the global forces of modernization and imperial capitalism.

Picnicking in Eden: Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*

“No, it is not only our fate but our business to lose innocence, and once we have lost that it is futile to attempt a picnic in Eden” –Elizabeth Bowen “The Big House”

At first glance, Elizabeth Bowen's second novel, *The Last September*, may seem to contradict this argument. While modernist novels like *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Langrishe, Go Down* register discontinuities in plantation history through a focus on a particular planter family, they also highlight material change, colonial violence, and coercive cosmopolitanisms. Rather than foregrounding material change or experimenting with diverse voices, Bowen's novel initially seems to insist on the big house's parochialism and insularity. In contrast to the incessant mobility of Rhys's Anna Morgan or Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen, Bowen's Naylor family of Danielstown—Sir Richard, his wife Myra, their niece Lois, and nephew Laurence—are relatively rooted and static. As the novel unfolds, however, the already unstable Naylor family becomes increasingly uprooted. *The Last September* chronicles the last gasp of Ascendancy life during the Irish War of Independence. In this time of escalating violence, the Naylor family insist on

cosmopolitan values—hospitality, sociability, and detachment—but their detachment from both Irish and English national cultures leaves them without a meaningful course of action and renders them obsolete at the moment of decolonization. The impersonal intimacy fostered by the big house becomes a sign not of prosperity, but subjective evacuation in response to polarizing conflict.

Like many plantation modernists, Bowen had intimate knowledge of big house culture.⁴⁶ The Welsch Bowens arrived in Ireland in the wake of the Cromwellian invasion and, according to family lore, received over 800 acres of land in County Cork from Cromwell himself. While Bowen would later write that big house residents feel a sense of goodwill towards their less privileged Irish neighbors, insurgent forces fired on Bowen's Court during the protestant United Irishmen's Rising of 1789. After the famine, her grandfather acquired the insolvent estate and used corporate models to regain the family's social position and prosperity. In the next generation, her father largely ignored estate management, becoming a lawyer and living half the year in Dublin. While the isolation of Bowen's Court and Anglo-Irish society allowed her to grow up without full comprehension that Protestants were a minority in Ireland, her family was in many ways unstable. Born in 1899, Bowen's childhood was divided between her parents Georgian townhouse, Herbert Place, in Dublin and Bowen's Court. Her father worked for the Irish Land Commission before suffering a nervous breakdown, at which time she moved with her mother to England where she attended school.⁴⁷ By the time she was six years old, Bowen had begun to resort to a "campaign of not noticing" to cope with her family's

⁴⁶ Information on Bowen's life is drawn from Victoria Glendinning's biography, *Elizabeth Bowen*.

⁴⁷ He also wrote a book on statutory land purchase in Ireland (which was out of date due to the Free State law changes).

instability (qtd. Glendinning 25). Having inherited the estate in 1930, Bowen was forced to sell Bowen's Court in 1959. Bowen's Court had been in her family for three hundred years, but her uprooted youth left her with the feeling that her life had been a "succession of visits" (qtd. Glendinning 61). This sense of dislocation is in many ways emblematic of her class. While imperial-capitalist forces compelled Irish Catholics and the Scotch Irish to diasporic wanderings, the Anglo-Irish's liminal position as colonized and colonizer also left them deracinated. With affinities in Ireland and Britain, their lives were fundamentally transnational. These early experiences inform Bowen's work, including her plantation novels *The Last September* (1929), *Heat of the Day* (1949), *A World of Love* (1955), and her nonfictional *Bowen's Court* (1942).

The Last September is ostensibly a historical novel, but it recreates a recent past of less than a decade. Bowen distances this past by noting that "In those days, girls wore crisp white skirts and transparent blouses clotted with white flowers" (3). The clause "in those days" suggests a receding past, and, although the events portrayed occurred less than ten years before, the onset of decolonization has caused a radical break in Irish history. Bowen downplays the economic function of Anglo-Irish landed estates. The novel contains very little discussion of agriculture or even of the tenants that form the base of Danielstown and Irish society. Within the house, the servants are anonymous and nearly invisible. The labor that maintains the material aspects of day to day life, the army of servants and laborers, remain unacknowledged. Hospitality alone provides the lived means of maintaining continuity between past and present, and the novel demonstrates how Ascendancy life revolves around sociability.

For Bowen, big houses have a predominately social function, as she writes in her essay “The Big House” (1940): “they were planned for spacious living—for hospitality above all. Unlike the low, warm, ruddy French and English manors, they have made no natural growth from the soil—the idea that begot them was a purely social one” (26). Bowen highlights the isolation of landed estates. The big house retains a sense of “mystery” and lives “under its own spell” despite the disenchantment of modernization and increased contact with the outside world (25). The fairytale aura that Bowen detects is maintained by its isolation from the Irish people who surround it. The big house is placed in a defensive position against the native Irish, enclosed behind rings of long driveways, fields for grazing, woods, and walls. In contrast to this physical isolation, the big house is the center of hospitality; its functionality derives from how well it transcends imperial-economic functions and facilitates sociability by raising “life above the exigencies of mere living to the place of art, or at least style” (27). Recognizing the big house’s roots in colonialism, Bowen notes “The security that they had, by the eighteenth century, however ignobly gained, they did not use quite ignobly. They began to feel, and exert, the European idea—to seek what was humanistic, classic and disciplined” (27). The model of sociability provided by the big house is markedly “impersonal” (29). “In the interest of good manners and good behavior people learned to subdue their own feelings. The result was an easy and unsuspecting intercourse, to which everyone brought the best they had—wit, knowledge, sympathy or personal beauty. Society—or, more simply, the getting-together of people—was meant to be at once a high pleasure and willing discipline, not just an occasion for self-display” (29). This social intimacy forsakes the personal and brings out the finest characteristics of the individual in the

services of mutual enjoyment. Bowen suggests, the big house can be recuperated insofar as it provides the condition of possibility for a more refined social order and aestheticized sociability not only for the Anglo-Irish elite but for all of Ireland. In seeking to expand Anglo-Irish hospitality to all classes, Bowen ironically mirrors a pre-colonial past. As historian Catherine Marie O’Sullivan notes, Irish commitment to hospitality dates back to the middle ages, when hospitality was regarded not merely as a desirable quality, but as an “inescapable obligation that formed the nexus of people’s most important relationships” (14).⁴⁸ Traditionally, in Irish culture, hospitality helped establish community through reciprocal socio-economic exchanges.

Hospitality is formally and thematically integral to the three-part novel, which Bowen structures around the arrivals and “departures” of various guests: the arrival of Hugo Montmorency and his wife Francie, the visit of Miss Marda Norton, and the death of Lois’s love interest, the British subaltern Gerald Lesworth. These visits take place in September 1920, a period known as “The Year of Terror.” In this year, the violent Black and Tans and the even more brutal Auxiliaries joined the British Army and the Royal Irish Constabulary in enforcing martial law in Ireland. Together, they burned Catholic areas throughout the south and deployed “undercover hit squads” to quell the insurgency.⁴⁹ Located in Cork, Danielstown sits in the middle of a warzone, but the Anglo-Irish residents ensconced in its big house are oddly removed from this violence. The Naylor’s resent the war’s intrusion on their hospitality to the extent that they deny

⁴⁸ O’Sullivan writes: “Evidence from the literary and historical sources for medieval Ireland suggests that the practice of hospitality functioned as an Irish *system of total services*: it encouraged cohesion and a commitment to shared ideals; provided a forum for individuals to publicly challenge the honour and hegemony of others; afforded a viable outlet for the transfer of goods through a system of exchange and reciprocity; and was often carried out as a social transaction that allowed individuals to reaffirm and, to a lesser extent, reposition their economic, social or spiritual standing in society” (15).

⁴⁹ See Coogan 82-4 on revolutionary violence in Ireland.

that the conflict even constitutes a war. They joke mildly about machine guns and dismiss fears of IRA violence as “very English” (26). Desperately trying to maintain tradition, their lives remain a succession of visits and parties as they continue to welcome British soldiers into their home.

The war throws Danielstown into crisis. Clinging to routine within the semi-public domestic sphere of the big house, the Naylor buttress the colonial status quo that enables their way of life. This strategy requires that they balance their hospitality towards the British soldiers in their midst with their sympathies for the Irish people. The balancing act becomes ever more precarious as the escalating violence pressures the Naylor to choose sides even as they naively resist identification with both England and Ireland. As neutrality becomes increasingly untenable, so too does the Naylor’s detachment become increasingly unethical.

The historical Anglo-Irish resistance to identification with the Irish is evident in Danielstown’s very architecture. While the novel begins and ends with the image of its front steps and front door, hospitably left unlocked, the house’s architecture repels particular kinds of visitors and isolates its inhabitants from the Irish around it. Surrounded by trees, the house seems to be “pressing down low in apprehension, hiding its face. [...] It seemed to huddle its trees close in fright and amazement at the wide light lovely unloving country, the unwilling bosom whereon it was set” (92). Whether or not the Naylor want to acknowledge it, their isolation is in part a response to Irish Catholic hostility and a legacy of empire. With its thin walls and blistering paint, Danielstown has seen better days. Furnished with imperial loot, such as tiger skin rugs and ebony elephants from India, the effect of the interior is rather shabby. Built for sociability, in

many ways it no longer fully satisfies this function. A silence “distilled from a hundred and fifty years of society, wait[s] under the ceiling” (22-3) subduing awkward attempts at conversation. Similarly, the gloomy portraits of previous generations line the walls, “fading each to a wedge of a dawn-colour and each looking out from a square of darkness tunneled into the wall” (27). The house and its décor fail to signal the desired permanence of the colonial order or even create an impression of continuity between a glorious imperial past and the unstable present. The physical barriers around the house—its long avenues, woodlands, and demesne walls—no longer separate the colonizers from the colonized, prevent assimilation, or maintain a two-tier class structure. Despite the architectural isolation which sets Danielstown apart from the Irish, nationalist forces are slowly permeating the estate’s boundaries: rebels may have buried guns among the trees, lorries patrol outside the gates in search of trench-coated men, and armed insurgents sleep in the Old Mill on the property.

The Naylor's strive to maintain a rapport with the Irish Catholics in the neighborhood even though the war challenges this sense of neighborliness.⁵⁰ Like Thady Quirk, in maintaining ties with both the English and the Irish, the Naylor's become privy to the secrets of both. This liminality is evident in their relations with Michael O'Connor, a neighboring Irish Catholic small farmer. Lois visits briefly with Michael, whose son Peter is involved with the IRA. After asking politely about the health and wellbeing of the other members of the family, she inquires as to Peter's whereabouts, and

⁵⁰ Bowen herself seems to have shared Lady Naylor's belief that big house residents often lived in harmony with their neighbors, writing in “The Big House”: “To the keeping of afloat of the household not only the family but the servants contribute to ingenuity and goodwill. As on a ship out at sea, there is a sense of community” (28).

Michael tells her that he hasn't seen his son in some time. But the British intelligence officer, who attends Ascendancy parties, has mentioned that Peter has been seen in the area. Lois doesn't warn Michael that the British know where his son is, even as she hopes that Peter evades capture, and she is disappointed when Gerald captures Peter. Just as Bowen evaded her family's instability, Lois resorts to a strategy of "not noticing" in order to balance her divided loyalties.

The Naylor's attitude towards the British is even more ambivalent. Although they invite the English soldiers to their tennis parties, they resent the British presence in Ireland. By day, Lois and her friends hide in the woods to avoid patrolling Black and Tans indiscriminately firing their guns, and by night, they attend dances at the army barracks. The Anglo-Irish see the army subalterns as separate entities from the violent Black and Tans, rather than as dual forces of occupation. When they receive news at a tennis party that insurgents have attacked the Royal Irish Constabulary barracks nearby, they abhor the violence, but don't see the subalterns in attendance as "a possible remedy": "the party would indeed have been dull without them, there would have been no young men. Nobody wished them elsewhere" (64). The Anglo-Irish disconnect the subalterns from their purpose of subduing the Irish lower classes and re-establishing Ascendancy hegemony. Indeed, the women act as though the soldiers are present in Ireland merely to visit and their military duties interfere with party planning.

In contrast to Anglo-Irish denial, the English soldiers and guests matter-of-factly acknowledge their involvement in the war. Gerald calls the subalterns "all we jolly old army of occupation" (49) and states that he will leave Ireland "—As soon as we've lost this jolly old war" (49). The subalterns are less matter-of-fact about their role in the war

and feel held back by British policy, which seeks to garner international support by keeping its most aggressive actions undercover. Ignorant of Ascendancy customs, they are unable to reciprocate Anglo-Irish hospitality, while their wives and families are frequently rude and condescending to their hosts. Mrs. Vermont, for instance, gluttonously takes advantage of the Naylor's hospitality, while insisting that they are in some way beholden her: When politely told how pleased they are to have her visit them, she replies, "Oh *well*—you see we didn't come over to enjoy ourselves, did we? We came to take care of all of you" (124). Mrs. Vermont's rudeness reveals paternalist assumptions of a greater Irish inferiority, even as she benefits from Anglo-Irish hospitality and propriety.

As rude as she may be, Mrs. Vermont is correct in noting that the British military presence in Ireland undergirds the Anglo-Irish way of life. The Ascendancy itself is already fracturing, and guests visit Danielstown in part because they have nowhere else to go. Hugo Montmorency sold his family's estate and now spends his life visiting his friends' big houses; Marda Norton is an unmoored and incessant visitor; and Laurence and Lois are poor relations with few alternatives. Indeed, the Naylor's and Hugo romanticize the nineteenth-century big house culture, but the younger generation does not feel at home there and even fails to identify as Anglo-Irish.

Lois occupies a particularly indecisive position. Her mother married Mr. Farquar, a lower-class Scotch-Irish man from Ulster. After her mother's death, Lois attended school in England, and now at eighteen she is simply another guest dependent on Danielstown hospitality. This socio-economic uncertainty manifests as subjective ambivalence. Her friends and family repeatedly characterize her as vague, and she both

seeks and evades definition. “She didn’t want to know what she was, she couldn’t bear it: knowledge of this would stop, seal, and finish one” (83). While she desperately wants something to happen to her, her detachment forecloses the possibility of meaningful action. Living in the midst of a war, she fails to recognize it as an important historical moment and laments that there is “no occasion for courage” in her life (41). Spotting a trench-coated stranger on the property, she feels not fear, but ambivalence. “It must be because of Ireland he was in such a hurry;” she thinks “Here was something that she could not share. She could not conceive of her country emotionally; it was a way of living, abstract of several countrysides, or an oblique, frayed island moored at the north but with an air of being detached and drawn out west from the British coast” (42). While the stranger walks with purpose “inspired” by nationalism, Lois’s lack of conviction leaves her huddling in a holly bush inactive and indecisive (43).

The Anglo-Irish turn to hospitality in this time of historical crisis out of a sense of propriety, but also out of sheer aimlessness. Their way of life is becoming obsolete and sterile, as Laurence observes to Hugo: “Talking of being virginal, do you ever notice this country? Doesn’t sex seem irrelevant?” (56). Half heartedly upholding the colonial system, the Naylor turn to sociability to ignore the formation of a nation-state in which they have no future and their parties are a futile attempt to avoid noticing the institutionalization of historical change. As hostess, Lady Naylor unobtrusively directs conversation and choreographs amusing activities to deflect attention from the war, but discussions of society inevitably give way to discussions of the troubles, and vice versa. Despite this stalling, Ascendancy hegemony inevitably gives way to a new social order. Gerald’s death symbolizes the end of the British army’s imperial “visit” in Ireland. The

novel ends as Danielstown burns to the ground, its door left hospitably open to the flames. The Naylor's leave Cork and scatter to England. Like many displaced from the plantation complex, they become compelled cosmopolites—less at home in the world, than adrift.

Romancing the Big House

Not all plantation fiction qualifies as romance. However, the sheer popularity of plantation romance necessitates that writers respond to its conventions. Consequently, even when novels vary significantly from romantic themes or styles, they can still be usefully compared to the genre.⁵¹ Romance's medieval origins, modern popularity, and consequent class ambiguity make it notoriously difficult to define.⁵² Deriving from European narratives intended for aristocratic audiences, medieval romance focused on themes of chivalry, adventure, questing, magic, and love, and until the eighteenth century were defined as narratives written in the vernacular romance languages of Europe. Since the early modern era, the genre has also been associated with the novel, popular fiction, readability, and female audiences. Further complicating matters, romance developed in dialogue with other forms. Consequently, many critics prefer to see romance as a "mythos" (Northrop Frye), "strategy" (Barbara Fuchs), or "mode" (Fredric Jameson) in dialogue with other genres, styles, or movements such as realism, the historical novel, or modernism.

⁵¹ Jameson observes that "The point of such a [generic] model is not, of course, to formulate a structure rigidly applicable to all of its possible exemplars, but rather to construct a norm in terms of which even deviations may be read in a meaningful way" ("MN" 149).

⁵² For a general overview of the development of romance and the debates surrounding its definition, see Barbara Fuchs's *Romance*.

Despite the difficulty of defining the genre, distinguishing characteristics can be found. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye's theory encompasses both its historical developments since the middle ages and its more recent modern instantiations. Frye characterizes romance as a nostalgic "search for some kind of imaginative golden age" (186). This theme suggests that the established, yet weakened state must be replaced with young leadership, often a youthful protagonist who undertakes a quest or adventure. Romantic characters are typically wholly good or evil clichés and characters tend to be both idealized and idealistic. Female characters in particular are idealized or vilified according to their virtue, obedience, and chastity.⁵³ The genre trades in nostalgia for bygone days, and despite its popular readership, still espouses upper-class values. Frye sums up the genre's inherent contradictions: "In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance," which at the same time retains a "genuinely 'proletarian' element" (187). Fredric Jameson has refined Frye's ahistorical conception of romance and offers his own theories that link the emergence of romance to the development of a European nobility that has become "conscious of itself as a universal class or 'the subject of history'" (PU 118).⁵⁴ He argues that while medieval romance used magic to engage questions of Otherness, after the fall of feudalism, romance mediates the shifting socioeconomic terrain of modernity by substituting "new

⁵³ Frye euphemistically observes "subtlety and complexity are not much favored. Characters tend to be either for or against the quest" (195).

⁵⁴ "When, in the twelfth century, this kind of social and spatial isolation was overcome, and the feudal nobility became conscious of itself as a universal class or 'subject of history,' newly endowed with a codified ideology, there must arise what can only be called a contradiction between the older positional notion of good and evil, perpetuated by the *chanson de geste*. And this emergent class solidarity. Romance in its original strong form may then be understood as an imaginary 'solution' to this real contradiction, a symbolic answer to the perplexing question of how my enemy can be thought of as *evil* (that is, as other than myself and marked by some absolute difference), when what is responsible for his being so characterized is quite simply the identity of his own conduct with mine, the which—points of honor, challenges, tests of strength—he reflects as in a mirror image" (118).

positivities (theology, psychology, the dramatic metaphor) for the old magical content” (134).⁵⁵

Plantation romance, like the related subgenres of historical and imperial romances, gained popularity in the nineteenth century. Belying their medieval roots, these thoroughly modern romances mediate perceived socio-historical ruptures: historical romance negotiates crisis points in western history; imperial romance stages the confrontation between colonized and colonizer; and plantation romance combines these approaches within the context of circum-Atlantic modernity. Romance lends itself well to the plantocracy’s pseudo-aristocratic pretensions and inflated neo-chivalric deference towards women. The genre’s privileging of upper-class perspectives, evocation of a happier society, and dichotomous pairings is ideologically suited for idealizing a highly structured society thrown into crisis, such as Ireland or post-slavery plantation America. As Jameson notes, the “positional thinking [of good versus evil] has an intimate relationship to those historical periods sometimes designated as the ‘time of troubles,’” (PU 118). Romance’s tendency to emerge in periods of social crisis, when that structure is challenged, helps explain why plantation romance surged in popularity in the wake of the American and Irish civil wars.

Romance’s association with pastoralism makes it particularly mutable to the agrarian capitalist contexts of the plantation complex. Frye aligns romance with nature, the biblical story of Adam and Eve, and the desire to return to a lost Eden.⁵⁶ At the center

⁵⁵ Jameson writes about romance in his article [title] as well as *The Political Unconscious*. Hereafter cited as MN and PU respectively.

⁵⁶ Likewise, Jameson notes the connection between romance and nature. “romance is that form in which the world-ness of world reveals itself. For romance, then, both uses of the term are appropriate, for romance as a literary form is that event in which world in the technical sense of the transcendental horizon of my

of romance, then, is the idea of decay, of once paradisiacal prosperity now lost. With its emphasis on the “natural sterility of the fallen world” (189), which in the medieval romance constitutes “the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the waste land” (193), modern romance often seeks a return to agricultural productivity that is conceived as a return to social health, rather than simply economic growth. Plantation romance typically couples themes of agricultural decline with social decline, and many plantocratic characters have an almost mystical connection with nature or land.⁵⁷ The labor, economics, and commodities of agriculture are largely absent from plantation romance (although not from plantation realism or modernism). Romance disguises the economic functions of the plantation by reconstructing it as a pre-modern social system, hiding material and human commodities in a naturalized imaginative world that occludes capitalism. Masking the role of the planter family, and their servants or slaves in the accumulation and consolidation of capital, the plantation is recast in purely social terms (as Bowen does). Thus, the plantation becomes a benign institution unsullied by exchange values, a pre-capitalist quasi-feudal stronghold of order and stasis within the bewildering flux of colonial modernity.

The bourgeois plantocracy adopted romance to attain a veneer of Old World aristocracy that aligned them with the declining pre-modern ruling class, even as their

experience becomes precisely visible as something like an innerworldly object in its own right, taking on the shape of world in the popular sense of nature, landscape, and so forth. And in its turn, the precondition of such a revelation is itself historical in character for there must, as in medieval times, be something like a nature left as a mysterious and alien border around the still precarious and minute human activities of village and field, for the structure of world-ness to find an adequate vehicle through which it can manifest its existence. So Frye is surely not wrong to evoke the intimate connection between romance as a mode, and the ‘natural’ imagery of earthly paradise or waste land, of the bower of bliss or the enchanted wood; what is misleading is that he should suggest that this ‘nature’ is in any way itself a ‘natural’ phenomenon” (“Magical Narratives” 142).

⁵⁷ For more on pastoralism and plantation romance in the U.S. south, see Lucinda MacKethan’s *The Dream of Arcady*.

socioeconomic ascendancy destroyed that very aristocratic order. As C.L.R. James demonstrated in *Black Jacobins*, the plantation complex was built by a “maritime bourgeoisie” that dismantled lingering aristocratic power. Indeed, the quantification and qualification integral to plantation agriculture helped to demystify the world of magic, nature, and radical otherness that had been the purview of medieval romance. Plantation romance may be seen to mystify the new colonial hierarchy and the orderly epistemological worldview produced by plantation colonialism. In this way, the plantation’s violent restructuring of the world masquerades as a naturalized “feudal” past, reconstructing feudalism in its own—modern—image. In a utopian and usually conservative maneuver, the genre transforms the quotidian plantation into Frye’s lost Eden. As Jameson observes, romance draws “the boundaries of a given social order” and provides “a powerful internal deterrent against deviancy or subversion” (143), and, in the process, it naturalizes the modernizing colonial order as the remnants of a society eclipsed by modernity. Plantation romance generates its own clichés and stock characters that range from hot headed nationalists and dashing cavaliers, virtuous maids and blushing belles, to solicitous servants and happy slaves.

Following Jameson, we can see that plantation romance emerges out of the collision of incommensurate socioeconomic systems. Because the plantation is a modern capitalist institution that destroyed lingering feudal structures, one would expect most plantation fiction to emerge when this historical collision initially occurred in the early modern era. While the early modern plantation produced literary texts that document this collision, plantation fiction as we know it developed in the early nineteenth century and became even more popular in the modernist era. Critics often attribute this outpouring of

literary production from the plantation complex to a conflict between the residual plantation complex and emergent “post-plantation” capitalism. After all, the plantation complex underwent the biggest challenges to its methods of production during the nineteenth-century push for universal emancipation, leading plantation historians like Philip Curtin to argue that the plantation complex came to an end by 1900. The emergence of the big house novel as a hegemonic Anglo-Irish form after the Act of Union and the formation of the Plantation School of fiction after the U.S. civil war could be interpreted as evidence of the death throes of a plantation modernity superseded by industrial capitalism.

This argument assumes the validity of the concept of “post-plantation” literatures. However, as I have argued throughout this study, the plantation not only continued to be a viable form of production after 1900, but eventually became the dominant model of agriculture globally. Plantation romance helped to naturalize the Ascendancy class as a “continuation” of pre-modern feudalism, creating mythological continuity between past and present that enabled internal colonialism and racial apartheid. Yet early modern culture cannot be understood outside the context of the rise of circum-Atlantic capitalism, and the plantation complex was not a neo-feudal socioeconomic system steamrolled by a industrialized capitalist modernity.

How then, can we account for this apparent contradiction? If the plantation is not a neo-feudal system superseded by capitalism, then to what collision of socioeconomic models does modern plantation romance respond? In *Late Imperial Romance*, John McClure has argued that modern English imperial romance “expressed a broadly felt and sanctioned revulsion with the secularized, routinized, and materialistic culture of the

West and a common fear that the ongoing economic, political, and cultural expansion of the West would eradicate the last premodern alternatives to this culture” (4). Unlike English imperial romance, the colonial contact staged by plantation romance is not West meets non-West, but rather the imperial capitalism of London replacing the agrarian capitalism of eighteenth-century Ireland, or the industrial capitalism of the American northeast replacing the agrarian capitalism of the antebellum American southeast. Less a dream of adventure than of stasis, plantation romance forecloses heterogeneity and mystifies economic relations, transforming them into timeless social mores.

The big house novel often thematizes the failure to return to agrarian capitalism. Its earlier instantiations—such as *Castle Rackrent*, and gothic variations like Charles Manturian’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)—often focus on the decay of the plantation and the failure to bring about a new state of agricultural or social fertility. When renewal is somehow achieved, it is troubled or fleeting: Jason Quirk’s capitalist techniques may make the Rackrent estate solvent, for example, but his bourgeois ascent overturns the naturalized order of pseudo-aristocracy. Modern plantation romance does not compensate for the collapse of the plantation complex in the face of global capitalism, but it does signal a crisis in agricultural production in the post-slavery period. It responds to the “collision” of competing models of plantation modernity, the shift from settler colonialism to corporate imperialism within the plantation complex—a conflict evident in even the earliest instantiations of plantation romance, which negotiate plantation modernity with a dreamy longing for prelapsarian stability.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Romance has a long history in Ireland, beginning with the imitation of English forms in the early modern period, such as Roger Boyle’s *Parthenissa, That Most Fam’d Romance* (1651) and his brother Robert Boyle’s *Love and Religion Demonstrated in the Martyrdom of Theodora and Didymus* (1687). In the

Anti-Colonial Romance: Liam O’Flaherty’s *Land*

It may seem odd for a self-proclaimed Marxist like O’Flaherty to employ a genre that obscures the economic basis of plantation society in a novel about landlord-tenant relations. But romance can also function as a form of critique, as Barbara Fuchs and Fredric Jameson both argue. “Although it might be ideally suited to the enterprise of empire,” Fuchs notes, “it is also possible to read romance as the deflation of epic purpose and imperial conquest. Romance may offer a respite from the battlefield or an alternative way to imagine the relations between peoples” (83).⁵⁹ Like Fuchs, Jameson sees possibility in romance, observing that since the decline of realism under capitalism, romance is uniquely capable of “narrative heterogeneity and of freedom from that reality principle”: “Romance now again seems to offer the possibility of sensing other historical rhythms, and of demonic or Utopian transformations of a real now unshakably in place” (104). The ability of romance to provide imaginative space for alternative futures, through the construction of alternative pasts, helps explain why Irish nationalists as diverse as Yeats and Daniel Corkery were drawn to it.⁶⁰

In *Land* (1942), Liam O’Flaherty uses romance to undermine empire. Set in 1879, the novel documents the beginnings of the Land War in the appropriately named town of

eighteenth century, the pastoral romance of Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) were immensely popular, but “Irish” romance did not use Irish settings or themes largely until Sarah Butler’s *Irish Tales, or Instructive Histories for the Conduct of Life* (1716). In the nineteenth century, the hero of Samuel Lover’s *Rory O’More: A National Romance* (1837) takes part in the 1798 rebellion.

⁵⁹ Fuchs discusses empire and romance in relation to sixteenth century Spanish literature about the New World, like *Amadis of Gail* (1508), which staged “successful encounters with the Other, as well as a glorification of the quest”

⁶⁰ Similarly, Lucinda MacKethan notes that “To the extent that many southern writers have developed their images of the South as a dream of Arcady, they seem most often to have retained the trappings of that golden land primarily as a device by which they might expose or rebuke, escape or confront, the complexities of the actual time in which they have lived” (3).

Clash in County Mayo, from the perspective of the aristocratic “Old English” St. George family and the Fenian son of an Irish martyr, Michael O’Dwyer. As the novel begins, a Leitrim landlord, William Sydney Clements, has been murdered by his tenants. Evicted tenants fill ruined warehouses in the undistinguished town. There is growing agitation over rackrenting, fear of another famine, hunger, falling prices, and evictions. The Royal Irish Constabulary drink heavily before evictions, leading to brutalities. Indebted landlords resort to evictions in order to get loans from Captain Butcher. Absentee landlords return to Clash only for parties, “an annual memorial service for a feudal system that was moribund” (201).

O’Flaherty downplays agricultural concerns to focus instead on the socio-economic dynamics of landownership and landlord-tenant relations in the late nineteenth century. *Land* suggests that the peasantry require aristocratic leadership even in rebellion. The St. Georges and the O’Dwyers may have lost their money, but they come from the aristocracy. O’Flaherty accedes to planter ideologies that pit the feudal landlord class against a rising capitalist menace. In so doing, he breaks with Michael Davitt, founder of the Land League, whose *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (1904) provides a historical account of the Land War from a nationalist perspective. Dedicating his book to “The Celtic Peasantry of Ireland,” Davitt recounts how the agitation against landlords “sprang without leaders” from the Irish Catholic masses (xi), who set about to snuff out the “monopoly” of feudalism once and for all (725).

While he uses romantic types to construct his characters—the aristocrat, the brutal landlord, the young patriot, the motherless girl on the verge of womanhood, etc.—O’Flaherty draws on literary naturalism. The land is dangerous, sexual, and violent: in the

spring, “the might lust of the breeding earth pricked forth to a renewal of growth” (4). Despite having grown up in Clash, Elizabeth St. George finds the climate wicked and “very treacherous” (6). This environmental threat mirrors the social danger aimed at the socially and politically ambiguous St. George family. Arriving in Ireland with the Norman invasion in the twelfth century, they conquered “a barony of land” in the west (14). Once autocratic feudal lords, the St. Georges are now “declasses,” rejected by both their more prosperous Anglo-Irish neighbors and by the native Irish “peasants” they once ruled (13-14). Raoul ironically details the St. George legacy: “They built Killuragh Castle. They built the town of Clash and developed a very important commerce with the Spanish Empire. They were the first people in Ireland, according to the records, to introduce the wearing of silk underwear and the waxing of the mustaches” (14). During the Reformation, the family converted to Protestantism and maintained power until the eighteenth century. By “subtly changing their religious and political beliefs with every shift of history” (15), the St. Georges assimilate into the Ascendancy class. Despite this sociopolitical flexibility, their fortunes decline as they are unable to adapt to the new capitalist environment.

By the Act of Union, the St. Georges’s no longer hold a feudal barony, rather their property resembles a Cromwellian plantation. They retain a big house, Manister, and three thousand acres that were divided amongst Irish tenants that they “bleed mercilessly in order to survive” (16). After the famine, the bank foreclosed on the heavily encumbered estate. By the late nineteenth century, they own only 65 acres, and a small house. After six hundred years of dominance, they have become socially and politically irrelevant. Through the St. Georges, O’Flaherty tracks the history of colonialism in

Ireland over nearly seven hundred years. The family's willingness to adapt to each new phase of English imperialism allows for the comparison of multiple colonial models, from the late medieval Norman invasion through the early modern plantation to the Ascendancy big house. Their waxing and waning fortunes reflect the fate of the Anglo-Irish as a class, but their indigence and sociopolitical inefficacy make them more sympathetic.

Raoul's name reflects his family's outsider status. He brings his cosmopolitan values to Irish nationalism. After his brother Julian inherits what remains of the St. George family's hereditary estate, he becomes a lawyer defending Irish insurgents and must flee to France to avoid arrest. When Julian dies, Raoul inherits the property and returns to Clash with his 19-year-old daughter, Lettice, declaring "Now that I am back, I propose to behave exactly as I behaved abroad" (36). A "free-thinker" (36), Raoul retains his cosmopolitan values and embraces decadence. Meeting Michael allows Raoul to link his general rebellion against authority to social justice. A natural aristocrat, Raoul detests Butcher's bad manners. He becomes involved in the Land War when Butcher barrels into his house searching for Michael O'Dwyer after an assassination attempt. Insulted by Butcher's rude and arrogant behavior, Raoul decides to join O'Dwyer's fight against the landlords. He thinks this meeting with Michael is destiny. Michael is a skilled and passionate soldier, but his fight is largely unorganized. Needing the "authority of the people" (267), Raoul must overcome the people's resistance to his leadership in order to effectively organize them. In barging into the house, Butcher challenges Raoul's domestic authority. While he states that the decline of aristocracy is part of the natural order, his free thinking doesn't extend to Victorian gender roles. Raoul also declares

himself “master, in the full meaning of the word” (36). His domestic and social standards are patriarchal and authoritarian, requiring the strict division of the sexes. He teaches his daughter “a woman’s profession” of housekeeping (50) and hostessing.

After working as a landlord’s agent in Ireland, Captain Butcher capitalizes on the decline of the big house in the chaotic years after the famine, purchasing Manister House “Unlike other Englishmen that were buying Irish land at the time, I had no ambition to become a foxhunting loafer. As I said before, I come of yeoman stock. I love land. Just to possess it is a passion to me” (55). Empire has become a family business, and he has two sons in the British army, one stationed in Afghanistan and the other in South Africa. Butcher sees himself as upholding the power of the Ascendancy class, and feels that his actions in Ireland are “more important to the Empire than what my sons are doing. I’m defending the feudal system and the landowning gentry, on whom the power of England is based. If that system and that class are destroyed, then England is doomed within the space of a few generations” (52). However, his entrepreneurial impetus places him in a rising capitalist bourgeoisie and his abuse of his tenants violates the feudal lord’s responsibilities to care for the peasants that serve his family. O’Flaherty associates the bourgeoisie with the imperial project. In a second-rate imitation of feudalism, Butcher wears chainmail beneath his clothes to protect himself from potential assassins. The son of an English yeoman farmer, Captain Butcher declares himself a “self-made man” (52). In this way, Butcher considers the feudal system to be essentially colonial, a radical revision of Irish history. In so doing, he remakes feudalism in a modern framework.

O’Flaherty conceptualizes the Land War in feudal rhetoric. The omniscient narrator observes that the Anglo-Irish are a “decaying feudal class, then being destroyed

by the rising power of capitalism,” bewildered by “the strange apathy toward their interests of a government that had hitherto been completely at their service” (46-7). Raoul sees Victorian Ireland as an “age of transition” (83), he embraces industrialization and technological innovation even as these changes further erode his family’s power and wealth. O’Flaherty alternately refers to the Clash townsfolk and tenants as “peasants” or “the people.” The word choice of “peasant” harks back to feudalism through its association with subsistence farming, subordination, parochialism, and a lack of education that relegates the undifferentiated masses to premodernity. In contrast, the term “the people” has collective and revolutionary connotations (e.g. “we the people”), suggesting the emergence of a collective national identity and a socially engaged democratic citizenry. O’Flaherty romanticizes the Irish masses, whose unfavorable characteristics provide a source of patronizing humor. In so doing, he adopts stereotypes of the wholesome and superstitious paddy drawn from nineteenth-century fiction.

Butcher laments that the Anglo-Irish and the British must show restraint in dealing with the rebellious Irish and are unable to treat them like the Afghans and the Zulus. He attributes this restraint to the need to create a home market for English goods, “Because the Irish peasant now has a vote. Furthermore, he is a customer for English manufactured goods. The capitalists coddle him and fight the Irish landlords, because they want all the peasant’s money in exchange for their goods. They are opposed to land rents, the payment of which curtails the peasant’s purchasing power” (53). From his perspective, Butcher believes that Catholic emancipation and liberal universalism have eroded the absolute power of the “feudal”-colonial landlord. Despite his anti-capitalist vitriol, his wealth derives from these very changes. The self-made man ethos that he

subscribes is a decidedly capitalist ethos. In the wake of the famine, he shrewdly calculates that industrial England will begin to use Ireland as its “cattle market” (54) and evicts his tenants to clear their fields for grazing. These evictions, of course, contribute to the hostility directed at him.

The O’Dwyers were Manister tenants evicted by Butcher, prompting John O’Dwyer to become the leader of the local Fenians. Butcher notes “Curiously enough, he was not a peasant. The O’Dwyers were shipbuilders in Clash for centuries, a wealthy family at one time. The famine ruined them, as it did nearly everybody else” (54). Like Michael, John was a natural born leader, but untrained and he is led into an ambush arranged by Butcher. In the fracas, John wounds Butcher and kills his bailiff. Convicted of murder, he is hanged. Butcher’s corruption extends beyond evictions and rackrenting. He bribes the police, uses his wife’s sexuality to manipulate a British army officer, and tries to lure Michael into an ambush.

After his father’s death, Michael lives in London with his mother, but she dies shortly thereafter. Michael next lives with his Uncle John, a bachelor surgeon living in Dublin. Embarrassed by his nephew’s nationalist heritage, Uncle John tries to make Michael “an obedient slave of the English” by sending him to a boarding school in England. Seeking to join the Ascendancy, he hosts extravagant parties in a fashionable neighborhood and entertains with crude impressions of the native Irish. When he hears a street singer singing a ballad about his father written by Francis Kelly, he joins the Fenians. An adventurer, he goes to America for five years for the gold rush in the west. The quintessential soldier, he “sees beauty only in danger” (82), and “creates his own

world and his own laws” (82). As the leader of the Fenians, he is reckless and inexperienced.

St. George cosmopolitanism doesn't extend to its women. Although Lettice was born in France and raised in the art of hostessing, she eschews worldly pursuits and independent thought, preferring to adopt her father's radical worldviews wholeheartedly because she responds to them emotionally. While Raoul is nonchalant in his expatriatism, she longs for parochial connections and a sense of home. She tells Elizabeth that “Life in Paris was artificial, in spite of its exquisite culture. It was foreign to me. It was like staring at life through the window of a very expensive shop. Here I feel among my own people. I walk on my own earth and breathe my own air” (83). Lettice's mystical connection with Ireland comes not only from her father, but also her mother, who was also of Irish descent. She also has Raoul's poetic spirit without his cynicism. She finds the people “beautiful and harmless” and admires their faith which gives “a divine meaning to everything” (60). Desiring connection with them, she wants to “be friends with them” when she arrives from France (60): “I want to feel that I belong to them, that I am of their blood and they of mine, that I belong to their earth and their history. In France there were no people to whom I wanted to belong. Father and I only know exiles like ourselves. It was very lonely” (63). Despite a youth spent in sophisticated French society, Lettice isn't worldly, but rather simple and sentimental. Desperately searching for a place of belonging, she instinctively agrees with all her father's radical views.

Ignorant of the family's history of colonialism, Lettice's only previous knowledge of Ireland comes from her father's “very romantic” stories “about traders coming from Crete and Egypt thousands of years ago to take away the gold of its streams, about great

oak forests that covered what are now naked hills, about the university and the cathedral that were here in the eighth century, with students coming from all over the known world” (63). This exotic premodern Ireland becomes the ideal for the future, the lost Eden that Lettice, Raoul, and Michael work towards in their fight against the landlords. Raoul devises a new strategy for Michael’s insurgence, “the torture of isolation” (74). He explains to Francis Kelly:

“To isolate an enemy in the military sense [...] means cutting him off from all means of supply, reinforcement and escape. In this instance, I give a different meaning to the word. The isolation of Captain Butcher would not need to be physically complete, in order to effective and bring about his destruction. He would merely require to be deprived of his power, little by little, until he was alone and utterly helpless” (74).

This innovative non-violent form of resistance requires the help of the people acting in unison. Before isolating Butcher, they effectively test this strategy on Bodkin, a miserly pub owner spying on the Fenians for the English. They also disrupt the corrupt colonial judicial system used by the landlords to obtain evictions by kidnapping all the men summoned to appear before the court in the middle of the night, bringing it to an abrupt halt. In order to stop evictions, Raoul appoints Lettice to lead a rebellion of peasant women that ends with the Fenians blowing up a bridge. Afterward, the people carry her on their shoulders throwing flowers.

The people have to overcome their own servant mentality and resistance to change. Raoul argues that “These people have been slaves for so long that they only respond to the most primitive forms of persuasion” (157). For instance, the St. George’s

servant Ahearn becomes irate when Raoul moves him from a hard wooden settlebed in the kitchen to a feather bed in an attic bedroom, telling Elizabeth “The master brought back queer notions with him from France” (151). Raoul admits “it was my ancestors that made you slaves and taught you the habits of slavery over a period of six hundred years” (280). Despite the need for collective action, the novel suggest that they require aristocratic leadership. Having lost the people, Michael and Raoul decide to pursue different methods. Raoul continues nonviolent strategies, purposely getting himself imprisoned for sedition in order to win sympathy with the people. In a public speech in the town square, he tells the people “You could annihilate these ruffians, cut them to pieces and throw the pieces to your dogs. You could sweep Captain Butcher and all other landlords to the devil. You could even cross the sea into England and chop off Queen Victoria’s head for her impudence in laying claim to sovereignty over you” (280).

In contrast, as leader of the Fenians, Michael declares “open war” and martial law (275). The Fenians also push herds of cattle over a cliff to interfere with landlord profits. Without Raoul’s guidance, Michael rushes impetuously into danger, recklessly risking his own life. Just as Butcher set a trap for John O’Dwyer, so too does Michael set a trap for Butcher. In the fight, Butcher shoots Michael in the head, before he is shot three times and killed. “The people certainly don’t mourn him. On the contrary, they feel proud and triumphant, as if they had won a great victory” (345). Although Raoul envies Michael’s heroic death, it is largely preventable.

The novel ends as the people celebrate Raoul’s release from prison. The local priest, Father Cornelius changes sides and tells Raoul “Your method of fighting tyranny has now been adopted by the whole of Ireland” (351). The people have adapted Raoul’s

methods, now called Boycotting. Raoul complains, they “geld my idea and deprive it of its power” (52). The people no longer require Raoul or Michael’s leadership. While the novel ends on this triumphant note, Raoul correctly notes that the people have adapted his revolutionary methods for reformist purposes. The Land War lasts another twenty years, and the intergenerational fight against landlord abuse passes to Michael and Lettice’s son, Raoul Frances O’Dwyer. “Then he will be well equipped,” Michael tells Lettice before his final battle with Butcher, “when his time comes to travel my road” (316) by training from Raoul and Francis. O’Flaherty proves unable to shake free of romantic stereotypes. Nevertheless, his novel is an experiment in harnessing the genre’s mass appeal for a nationalist agenda, imagining the people’s power to alter the course of plantation history.

***Gone with the Wind* and Irish-American Plantocracy**

The British saw their plantation schemes in Ireland and the Americas as related parts of a singular colonial project.⁶¹ Sean O’Callaghan observes that Cromwell made repeated entreaties to the leaders of Plymouth plantation to take on Irish captives. Ronald Takaki notes that “The conquest of Ireland and the settlement of Virginia were bound so closely together that one correspondence, dated March 8, 1610, stated: ‘It is hoped the plantation of Ireland may shortly be settled. The Lord Delaware...is preparing to depart for the plantation of Virginia’ (qtd. Quinlan 23). Early colonists compared Native Americans to the “wilde Irish” (qtd. Quinlan 23). I can only speculate that this sense of shared history has been lost in large part because American plantocracy’s reliance on

⁶¹ Any scholar conducting research on the relations between Ireland and the U.S. South is indebted to Kieran Quinlan’s *Strange Kin: Ireland and the American South* and Dennis Clark’s *Hibernia America: The Irish and Regional Cultures*. I draw on them extensively in what follows.

African slave labor imbued New World plantations with a distinctive racial dynamic that has overshadowed both white slavery and early Irish-American connections. While the fifty or sixty thousand Irish captives forced into slavery before 1700 constitutes but a small fraction compared to the estimated eleven million African captives enslaved before universal emancipation, several recent books have shown that the Irish diaspora nonetheless played a significant role in the formation of the early plantation complex, as slaves and later as slave owners.⁶²

Although the Irish were a minority group in the region, they still played a part in the earliest settlement of the south. As Dennis Clark observes in *Hibernia America*, there were "Irish priests in Florida's Spanish missions, Irish officials for the Spanish crown in Louisiana and Texas, Irish convicts in Georgia, Irish settlers in the Carolinas, and Irish traders among the Indians" (94-95). Irish immigrants formed a significant southern underclass, as indentured servants, sometimes runaways to the mountains, and after 1820, as transient urban workers building essential infrastructure. Irish digging crews, canal diggers, riverboat workers, levee builders, railroader laborers largely moved through the south, occasionally settling in insular Catholic enclaves in places like New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah. There, among their Anglo-Saxon neighbors, they gained reputations for "larceny, malicious mischief, buying and receiving stolen goods, fraud, illegal voting, assault and battery, and murder" (98). After the war, immigration to the region declined dramatically.

Irish units served in both the Confederate and Union armies during the civil war.

Clark explains that "It was as difficult for the Confederate Irish to understand why

⁶² See Sean O'Callaghan's *To Hell or Barbados*, Michael A Hoffman II's *They were White and They were Slaves*, and Don Jordan's *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America*.

Yankees fought states seeking 'independence'—a long-cherished goal of Ireland—as it was for the North's Irish to see why the South should split from a country that provided immigrants freedoms unattainable in Ireland" (105). As members of the lower classes, Irish-southerners rarely owned slaves; however, they were just as likely to support slavery as other white populations of European ancestry. After emancipation, Irish-Americans often competed with newly freed blacks for employment and housing, leading to longstanding antagonisms. The Irish were a defensive minority group amongst a predominately Protestant and anti-Catholic population that also imagined affinities with England. Clark notes:

The baronial lifestyle of England's upper class had an attraction for the Southern plantation elite, particularly in Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia where both genealogy and education emphasized the cultural connection to England. From England the stereotypes, prejudices, and anti-Irish attitudes deriving from the ancient English-Irish conflict passed to much of the Southern leadership. (101)

Despite this, Irish-Americans did occasionally rise into the upper echelons of southern society, especially in the Carolinas and Louisiana. Whatever the actualities of demography, the Irish figure prominently in plantation mythology. Many important southern writers had Irish ancestry, including William Gilmore Simms, John Pendleton Kennedy, Edgar Allen Poe, Joel Chandler Harris, William Alexander Carruthers, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Alexander Percy, Flannery O'Connor, and Margaret Mitchell. Even William Faulkner declared a tenuous Scotch-Irish heritage. Not coincidentally, many of these writers—particularly Kennedy, Poe, Harris, Mitchell, and Faulkner—played key roles in constructing and deconstructing the conventions of plantation fiction.

Conversely, many Irish writers forged connections across the Atlantic in the U.S. south, recognizing uncanny similarities between Irish and southern cultures. In 1882, Oscar Wilde toured “the beautiful, passionate, ruined South, the land of magnolias and music, of roses and romance” and fantastically recounted that he had “stayed with Jeff Davis at his plantation (how fascinating all failures are!) and seen Savannah, and the Georgia forests, and bathed in the Gulf of Mexico, and engaged in voodoo rites with the Negroes” (176). Big house novelist Edith Somerville visited Aiken, South Carolina in 1929, where she mingled with local high society and went fox hunting. Eudora Welty maintained a lifelong friendship with Elizabeth Bowen, visited Bowen’s Court at least three times and worked in Bowen’s London flat; Bowen, in turn, visited Welty in Jackson, Mississippi and toured the mid-south in 1950, 1951, 1954, and 1959.⁶³ Irish and southern writers also forged literary connections. In *The Vanishing Hero* (1956) Sean O’Faolain compares his home county of Cork with Faulkner’s fictional Yoknapatawpha county and finds “There is the same passionate provincialism; the same local patriotism; the same southern nationalism... the same vanity of the old race; the same gnawing sense of defeat; the same capacity for intense hatred... the same oscillation between unbounded self-confidence and total despair; the same escape through sport and drink” (qtd. Quinlan 5).

Gone with the Wind has come to be seen as the quintessential plantation romance, its characters and imagery serving as shorthand for southern stereotypes. Spanning

⁶³ For a discussion of Wilde’s tour in the south and his influence on southern writers, see Ellen Crowell’s *The Dandy in Irish and American Southern Fiction*. Suzanne Mars explains “Eudora found that the stories told by artist Norah McGuinness and Bowen reminded her of Mississippi” (195). For a discussion of Welty’s visits to Ireland, see Suzanne Mars’s biography *Eudora Welty: A Biography* (particularly pages 195-202) and for a reading of her enigmatic short story “The Bride of Innisfree,” see Keiran Quinlan’s *Strange Kin: Ireland and the American South*.

approximately twenty years, the novel follows the American plantation from its antebellum zenith, to its wartime nadir, and through the despair of Reconstruction. While in David O. Selznick's 1939 film adaptation the plantation and plantocracy recover from the destruction of the war, Mitchell paints a decidedly more bleak portrait of plantation development. By the novel's end, Scarlett's former friends, Atlanta's old guard elite, are returning to power. They have lost their homes and wealth, endured humiliation and persecution at the hands of an invading army and vindictive Republican regime, kept the spirit of Lost Cause alive, quelled the savage behavior of uppity freed blacks through the clandestine activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and revitalized the Democratic party. While the plantocracy are finally restored to control of the state government, the novel never stages the resurgence of the plantation itself. Scarlett also regains financial security and later wealth through advantageous marriages and business acumen, but, in the process, Scarlett turns her back on the plantation complex, rejecting the antiquated ways of the old guard in favor of northern-style industrial capitalism. Consequently, Tara becomes little more than a "two horse farm" (657). While the novel consolidates Old South imagery and Lost Cause rhetoric, it also revises romance by replacing the simpering and coquettish southern belle of plantation romance with a sexually manipulative and Irish Catholic business woman.

While the novel consolidates plantation myths drawn from romance, it introduces Irish stereotypes into the genre through the figure of Scarlett's father, Gerald O'Hara. Born in County Meath on the eve of the Act of Union, Gerald leaves Ireland with a price on his head at the age of 21 in 1822. Standing only 5'4" tall, he is uneducated, but literate, soft hearted and hot tempered, with a predilection for drink and Irish ballads.

With five tall older brothers who stand over six feet tall, he is the runt of the family; his diminutive stature makes him not only endearingly comic, but also “hardy” (61). He kills a landlord’s agent for whistling “The Boyne Water,” a Protestant folksong that celebrates the victory of William of Orange in the Battle of the Boyne—the very battle that the O’Haras lost their land in. The family is already known for “suspected activities against the government” (68), but Gerald’s crime is not so much an act of political rebellion as a case of heated temper. However cliché this characterization, Gerald’s ethnic identity facilitates his success in the U.S. and allows him to become a self-made man.

While the trope of the “self-made man” is integral to plantation fiction as a whole—appearing most prominently in *Barren Ground*, *Land*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*—Mitchell most explicitly links the plantation to the American dream. Like the Scotch-Irish Dorinda Oakley, Gerald’s success demonstrates the opportunities available to enterprising citizens of the United States. The plantation frontier provides a “blank” landscape and attendant raw materials for agrarian capitalism, including cheap plentiful land and freedom from social norms. The Georgia hill country is “strange and different” compared to the more hierarchical coast: more diverse, less structured, and an equal playing field for “new people seeking their fortunes” (72). Even though the plantation is associated with leisured gentleman and dashing cavaliers, “The very redemptioners and convict servants were apt to fare better than the gentleman” in colonial plantation conditions, as W.J. Cash shows (6). Gerald is typical of the frontier planter class, in that he gets his start in agrarian capitalism through shrewd, but drunken, poker games, yet these masculine avenues are considered perfectly legitimate means of advancement within this nascent inland plantation culture. In this new meritocracy, people of all

backgrounds can ascend to the planter class through perseverance and hard work. As the site of the American dream, the plantation fulfills the liberatory potentials of modern democracy for white males.

Despite his initially illicit methods of advancement, Gerald's success is enabled by a willingness to assimilate. He seeks not only the trappings of plantocracy—land, slaves, and wealth—but full admission into upper-class society. As Don Doyle argues in *Faulkner's County*, settlers on the southern frontier tended to come from established eastern planter families and recreated plantation institutions within new settings. Arriving in the U.S. in 1822, Gerald participates in this kind of settlement. Like Thomas Sutpen, Gerald successfully replicates the plantocratic institutions—for a time—and assimilates well among the predominantly protestant southern elite, “with the whole-heartedness that was his nature, he adopted its ideas and customs, as he understood them, for his own—poker and horse racing, red-hot politics and the code duello, States' Rights and damnation to all Yankees, slavery and King Cotton, contempt for white trash and exaggerated courtesy to women” (62). Hewing closely to planter norms, he navigates the significant divide between the entrenched coastal “aristocracy” and the coarser in-land plantocracy. Still a “foreigner” after 10 years (69), he eventually marries into the coastal gentry and wins the approval of even the most conservative southerner, Mrs. Wilkes. Despite his thick brogue and hatred of “Orangemen,” Gerald upholds Anglo-American Protestant planter hegemony.

Although Mitchell clearly situates it on the wild frontier of northwest Georgia, Tara shares many characteristics with Anglo-Irish estates. Like the big houses of Ireland threatened by insurgents, the house that previously stood on Gerald's land burned down,

(perhaps by displaced Native American raiders?). “The fortunes of the O’Haras would rise again” in a New World context (65). As “Tara” replicates both Celtic holy ground and the southern plantation complex, the Irish American planter can reclaim his ancestral rights on the southern frontier. In the process, he colonizes lands seized from its Native American owners, just as his own family’s lands were seized by Anglo-Irish settlers. However troubling twenty-first century readers might find Irish Catholics assuming the role of colonizers, for Mitchell and her characters this seeming contradiction poses no ethical conflict.

As a second generation Irish-American and born into the plantocratic privilege, Scarlett has a different relation to the American dream. Raised for a life of leisure, she is able to draw on her essential Irish resilience after Sherman’s march to the sea leaves the O’Haras penniless and hungry. Just as Mitchell portrays blacks as inherently childlike and animalistic, she also portrays the Irish as inherently scheming and resourceful—natural born capitalists. Ever her father’s daughter, she achieves success through her own efforts. Yet her methods are both socially and ethically troubling, and she becomes corrupted by her efforts to attain wealth and the freedom that comes with it. Born into privilege, Scarlett rejects the planter lifestyle as unviable, and in many ways undesirable, and instead chooses industrial capitalism as a means to achieve socioeconomic dominance. While Gerald reproduces the plantation complex on the frontier, Scarlett flouts Victorian gender roles and the stigma of trade; she recognizes the plantation as an antiquated financial and social model, even as she romanticizes the antebellum past. Turning to business, Scarlet pairs with the colonizing army and fails to reproduce plantation norms, even as she commodifies her southern belle image. She longs for the

“innocence” of the antebellum days, but also capitalizes on it as she enjoys a newfound freedom under industrial capitalism. Scarlett’s Irishness is an asset that allows her to excel in business management. Scarlett assimilates into the colonizing class that fetishizes her colonial difference, becoming a “scallywag.”

Given the tendency of Irish southerners to assimilate to local political and social mores, it is not wholly surprising that the novel further continues the racist portrayals of black southerners established by nineteenth-century plantation romance, portraying slavery as a necessary and benign institution. The narrator recapitulates planter paternalism, stating “Slaves were neither miserable nor unfortunate. The negroes were far better off under slavery than they were now under freedom” (708). Mitchell’s romanticized portrayals of infantile slaves and fatherly slaveowners are typical of Old South nostalgia. Mammy has “elephant eyes” (42), while Big Sam is walks with the lumbering “gamboling of a mastiff” and his “watermelon-pink tongue” falls out of his mouth (725). In the happy, hierarchical plantation household, slaves are not only members of the family, but are frequently indulged and even dominant. Mammy and Uncle Peter “own” their masters “body and soul” (42). Pork even tries to imitate his Irish brogue “out of admiration for his new master” (64). The house slaves in particular adopt white values wholeheartedly, scorning small farmers and outdoor laborers. Mitchell gives no indication that Gerald’s Irish origins make him more kind to slaves or that he has any ethical misgivings about slavery. To the contrary, his humble Irish origins make him more ambitious; he craves property, including slaves. Inordinately proud to be a slaveowner, he refuses to sell his valet Pork above his market value after winning him in

a poker game, because owning a slave, particularly a gentleman's valet, brings him closer to the class status he seeks.

Within the colonial context of the Americas, traditional Irish-English enmity assumes peculiar forms. Both planter elites from Ireland and the American south indulged in Anglophilia and a desire to associate themselves with English aristocracy. American planters imagined significant continuities between English and southern society. When the war begins, Mitchell's planter elite trust that the English will offer military support for both financial and cultural reasons. Not only do the English need cotton for their mills, they assume, but "the British aristocracy sympathized with the Confederacy, as one aristocrat with another, against a race of dollar lovers like the Yankees" (176). The southern elite neglect to consider how the "peculiar institution" of slavery might impinge upon these real and imagined affinities with England. However, the English government fails to reciprocate these imagined affinities, as Rhett matter-of-factly tells Scarlett, "the fat Dutch woman who is sitting on the throne is a God-fearing soul and she doesn't approve of slavery. Let the English mill workers starve because they can't get our cotton but never, never strike a blow for slavery" (237). Mitchell underscores the hypocrisy of a rigid English class system that exploits the working poor but condemns slavery. Ironically, in his desire to become not only a planter but also a southerner, Gerald aligns with southern planters who imitate English aristocrats and British colonial power. Furthermore, the novel suggests that Irish Americans make better planters—and better capitalists—than those actually descended from English settlers, like the "queer" Episcopalian Wilkes family (53). Both "overbred and inbred" (1040), they are unable to rebuild after the war. In contrast to Scarlett's strength and practicality, the

dreamy and enervated Wilkes family cannot navigate the new world of finance and industrial capitalism overtaking the south.

Scarlett's heritage combines Celtic aristocracy with New World plantocracy. Her mother Ellen Robillard has black hair, "inky lashes" and "slanting eyes" that Mitchell attributes to French-Creole ancestors. Ellen's grandparents were forced to leave Haiti during the revolution, but rebuilt on the Georgia coast.⁶⁴ The Frenchness is a veneer over her essential Irishness, which proves adaptable to colonial imperative. Although Mitchell also aligns Scarlett with the French Catholic plantocracy of Georgia, her Irish heritage dominates. Named after Gerald's mother, "Katie Scarlett O'Hara" has eyes "as green as the hills of Ireland" (97). This French-Irish hybridity gives her a sense of subjective uprootedness, as "the blood of a soft-voiced, overbred Coastal aristocrat mingled with the shrewd, earthy blood of an Irish peasant" (102). While Anglo-southern girls repress their feelings, her Irishness make it impossible for her to be a true lady.

Even as it places the Irish diaspora at the center of plantation modernity, *Gone with the Wind* exhibits a profound ambivalence towards Irish-American character and identity. While Gerald stands in for the upwardly mobile American immigrant experience, the other Irish characters in the novel are decidedly more negative. Impressed by the way he gets "work out of that bunch of wild Irish he bosses," Scarlett hires former Union soldier Johnnie Gallegher to oversee leased convict work crews at her lumber mill (692). Ignoring his rough demeanor, she knows "that an Irishman with a determination to get somewhere was a valuable man to have, regardless of what his personal characteristics might be. And she felt a closer kinship with him than many men of her

⁶⁴ In *Wind Done Gone*, Randall attributes this to mixed race heritage.

own class, for Johnnie knew the value of money" (709). The novel suggests that many, if not most, Irish Americans harbor an obsession with money that favors profit over principles, like the Scotch-Irish or American northeasterners. Scarlett's identification with Johnnie signals a distancing from plantation ideology, which disassociates wealth from class, as well as the plantation's strict hierarchy which assumes some people are born aristocrats and others are not. Scarlett's perspective is more or less social Darwinism—with gumption separating the wheat from the chafe, not gentility. While Johnnie swindles her—stealing and selling food and other supplies she purchases for the convict crew, starving and beating the workers, and keeping a black mistress at the lumber mill—she keeps him because he still makes a profit. Similarly, Scarlett befriends carpetbagger and former whorehouse madam Bridget Flaherty "who had a sun-defying white skin and a brogue that could be cut with a butter knife" (816). Bridget counsels Scarlett on how to perform an abortion. These negative portrayals point to a class division within the Irish-American community itself. While Johnnie and Bridget are class climbing upstarts, the O'Haras were Celtic nobility before Cromwell's invasion and transplantations. Mitchell couches Gerald's success in America as a return to his rightful aristocratic heritage, but Scarlett's methods are outré. Rather than assimilation with the protestant planter elite, she chooses to keep company with vulgar Irish immigrants and carpetbaggers.

Not surprisingly, the Scotch-Irish fare even worse in the novel. Although they settled later in the mountains and separated themselves from the Irish Catholic tradition in America, most Irish immigrants to the south before the revolutionary war were Scotch-Irish. Despite seventy years in the Carolinas, for Gerald, his neighbors "The MacIntoshes

were Scotch-Irish and Orangemen and, had they possessed all the saintly qualities of the Catholic calendar, this ancestry would have damned them forever” (66). Gerald holds a grudge against the MacIntoshes, who are rumored to hold abolitionist sympathies, “But, in an Orangeman, when a principle comes up against Scotch tightness, the principle fares ill” (66). A conservative and insular family, the MacIntoshes commit the unpardonable social sin of being unneighborly and unsociable. Gerald attributes their lack of hospitality to Scotch-Irish tight-fistedness, and his judgments prove prescient, as the MacIntoshes betray the planter class by taking the Iron Clad oath pledging allegiance to the Union during Reconstruction.

In *The Mind of the South* (1941), W.J. Cash dispels pseudo-feudal myths of Old South plantocratic grandeur with a revisionary scenario. His quintessential planter isn’t coddled gentry, but a hardy ambitious immigrant on the frontier. “A stout young Irishman” who settles in a log cabin in the Carolinas at the turn of the nineteenth century, “When the old man finally died in 1854, he left two thousand acres, a hundred and fourteen slaves, and four cotton gins” (15-17). Mitchell’s portrayal of Irish identity is far more ambivalent than Cash’s robust immigrant, as Scarlett represents a darker version of the American dream. Initially, she has “no interest” in either her French or Irish ancestry (145), but as the novel progresses her Irish characteristics emerge in moments of conflict. Mitchell suggests that not only is Irish identity essential—that is, biological—but it is so dominant that it will overpower less rugged European ancestries. For her, Irish identity is inescapable as the one drop rule. While the plantation initially appears as a site that rewards merit and hard work, true planter-aristocrats are born, not made. In this, Mitchell’s novel upholds the meta-plantation, indicating that every southerner has a place

within the plantation hierarchy, even as that hierarchy disintegrates under the democratizing pressures of an ineluctable modernity.

Chapter Four

Black Modernism and the Ghosts of Plantation Romance

In his essay “Gift of the Black Tropics” (1920) W.A. Domingo argues that the presence of New York’s black immigrant population exposed American racial hierarchies, “Coming to the United States from countries in which they had experienced no legalized social or occupational disabilities, West Indians very naturally have found it difficult to adapt themselves to the tasks that are by custom reserved for Negroes in the North” (12). Consequently, they applied for jobs that African Americans would not, opening up access to new occupations. Domingo underscores the ambitious drive of West Indian immigrants, noting that their lack of conformity caused friction with African Americans “who resent[ed] the implied self-sufficiency” (13). Despite these tensions, he credits immigrants with injecting the Harlem Renaissance with a truly political element, as the influx of foreign-born people catalyzed native born blacks to embrace a more subversive politics. Not coincidentally, many writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance either came from or travelled widely in the Caribbean, including Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston.

Whatever their country of origin, early twentieth-century black writers in America were compelled to respond to nineteenth-century plantation fiction, which continued to play a key role buttressing white supremacy. In his essay “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” Arthur Schomburg calls for the writing of unbiased histories that rely on “scientific method and aim” (66). Schomburg’s methodology is necessary because African American history has been written from white perspectives that glorified the antebellum past and portrayed Reconstruction as a terrible scourge on southern civilization.

Similarly, when Langston Hughes opposes Negro and American culture in his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” he responds to plantation romance’s racial politics, which pits white American culture against African American culture, as Grace Elizabeth Hale has shown. Plantation fiction played an integral role in popularizing these reactionary histories and upholding Jim Crow. In *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth Century American Literature*, Stephanie Foote argues that regionalist literature forged distinctly American imagery that consolidated national identity against the tide of urban immigration. In the Plantation School of fiction, predominantly white urban readers are urged to identify with plantocracy, to look amusingly upon the foibles of the blustering but kind-hearted planter and gaze upon the frivolously alluring belle. These iconic white figures are presented as distinctly national types, whose quintessential American-ness positions the equally stereotypical black figures—the mammy, the valet, the field hand, the pickaninny—as essentially un-American. Jessica Adams explains that “as black people became picturesque, became spectacle, they were alienated by whites, cast as ‘foreigners,’ strangers at home” (6). As such, nineteenth-century plantation romance, still very much in vogue in the early decades of the twentieth century as *Birth of a Nation* wrote history in lightning for white audiences, continued to draw the color line.

Consequently, African American writers of varying political persuasions were compelled to respond to plantation ideology and iconography, both implicitly and explicitly. In “The Negro-Art Hokum,” George Schuyler explains that:

Because a few writers with a paucity of themes have seized upon imbecilities of the Negro rustics and clowns and palmed them off as authentic and characteristic

Aframerican behavior, the common notion that the black American is so ‘different’ from his white neighbor has gained wide currency. The mere mention of the word ‘Negro’ conjures up in the average white American’s mind a composite stereotype of Bert Williams, Aunt Jemima, Uncle Tom, Jack Johnson, Florian Slappeg, and the various monstrosities scrawled by cartoonists. (97)

The plantation haunts black identity, as white Americans generated images of an idealized antebellum past to establish essential racial difference and uphold a segregated present. In response to these racist stereotypes, Schuyler vehemently argues that the “American Negro is just plain American” and “merely a lampblack Anglo-Saxon” (97). Schuyler’s rejection of essential racial difference epitomized by the expressive “Negro soul” directly opposes plantation myth and demonstrates that, far from embodying an invariable pre-modernity, people of African descent inhabit the same modern world as whites.⁶⁵

In this chapter, I consider three texts by black writers that revise the racist distortions of plantation romance. First, I look at Du Bois’s cosmopolitan, social scientist persona in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a text that demonstrates his ambivalent relationship towards the U.S. south. Even as he corrects stereotypes of plantation romance, Du Bois maintains an authoritative distance from the southern black folk he studies. Cosmopolitanism forms an intrinsic—and often overlooked—component of plantation fiction that Du Bois must revise in order to deconstruct myths of plantation life, develop an anti-colonial ethnography, and envision new forms of black cosmopolitan

⁶⁵ This argument is similar to C.L.R. James’s assertion of the modernity of slaves themselves “The product [that they cultivated] was shipped abroad for sale. Even the cloth the slaves wore and the food they ate was imported. The Negroes, therefore, from the very start lived a life that was in its essence a modern life. That is their history—as far as I have been able to discover, a unique history” (*Black Jacobins* 392).

authority. Next, I turn to two novels by Harlem Renaissance writers that depict the decline of the plantation in the West Indies. The Caribbean played a vital role in literary revisions of white dominated histories, helping to forge a sense of diasporic black identity and a shared history that emerged from the interactions of West Indian immigrants and African Americans in Harlem. Eric Walrond's short story "The Vampire Bat" (1926) depicts the decline of the plantation and subsequent empowerment of Barbadian blacks, as the rationalized violence of the plantation generates an irrationally supernatural retribution. While the Plantation School writer Thomas Nelson Page used gothic conventions to portray an idyllic plantation society threatened only by the inference of foreign interlopers, Walrond uses the supernatural to portray the fading hegemony of the plantocracy as their fears of black revolt come to life in otherworldly forms. Finally, I turn to the first African American novel on the Haitian revolution, Arna Bontemps' *Drums at Dusk* (1936). Bontemps's novel follows romantic conventions to reach a wider audience, with politically ambivalent results. His reformist romance constructs a new bourgeois plantation out of postslavery socioeconomic chaos.

W.E.B. Du Bois and the Cosmopolitan Sciences of Plantation Ethnography

Like Schuyler, W.E.B. Du Bois positions black art in direct opposition to plantation romance's pervasive stereotypes. In his essay "Criteria of Negro art," Du Bois notes that when confronted by innovative black literature "The white publishers catering to white folks [...] want Uncle Toms, Topsies, good 'darkies' and clowns" (102). Not surprisingly, then, *The Souls of Black Folk* revises plantation stereotypes using scientific methods, like those advocated by Schomburg. Combining ethnography with plantation

narrative, Du Bois serves as a bridge figure between nineteenth-century plantation romance and black modernist fiction of the 1920s and 30s. As the family-owned estates of Old South imagery gave way to larger, corporatized plantations, Du Bois revisited the plantation, documenting its transition to agribusiness and detailing its impact on ordinary black southerners. Just as Liberty Hyde Bailey's connection to the emergent disciplines of agriculture and horticulture affect his treatment of the rural, so too is Du Bois's treatment of plantation America effected by his connection to the emergent social sciences. *Souls* remedies the racial oversights of white progressive reformers, who documented the social, political, and ecological impact of the plantation complex on white southerners, and either acquiesced to the demands southern apartheid (for instance, appointing white and black extension agents to cater to southern racial mores) or turned a blind eye to it altogether. Du Bois shares reformers' faith in education, as his well-known concept of the "talented tenth" indicates, but his approach is ultimately less interventionist. Rather than transposing an apparatus of external reformers into the region, he documents the south in order to gain attention for the physical and psychological violence of Jim Crow segregation, which stands in contrast to pervasive images of idyllic plantation life. In contrast to Bailey's narrative of American triumphalism and Rooseveltian masculinity, Du Bois employed the social sciences in the service of anti-colonialism. This project required a reconfiguration of the conventions of plantation romance that co-opted African American vernacular, obscured the brutalities of apartheid, and limited black cosmopolitanism. Even as it acknowledges constrictions on black southern mobility, *Souls* offers an antidote to plantation ideology through the construction of narrative and thematic black cosmopolitan authority.

The generic origins of American plantation fiction are usually traced to John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* (1832), a novel that adopts cosmopolitanism at the level of form and content by combining travel writing, letters, drama, history, sketches, satire, parody, realism, and romance.⁶⁶ Kennedy's classic southern novel is narrated by Mark Littleton, a northern businessman who visits the plantation of his cousin Lucretia and her husband Frank Meriwether. Littleton presumably shares the values of the book's northern audience, and the focalization of the story through him creates narrative distance from the southern setting and social milieu. His outsider status allows him to comment on and judge the Meriwethers's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the foibles and virtues of American plantocracy. In other words, Littleton's outsider status allows for the illusion of objectivity; uninterpellated by southern culture, his observations and judgments take on a valence of accuracy and impartiality. These judgments are familiar to readers of plantation fiction: both critical of and amused by southern foibles, he soon sees the plantation as the epitome of American democratic ideals and an idyllic way of life being overtaken by nascent industrial capitalism. *Swallow Barn* already registers the decline of the plantation as a viable economic and social form, a theme expanded upon by Kennedy's protégé Edgar Allen Poe in "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839).

By the 1880s, white writers of plantation romance replaced the cosmopolitan narrator of *Swallow Barn* with a local, black narrator, adopting African American dialect to legitimate the bygone plantation past and justify the increasingly segregated present. This southern black insider was often a former slave, as in the case of Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus* (1881) and Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia: Or, Marse*

⁶⁶ See Lucinda Mackethan's introduction for a discussion of *Swallow Barn*'s generic origins.

Chan and Other Stories (1884). Their fiction perpetuated a series of stereotypes that seeped into popular perceptions of plantation culture. These romantic novels presented the plantation as an unchanging remnant of the pre-modern age.

Just as antebellum black writers had countered pro-slavery “Anti-Tom” novels with slave narratives, progressive era writers of African descent answered plantation romance’s attempts to define the parameters of black identity by revisiting the plantation in narrative. Charles Chesnutt used humor and dialect in *The Conjure Woman* (1899) to critique white supremacy, wistfulness for plantocracy, and internal colonialism, while Frances Harper used sentimental fiction to advocate racial uplift in *Iola Leroy* (1893). In contrast, in *Souls*, Du Bois himself assumes the role of cosmopolitan narrator. While Kennedy’s white narrator’s access to white plantation life came from his familial relationship with the plantation mistress, Du Bois’s access to African American plantation life is achieved through blackness. As he transverses the plantation south, Du Bois documents the region socioeconomically and reconstructs history through the African American experience of antebellum slavery and postbellum tenancy. The narrative foregrounds Du Bois’s own mobility and his cosmopolitan authority as a metropolitan teacher, reformer, and sociologist, in defiance of a culture of segregation that sought to constrict black mobility, metropolitan perception, and cosmopolitanism.

Like *Swallow Barn*, *Souls* refuses easy categorization. The text amalgamates narrative forms, including essays, song, poetry, testimony, interviews, pedagogy, history, and ethnography. Du Bois’s generic evasion shifts along with his assumption of various authoritative roles: as a novelist, editor, teacher, historian, public intellectual, and social scientist. These various personas construct an image of Du Bois as the quintessential

cosmopolite: educated, cultured, worldly, the narrative voice slides in and out of generic conventions as he serves as a guide to plantation America.

Du Bois grounds his narrative authority in metropolitan epistemological privilege, and even elitism. As a cosmopolitan narrator and participant-observer, he maintains a liminal position—an urban outsider, a racial insider—that allows him to mediate between a predominantly white northern-urban audience and the black plantation south. Combining ethnography with the modern tradition of the flaneur, Du Bois's perambulations are coupled with a masterful creative vision. However, this black flaneur claims objective authority, rather than the typical subjective mastery of the Baudelairian flaneur of metropolitan capitals. In this pre-Malinowski form of fieldwork, Du Bois as ethnographer doesn't disavow the hierarchy implicit in observation; he lives and works with black southerners without going "native." As an educator, scholar, and cosmopolite living in the homes of black southerners, he retains an authoritative distance from the locals that he observes.

Given Du Bois's cosmopolitan narrative voice, it is not surprising that black mobility also serves as a reoccurring motif throughout *Souls*. In particular, Du Bois chronicles his own movements in and out of the south using the word "wander" and "wind" to characterize both his narrative digressions and peripatetic ramblings through the region. Beginning a chapter entitled "Of the Meaning of Progress" that describes his experiences in the region in the later 1880s, the height of plantation romance's popularity, and compares that period to the turn of the century present, Du Bois begins his reminiscences then stops abruptly with a dash "I remember how – But I wander" (38). In the next paragraph, he describes walking through the hills of Tennessee in the summer

looking for a school in need of a teacher and once he finds one, living with local black families. He writes that he “walked on and on [...] until I had wandered beyond the railways, beyond stage lines, to a land of ‘varmints’ and rattlesnakes, where the coming of a stranger was an event, and men lived and died in the shadow of one blue hill” (38). Du Bois returns to this land of “varmints” untouched by modernity ten years later to document the advance of “Progress” (43). Comparing the hopeful past with the bleak present, the narrator meanders through the countryside, pointing out local people and decayed plantations. The narration of his travels draw the reader into the experience through direct address. “But we must hasten our journey” (70) he says abruptly at one point, after a digression on the history of the slave trade meanders into a description of the passing Georgian countryside. In noting that “We rumble south” (70), Du Bois uses present tense to lend a sense of immediacy to these travels. “Wander,” “wind,” “hasten,” “pass on”—these words alternate between a sense of aimlessness and urgency, following the form of Du Bois’s itinerancy and reminiscences. This freedom of mobility contrasts with the immobility of the black southerners Du Bois encounters in his travels.

In revising plantation narrative, Du Bois negotiates a dichotomy of American nationalism and cosmopolitanism central to African American identity. In *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (2005), Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo argues that as early as the start of the nineteenth century, writers of African descent were pressured to define themselves in relation to national or world citizenship. To be a citizen of the nation meant affirming local and national affinities even as the white power structure attempted to deny citizenship and rights to people of African descent. In contrast, to be a citizen of the

world was to be a citizen of the black world, to affirm cosmopolitan affinities and imagine relations with people of African descent in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean—including affinities with Haitian revolutionaries (7). Writers of African descent positioned themselves in relation to national and world citizenship in the context of the continuing conditions of slavery, as well as white attempts to define them as “less than human” (10). While Houston Baker Jr. argues that mobility is essential to the attainment of black modernity, Nwankwo foregrounds the relationship between modernity and cosmopolitanism, as “the definition of oneself through the world beyond one’s own origins” (9). Through this lens, the forced mobility of the Middle Passage constitutes a form of “hegemonic cosmopolitanism” that people of African descent necessarily responded to with new conceptions of world belonging (14).⁶⁷ *Souls* begins with a working through of questions of national and cosmopolitan affinities, and Du Bois elucidates his influential theory of double consciousness in just these terms:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled

⁶⁷ Nwankwo’s study contributes to a growing body of work in cosmopolitanism that shifts theoretical debate from Enlightenment or universal cosmopolitanism to particularized cosmopolitanisms, such as James Clifford’s “Travelling Cultures” and Homi Bhabha’s “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.”

strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (2).

This famous articulation of double consciousness emphasizes the balance between national and supranational modes of attachment. Situating the color line globally, Du Bois describes the doubling of black perspectivalism: the Negro world that spans the plantation Americas and the American world's white power structure that denies African American political rights, social freedoms, economic opportunities, liberty of movement, and cosmopolitan epistemologies. Yet African American epistemologies are derived simultaneously from both worlds—through the lens of white America, as well as the lens of circum-Atlantic and hemispheric blackness. Du Bois argues that people of African descent are not aiming to “Africanize America” nor be “bleach[ed]” by “white Americanism” (3). Rather “the world” needs both American-ness and blackness (3). Du Bois corrects universal cosmopolitan ideals by striving not only to maintain equilibrium between, but also synthesize, the national and the global in defiance of a culture of segregation that would deny both forms of subjectivity to people of African descent. To be a black cosmopolite is to be “both a Negro and an American” (3), to balance worldly and national affinities, to exercise political and social freedoms. These freedoms include cosmopolitan mobility, but unlike the unfettered mobility of the Baudelairean flaneur or American tourist, it is a mobility exercised in the shared histories of the Middle Passage and plantation violence, and therefore far more radical and precious.

The black cosmopolitanism of *The Souls of Black Folk* modifies conceptions that oppose cosmopolitan and national affinities as though the two were mutually exclusive attachments. In contrast, for people of African descent, cosmopolitanism compensated for

national identity or even acted as a means of achieving national identity (Nwankwo 12). By adapting the cosmopolitan narrator and black voice of plantation romance, Du Bois lays claim to a modern urban identity and interregional mobility. While he doesn't aim to enable cosmopolitan epistemologies for all black southerners, Du Bois uses his own cosmopolitanism in the service of racial uplift.

Plantation Horrors in Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death*

Du Bois's "Criteria of Negro Art" aligns the Harlem Renaissance with modernism, declaring "Thus it is the bounden duty to begin this great work of the creation of beauty, of the preservation of beauty, of the realization of beauty, and we must in this work all the methods that men have used before" (102). Unlike metrocolonial models of modernism, this black modernism must explicitly embrace politicization, because "all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists" (103). Because white supremacy is articulated through literary propaganda, so too must racial uplift be articulated through literary propaganda, even as it provides access to aesthetic experience. Du Bois's essay reflects the hope that the insurgent interest in black art and music would translate into what Langston Hughes acerbically called "green pastures of tolerance" (80). While *Souls* subverts racist stereotypes, literary fiction must also revise plantation history. One Harlem writer, Eric Walrond, took issue with Du Bois' literary program. One of the West Indian radicals praised by Domingo in "Gift of the Black Tropics," Walrond was born in Guyana and spent his youth in Barbados and the Panama Canal Zone. Moving to New York in 1918, he wrote for such periodicals as the *Negro World*, *Crisis*, and *Opportunity*. One of his stories from *Tropic Death*, "The Palm Porch,"

appeared in Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925), and Wallace Thurman modeled the character of Cedric Williams on him in *Infants of the Spring* (1932). Situated at the center of the Harlem Renaissance's elite, Walrond's contributions to a black modernism have largely been overlooked. In his essay "Art and Propaganda" (1921), Walrond refutes Du Bois' assertion that African American writers must embrace propaganda, arguing that they must adopt the formal experimentation that won Rene Marin's *Batouala* the Prix Goncourt, "ignoring the rules of rhetoric, the author plunges along at a desperate rate, forgetful of the landmarks of style, form, clarity" (53). The black writer must embrace formal experimentation as a form of retributive violence "When he does take it up, it is not going to be in any half-hearted, wishy washy manner, but straight from the shoulder, slashing, murdering, disemboweling!" (54).⁶⁸

The Caribbean plantation has long generated a range of gothic figures that emerge out of the blending of African and European religion and folklore. In Zora Neale Hurston's ethnographic *Tell My Horse* (1938), Haitian tradition ties zombies to the plantation and the fear of a return to slavery. A bocor transforms the living into "bodies without souls" for revenge, to create thieves, or, more often, to acquire plantation labor (179). Hurston recalls one case in which a bocor awakened a zombie "because somebody required his body as a beast of burden. In his natural state he could never have been hired to work with his hands, so he was made into a Zombie because they wanted his services as a laborer" (182). Reducing proud prosperous blacks to mindless drudgery, zombie narratives re-imagine the horrors of plantation slavery by transforming subjects into objects and reintroducing captive labor. The captive zombie becomes unrecognizable to

⁶⁸ Indeed, he lampoons Charles Chesnutt for being limited to propaganda. "Indeed, Chesnutt, from his loft pedestal, saw the red monster of race prejudice in all its sordid colors and leveled his javelin at it" (63).

its free human family, who “may motor past the plantation where the Zombie who was once dear to them is held captive often and again and its soulless eyes may have fallen upon them without thought or recognition” (181). The figure of the zombie consolidates the fear of a return to slavery, of being “set to toiling ceaselessly in the banana fields, working like a beast, unclothed like a beast, and like a brute crouching in some foul den in the few hours allowed for rest and food” (181). Overworked, dehumanized, subpar shelter: zombism recreates the conditions of slavery through supernatural means. In this way, a person of African descent may be rendered unrecognizable and forced to work “ferociously and tirelessly without consciousness of his surroundings and conditions and without memory of his former state” (183).

Caribbean folklore is not the only discourse to connect the plantation with supernatural forces. The plantation has been associated with gothic literature since the eighteenth century. Early gothic novelists William Beckford and Matthew Gregory Lewis both owned Caribbean plantations.⁶⁹ Fiction like Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher,” Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, and Herbert De Lisser’s *The White Witch of Rosehall* present the plantation as a space of supernatural happenings and gothic mystery. Later, Hollywood films such as *White Zombie* (1932), in which Bela Lugosi uses zombies as workers on his plantation, and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), in which an unfaithful planter’s wife becomes a zombie, used the Caribbean plantation to create suspense and eerie atmosphere, relying on lurid stereotypes of voodoo and racism. Like plantation fiction, gothic literature follows a well established set of conventions that

⁶⁹ Lewis even wrote an account of his experiences in the Caribbean, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* (1834).

For more on these connections between early gothic romance and the plantation, see Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert’s “The Colonial and Postcolonial Gothic: The Caribbean.”

originate with romance and show a preoccupation with medieval motifs—damsels in distress, degenerate aristocrats, haunted castles—and an idealized feudalism that recasts the Middle Ages for modern audiences. Gothic tropes like shadows, ghosts, mystery, and sensation show the limits of Enlightenment scientific and social progress by emphasizing phenomena that lie beyond human control. In New World settings, the gothic lens can have multiple effects. On the one hand, it may reinstitute stereotypes of the Caribbean as a site of both exotic excess and racialized danger. On the other hand, it may provide a more critical perspective that cuts through the idyllic imagery of romance and exposes the seedy underbelly of plantation ideology.

Thomas Nelson Page uses gothic conventions for the former purpose: to contrast the social paradise of the American plantation with the horrors of the racially ambiguous Caribbean plantation. By and large, the six stories in Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia* (1887) co-opt black vernacular to portray the antebellum plantation as an unchanging Eden inhabited by genteel ladies, blushing belles, dashing cavaliers, loyal servants, and paternal planters. In contrast to the comic mishaps and sentimental happenings of these stories, "No Haid Pawn" strikes a different tone. Eschewing dialect, the story assumes gothic conventions. In a neighborhood of otherwise pleasantly benign estates, the title plantation is haunted by the ghosts of its former master and his slaves.

An unnamed narrator describes hearing eerie stories about No Haid Pawn during his childhood from family slaves who give firsthand accounts of "evil spirits, again and again, in the bodily shape of cats, headless dogs, white cows, and other less palpable forms" (164). As a "lad," he returns from boarding school and fearlessly explores the plantation's grounds. Caught in a thunderstorm, he takes refuge in the decrepit big house.

As darkness falls, the ghosts of the plantation rise from their water logged graves. The story ends as the narrator confronts the headless ghost of a knife-wielding West Indian planter and the house burns, its remains sinking into the malodorous swamp. In Page's story, this aberrant plantation embodies all of the horrors of slavery and colonialism, but these misdeeds are contained and anomalous, and romance plantation remains intact.

The story telescopes many ages of plantation development: the period of the house's initial construction in the previous century; the period of its later inhabitation by the West Indian planter, presumably in the wake of the Haitian revolution; the antebellum period when the narrator is caught in the storm; and the postbellum period of its writing and narration. Although *No Haid Pawn* changes ownership throughout this time, the "neighborhood" remains unified and changeless. There are significant differences between this plantation and the other estates in the neighborhood. Although horrible things transpire there, Page presents the plantation as atypical built by a "stranger" in an isolated bend of the river by "a stranger" (166). In its construction, the house violates "the custom of those who were native and to the manner born" (166) and remains inaccessible from its neighbors due to its swampy surroundings and social convention. Its eighteenth-century owners treat their slaves brutally to the disapproval of "certain classes of their neighbors" (168). Although they don't intercede, the "conservative" neighborhood ostracizes these outsider inhabitants.

While Page romanticizes the antebellum as "old times" (173), this peaceful plantation society is upset by the discovery that local abolitionists are operating a stop on the underground railroad and a slave is planning an insurrection, threatening to undermine "the foundations of the whole social fabric" (174). While most slaves are

presented as "of moderate stature, with dull but amiable faces, these childlike slaves are led astray by a recently arrived "Congo desperado" (172). This newcomer is large, dark, and dangerous. Like the West Indian planter, he speaks a "strange dialect" (172). When the insurrection is uncovered, the rebellious slave disappears. It is within this context of social unrest that the supernatural remainders of the plantation past erupt.

The story follows the familiar conventions of the Victorian ghost story. The West Indian planter who inherits the strange property speaks in a French patois, and is "gigantic stature and superhuman strength, and possessed appetites and vices in proportion to his size" (169). This otherworldly outsider has many licentious habits and sadistic vices too disturbing to enumerate. "A brutal temper, inflamed by unbridled passions, after a long period of license and debauchery came to a climax in a final orgy of ferocity and fury" when he throws a "hacked and headless corpse" out a second story window (169). After a trial in which the narrator's father represent him, the planter is hanged on a gallows built near the big house and buried on the estate near the slave graveyard.

No Haid Pawn has been uninhabited for 40 years when the narrator returns and goes hunting on the property. As in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," the big house embodies a deathly aesthetic with its "greenish lurid atmosphere," windows like empty eye sockets, and facade the color of "the face of a corpse" (177). The big house symbolizes death. Seeking refuge therein the house, the narrator imagines "the awful traditions of the place" (181). As the storm has flooded the pond and swamps, he begins to hear weird noises and footsteps. Finally "a distant call or halloo" (183) startles him, and he looks out the window to see "the dead rowing in their coffins" in the flooded yard,

just as in the slave stories. The West Indian rises from his grave uttering “a string of oaths, part English and part Creole French” (185), and mounts the stairs to the second floor of the house, “Directly in front of me, clutching in his upraised hand a long, keen, glittering knife, on whose blade a ball of fire seemed to play, and stretched at his feet lay, ghastly and bloody, a black and headless trunk” (185). Terrified, the narrator trips and falls prostrate like the body of the planter's headless victim. The last paragraph switches from first to second person to briefly describe the house burning, presumably struck by lightning, its remnants disappearing into the swamp, just as the house of Usher slides into a luminous tarn.

While Poe’s story focuses on the incestuous decadence of the southern pseudo-aristocracy, Page attributes plantation horrors to foreign elements—the Congolese slave and the West Indian planter—who challenge an otherwise idyllic American institution. The narrator enters the property with an exploratory attitude, discovering “an unknown land” of “impenetrable jungle or a mire apparently bottomless” (175-6). Jennifer Rae Greeson argues that “To the extent that the Southern states under Reconstruction appeared as ‘conquered provinces,’ they constituted a sort of domestic Africa for the United States, a site upon which the nation proved its civilizing might to be the equal of Europe” (117). In Page’s story, a southerner undertakes the civilizing mission in a “domestic Africa” that also houses the menace of the Haitian revolution. If this bad planter and plantation are not quite vanquished, the foreign threaten is at least contained. The aberrant slave and planter literally become inhuman, decapitated spirits as the sadistic planter relives his heinous crime again and again. As the house burns into the

swamp, this alien presence is neutralized, no longer a threat to the static social field of the romantic plantation.

Eric Walrond's "The Vampire Bat" focuses on another otherworldly figure drawn from Caribbean folklore that intimately relates to the plantation, the duppy. Despite his rejection of literary propaganda, the stories in his collection *Tropic Death* (1926) candidly examine race prejudice and black poverty in the West Indies, representing the Caribbean as violent, scorching, impoverished, and famished. The ten short stories that make up the collection portray a diverse cross section of Caribbean culture: starving peasants, American marines, Spanish women, South American sailors, and others. But "The Vampire Bat" stands out from these stores in that it draws on gothic conventions to depict the decline of the plantation and examine white fears of racial otherness. In the story, a young planter, Bellon Prout, returns to Barbados after the Boer war. On his journey home, he stops to rest at the cottage of Mother Cragwell, where a local woman relates an unnerving encounter with a mysterious man on the highway. Ignoring warnings of supernatural danger, Prout continues on his journey and finds a black baby sleeping in the road, reluctantly taking it home. The next morning he is found dead, presumably a victim of a vampire bat. While Hurston documents black fears of slavery's continuation in new forms, Walrond uses gothic conventions to expose white fears of the postslavery loss of plantation hegemony ("civilization").

Although written in the 1920s, the story looks back two decades to the aftermath of the Boer War (1899-1902), a period when American corporations sought to appropriate West Indian islands in the wake of the Spanish-American war. Not coincidentally, this is approximately the same period in which *Dracula* (1897) was written.

While *Dracula* shows the gothic effects of reverse colonization at the core, Walrond shows the imperial power structure under attack at the periphery by similarly racialized, supernatural forces. Under these familiar romantic conventions, the “jaunty” buckra vanquishes colonial rabble abroad (144). Going “forth at the King’s trumpet call to buck the Boer’s hairy anger” in South Africa, Prout creates “ghosts” of colonial insurgents. Seeing himself as a conquering male hero on his heroic old mare” (146), he embarks on a journey home that crosses the island. This opening passage seems to introduce an adventure tale of imperial triumph. A “solid pillar of the Crown,” Prout staunchly identifies with metrocolonial values. Upon his return, he presumably will turn his imperial skills towards socioeconomic rejuvenation in Barbados, where the plantation elite is dwindling.

A narrative shift from imperial triumph to gothic imagery signals the failure of romantic conventions to explain the plantation’s decline. The story’s island setting soon undercuts the romantic tone of the story’s opening. Arriving in Barbados, Prout finds an island like “a garden of lustrous desolation” (145). Decaying plantations litter the landscape of this stormy and desiccated Eden, their days of productivity and prosperity long past. On his isolated journey home is 16 miles across the island, a bright moon illuminates a landscape emptied of humans, just cane fields and riotous vegetation. The Bellon family’s only remaining plantation, Mount Tabor, began decaying the week that he left for the war when a hurricane struck the island; it has stood unproductive for years. The landscape of Barbados, so bucolic and easily conquered through Prout’s romantic lens, becomes uncanny and dangerous. The island’s unstable ecology mirrors its volatile political landscape. Colonial ideology holds that a well-managed plantation produces an

orderly ecology and social hierarchy. In the past, rebellions erupted during the absences of the planter elite; given Prout's long absence, social unrest seems imminent. On one estate, the black workers, "a stark, neurotic lot [...] burned and pilfered the old sugar mill, while the buckras were confabbing on the seashore of Hastings" (146). Because the "neurotic" rebellion contradicts the orderly hierarchy of the meta-plantation that unpins his Eurocentric worldview, Prout dismisses the revolt as simply irrational. Following the imperial logic of romance, he places the causes of the revolt with the senselessness of the workers, not the inequities of the malingering plantation system. Prout vanquishes Boer insurgents abroad, but at home he proves vulnerable to radical otherness that can no longer be contained by the crumbling social controls of the meta-plantation.

Both prior to and after universal emancipation, the plantocracy strictly controlled the mobility of the black population, but as the planters lose their hold, the roads hold dangers for white men. However, this danger is not a worker's revolt, as Prout assumes, but rather a supernatural uprising that he cannot comprehend. Prout grossly misinterprets these dangers, because he interprets the island's social dynamics through the lens of romance. Stopping at Mother Cragwell's bakery for food and rest, he misinterprets her solicitousness as a simple fulfillment of her socially-ordained role. This stereotyping allows him to easily dismiss her warnings as merely "racial concern" (148), the fulfillment of her subordinate, nurturing role as an overly concerned mammy. Consequently, he responds to her warnings with witticisms "can't a law-abiding colonist walk the King's Highway after dark?" (147). She responds "De King's highways [...] wha' dey care 'bout any King?" (150). Mother Cragwell's rejoinder suggests that European rule doesn't extend to the island's supernatural phenomena. Despite his

supposed adherence to reason, Prout fails to recognize the changes that have taken place during his absence, because he adheres to a romantic-imperial perspective with its attendant racism. Rejecting local black superstitions, Prout succumbs to racial stereotypes that cloud his judgment. However much he lays claim to objectivity, his rationalism is actually couched in the (irrational) inequities of romantic hierarchies.

Prout's racist incredulity renders him vulnerable to supernatural machinations, as his flippant comments prove prescient. When a local woman bursts into the bakery, crying "Oh, de man in de canes, de man in de canes—" (150), he physically recoils in disgust of not her superstition, but her skin tone, thinking "God, she's black!" (150). Ignoring her genuine panic, he sees her encounter as a mere "tale," the peasants' penchant for storytelling (154). She relates how a duppy, "one o' de mans in de canes come back fo' haunt do po' neygah" followed her down the road without her knowledge (151) Then "somebody from behind put two long greasy arms roun' my neck, like he wan' fo' hug me!" (153). The supernatural past haunts the peasants as well, but Mother Cragwell and her guest are less vulnerable to supernatural forces because they approach these forces with cautious respect and know how to fight back. She strikes the duppy and looks him in the eye; he runs away throwing stones and cursing her. The figure of the duppy derives from the Ashanti belief system pervasive throughout the Caribbean. Spirits without bodies, duppies may corporealize and change forms; they eat, drink, and throw stones. One of the Jamaican men that Hurston interviews explains that the duppy gives "power to these parts": "when the duppy leaves the body, it no longer has anything to restrain it and it will do terrible things" (44). As Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson explain, duppies may be merely a nuisance or something more sinister; they often return

to their former homes, plague their families, or seek retribution. They appear as animals or figures from the plantation, such as the “Chinese or Coolie ghost” or the “ghost with a rope around its neck.”⁷⁰ Walrond’s duppy inhabits the cane fields, a dead plantation laborer. He “haunt de po’ neygah” (151), and seems to have no way to direct his revenge. His long greasy arms serve as a metonym for his body, indistinct in the darkness.

Initially patronizing and flippant, Prout’s condescension soon gives way to wariness out on the dark highway. Shaken enough to change his route, he avoids a shortcut past one of the island’s many “dismantled” estates (154). This road leads to a gully with “a rocky cave harboring wild dogs and lame mules, tusky boars and other, mystic finds” (155). Prout ironically correlates natural phenomena like wild animals with “mystic” phenomena, demonstrating his disregard for supernatural beliefs. In contrast to these quotidian dangers, the under-classes rise up from the plantation against their former masters in a supernatural revolt. Suddenly, “balls of crimson plagued the sky!” (155). Unable to rationally dismiss this phenomena, Prout is haunted by the sexual imagery of women under the influence of voodoo emerging at night to wreck their revenge. “Fire hags at night—St. Lucia sluts, *obeah*-ridden, shedding their skins and waltzing forth at night as sheep and goats, on errands of fiery vengeance” (155). In the historical context of slave concubinage, the image of the firehag emerging out of the sugarcane fields is manifestation of voracious black female sexuality as violent as any planter’s. With the island in chaos, the planter struggles to overcome his growing fear “surely the niggers can’t be right.” (155). He dismisses empirical evidence, attributing the fires to the subterfuge of “some illiterate field hand” (156), and dismisses supernatural explanations

⁷⁰ See Moore and Johnson’s discussion of duppies in Jamaican culture pp. 36-42.

in favor of European rationalism, deciding that local ruffians must be burning someone's cane field. Imperial logic—"his buckra consciousness" (156)—interprets these events as a racially inflected class war, the jealousy of the laboring class undermining plantation productivity: the same conquering perspective that rationalized the Boer War abroad, now rationalizes domestic warfare.

Walrond uses dashes to connect Prout's increasingly disjointed thoughts and deteriorating rationality. His anxiety mounting, Prout's rationalism begins to falter, "His head went swirling—the temptation to relapse conquered—barbaric *obeah* images filled his buckra consciousness. Sugar canes burning—men in the canes—fire hags—nigger corpses—" (156).. He recalls a story about a corpse "pell-mell before him" (156). He becomes disoriented and fears a "relapse" into local superstitions, after being brought out of it by his war time experiences.

When the vampire bat appears in the form of "a little Negro baby" asleep in the road, he recoils from it just as he recoiled from the local woman at Mother Cragwell's cabin (158). Nonetheless, he brings the child to an abandoned overseer's cabin at Mount Tabor. He attributes this event to banal causes "lurking evils, the desertion—often murder of illegitimate Negro babies" (158), and pillories the negligence of the local black community, without consideration of how the colonial plantation system shaped those social relations. Prout places blame with black morality—those animalistic peasants lacking in parental instincts—familiar territory that allows him to maintain his belief in his own racial superiority and embrace his role as a paternalistic planter who controls the natural negligence of local blacks.

The story codes the fire hags, the duppies, the Negro corpse, and even the baby as radically and racially other, as Walrond shows European rationalism thinly veils a latent racism. The child appears innocently enough, aside from an Edenic “diaper of green leaves it was nude” with “soft, bronze skin” (158). The duppy in the road tries to wrap his arms around the local woman, and so too does the baby clutch Prout, “the Negro waif’s bird-like claws dug deeper into the buckra’s shirt bosom” (158). The word “bosom” indicates nurturing and motherhood. In opposition to his previous masculine conquests, Prout becomes feminized. “Angry at the physical proximity of it” (159), his disgust with the infant is an aversion to blackness itself, even in its most innocent form. His fear of the supernatural is a fear of uncontrolled blackness as the weakened plantation can no longer exert control.

Walrond recounts Prout’s thoughts as his rationality breaks down: “Rapacious Negro ghosts—‘men in the canes’—ha! ha! Preying upon the fears of the uncivilized blacks. Fire Hags! St. Lucia mulatto sluts—changing their skins—turning to goats—sheep—prowling—going forth—And weirdly interchangeable—Black Negro babes and vampire bats!” (159). Walrond presents the fragmentation of the planter’s increasingly hysterical thoughts as rationalism fails to account for the night’s experiences. Through free association, Prout links the baby with vampire bats and tries to relegate superstition to “uncivilized blacks.” Correctly observing that the ability to change form hides the ever present danger of insurrection, he rejects these thoughts as illogical. Prout’s adherence to rationalism fails to protect him and cannot account for this colonial situation.

Prout’s fear of the unknown, his collapsing of black humanity and supernatural forces, his reduction of black subjects to barely governable animals, are all

proved ironically valid. Prout's body is found the next morning with "a perforation pecked in its forehead" (160). Drained of his blood by a black vampire, he becomes otherworldly and preternaturally Other—"utterly white and bloodless" (160). Just as the estate's night hands "peck" at their greasy skillets in the fields, so too does the bird-like infant peck the sleeping Prout overtaking the heroic planter in a predatory embrace. The hole in his head symbolizes the inadequacy of rational perspectives and the incommensurability of European and Afro-Caribbean frameworks. While gothic conventions convey a modern fear of the unknown, Walrond uses the supernatural to ridicule white fears of losing power and being vulnerable to the black masses that they once controlled. If blacks are considered animalistic, used like beasts by an ineluctable plantation economy, then in "The Vampire Bat" they literally become irrepressibly inhuman, otherworldly, and vengeful. As heir, Prout inherits the legacies of his family's plantation past and colonial undertakings, but proves ill equipped to deal with the shifting ghosts of the plantation. In the story, the insolvent remains of plantation productivity, the cane fields, contain a multitude of dangers for the land-owning class and the big house fails to provide refuge from the creatures of the plantation past. Prout's death further erodes the languishing plantation power structure. In contrast to plantation romance's easily conquered Eden, Walrond uses the gothic to chronicle a changing plantation economy and foretell black empowerment. Gothic literature's characteristic return of the repressed is the return of the implacable victims of plantation history. While white planters preyed upon black laborers, now the imperial power dynamic is reversed. In South Africa, the planter makes ghosts of Boer insurgents through imperial conquest, but in Barbados, ghosts vanquish Prout. As the planter class shrinks, the black population

vigorously grows. In contrast to images of plantation decay, Prout passes a “mulatto cane cutter, a poxy progenitor of twenty-one husky mule-driving sons, stood under the raised portcullis” (145). Compiled along with stories of marine brutality and starving black children eating dirt, this supernatural tale carries an ominous warning of black retribution.

Reforming Romance in Arna Bontemps’ *Drums at Dusk*

As a child, Arna Bontemps “wondered why slaves never fought for freedom” (qtd. Jones 93), an impression of docile submission likely derived from the popular imagery of plantation romance. Later, he wrote three novels on slavery that refute this docile stereotype: *Black Thunder*, *Drums at Dusk*, and *Chariot in the Sky*. In his first historical novel, *Black Thunder* (1936), Bontemps portrayed the failed Gabriel’s Rebellion that took place in Richmond in 1800. *Drums at Dusk* (1939), his next novel, adapts the usually conservative, often white supremacist genre of romance to depict the overthrow of the plantation society that it typically supports. The novel is set in Saint Domingue in 1791, two years since the fall of the Bastille. The island has already experienced political and social upheaval as tensions build among the island’s heavily segregated populace: ten thousand members of the white elite, thirty thousand lower-class whites, forty thousand mulattos, and half a million slaves. Following sympathetic whites as they flee roving gangs of insurgent slaves during the first outburst of the Haitian revolution, Bontemps presents a cross section of plantation society: a Paris trained mulatto seamstress, a hardscrabble poor white gardener, a dissolute city dweller, a cold-hearted slave trader, a sadistic French aristocrat, a voodoo priest, and several loyal slaves, including Toussaint L’Ouverture. The novel’s political moderation counters sensational

images and stories about Haiti prevalent during U.S. occupation.⁷¹ Like Liam O’Flaherty, Bontemps reforms, rather than revolutionizes, romance by adapting its generic conventions to make black liberation more palatable for white middle-class audiences. In Walrond supernatural sources menace the plantocracy, but in *Drums* the danger lies with the sadistic vices of the planter elite and the ungovernable rage of revolting slaves.

In contrast to plantation romance’s portrayal of colonized land bending easily to white cultivation, Bontemps portrays Haiti as a wanton paradise,” a degenerate plantation culture (8). Breda plantation sits along a highway lined with trees like “giant skeletons” (6) that is walked only by “ghosts” (1). Horse hoofs on the road echo “like a chorus of merry witches” (49). The island’s gothic character originates with plantation slavery. In one scene, twenty-four recently arrived African slaves hang themselves along the ghostly highway, “Before the men stretched a line of swinging corpses, one to a tree. Ghastly, shocking, terrible, they seemed to have organized a sort of demonstration in protest” (86). Because C.L.R. James’s *Black Jacobins* served as the primary source for his novel, one might expect Bontemps to use gothic imagery to portray white violence against slaves. Indeed, published just the year before, James’s history of the Haitian revolution details plantation violence to revise portraits of slavery as a benign institution. *Black Jacobins* explicitly addresses the distortions of plantation narratives, noting how in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “professional whitewashers” and their allies described Haiti with “scenes of idyllic beauty” in order to detract from the vicious realities of slavery (14).

⁷¹ In their introduction to Bontemps’ novel, Bibler and Adams place it within the context of literary and film texts about Haiti that included *White Zombie*, as well as Eugene O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones* (1920), John Vandercook’s *Black Majesty* (1928), William Seabrook’s *The Magic Island* (1929) and John Houston Craige’s *Cannibal Cousins* (1934), Langston Hughes’ *The Emperor of Haiti*, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Tell My Horse*, Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World*, and Derek Walcott’s *Henri Christophe* (1950).

These commentators presented “a plantation on which there were no prisons, no dungeons, no punishment to speak of” (14). Plantation romance later consolidated and mystified the imagery of these initial narratives. Yet, *Drums*, the first African American novel on the Haitian Revolution, contains surprisingly few instances of white brutality.

Two characters, the slave trader Captain Frounier and the degenerate aristocrat Count Armand de Sacy represent the cruelties of slavery. Ninety-year-old Captain Frounier laughingly describes the horrors of the Middle Passage. Later, when he visits one of his fetid ships, the narrative begins as he disembarks and the ship’s inhumane interior is only briefly described by de Sacy’s repulsed ejaculations. For his part, the count comes to Breda every ten years to dispose of his latest mistress. On this, his third trip, he is also fleeing the Terror of the French Revolution. Upon his arrival, de Sacy declares that five sick slaves are merely “pining” and prescribes an “emetic,” spitting in their mouths (27). As disturbing as this is, de Sacy’s “emetic” pales in comparison to James’ graphic accounts of the plantation’s routine horrors. The count humiliates the slaves, but doesn’t try to physically hurt them until after he is threatened by insurgent slaves. As Toussaint calmly observes, “That spit—why, that only hurt your pride” (79). Indeed, despite its gothic surroundings, Breda estate is otherwise the ideal plantation: bucolic, picturesque, opulent, orderly, and, most importantly, productive. Aside from the count’s humiliating prescription, the slaves there receive such “considerate treatment” that a local saying goes “as lucky as a Breda slave” (78). Bontemps limits white violence against blacks in order to avoid offending the novel’s intended white audience.

Bontemps’ use of romance gives the novel a profound political ambivalence and he is unable to break down the racist stereotypes of slavery that the genre usually

supports. Although the leaders of the revolution—Toussaint, Boukum, Baissou—appear in the novel, black characters remain peripheral to the plot. At the novel’s start, “prancing” slaves unload de Sacy’s coach” (12), while the overseer M. de Libertas whistles in his bath and “three grinning blacks in loin clothes doused and splashed and mauled him gleefully” (14). The faithful retainer Mars barks orders, as other slaves half-run, half-walk with a “sort of hippity-hop” (94). Even Toussaint moves “with almost simian nimbleness” (160). While avoiding plantation stereotypes like Uncle Tom and the mammy, Bontemps uses the familiar rhetoric of romance to portray Breda slaves as friendly, harmless animals. In contrast to these nonthreatening stereotypes, the leaders of the insurrection are intimidating—bigger, darker, masculine, and correspondingly, ethically suspect. A “menacing black” (53), Boukman tells Diron, “Slavery has made us stupid—like oxen” (54). The degrading conditions of plantation slavery has generated recklessness and irresponsibility. Bibler and Adams note that “As Bontemps partially rationalizes the violence of the revolution, both this passage and the earlier, unflattering descriptions of Boukman suggest that he also saw the rebels and their excesses as more or less distasteful” (xxviii). While he unwaveringly supports civil rights, for Bontemps, the ends of liberation do not justify violent means.

The novel’s protagonist, Diron Desautels, also embodies the political ambivalence of reforming romance. Recently returned from France where he absorbed the democratic ideals of the French revolution and joined the abolitionist society *Les Amis des Noirs* (the Friends of the Blacks), Diron demonstrates an inability to act on his ideals. An acolyte of abolitionist writers Abbe Gregoire and Abbe Raynal, he is drawn to the revolution by “two or three ringing, eloquent phrases” from the Declaration of the Rights of Man that

strike him like “lyric poetry” (5). Although he uses Enlightenment rhetoric privileging rationality, Diron’s ideals emerge from emotional and aesthetic attractions: the heady rhetoric of cosmopolitan universalism and shared humanity. Diron claims an aversion to aristocracy, but enjoys the hospitality and privileges of the planter class. Although, he solemnly tells his uncle “There’ll be a time to dance when there’s freedom in Saint Domingue” (40), Diron and other members of *Les Amis de Noirs* leisurely cast aside the concerns of slavery and revolution to enjoy an afternoon of cockfighting at Breda, where they are served by slaves and entertained by aristocrats, “political matters were not in their minds, unless it could be said that the business of reducing the island’s rum reserves was political” (94). Just as he is attracted to “the glamour of the revolution” (87), Diron seems to be enticed by plantation society’s sensual charms, the bounty and leisure of the plantation.

Like *Gone with the Wind*’s Ashley Wilkes, Diron fails to live up to his own high-minded ideals and demonstrates a profound racial ambivalence. On the one occasion when he interacts with slaves on equal terms, Diron finds them a “fairly repulsive bunch” (54). He is particularly disgusted by Boukman, the “ugliest, the bluntest, the most unpleasant creature he had ever seen” (54). Diron hopes that the cosmopolitan values of the revolution will “make even a cutthroat and a slave beautiful” (55), and thinks “the rabble who stormed the Bastille were mostly a tough and sinister lot. It took their kind to do the dirty jobs” (55). Intellectually, Diron recognizes a social hierarchy that subordinates both French peasants and Haitian slaves, and, because his ideals are derived in no small part from the eloquence of revolutionary rhetoric, he believes in the elevating potential of liberation. Since he romanticizes the beauty of the revolution, he’s surprised

to witness its terrible violence over the course of the novel. Motivated by “*liberte, egalite at fraternite*” (53), Diron doesn’t actually act on these revolutionary ideals—he always has an excuse that prevents him from fighting.

The party scene at Breda is strongly reminiscent of *Gone with the Wind*. Belles in rainbow dresses crowd the veranda and stairs, gentlemen gather to smoke cigars and talk politics, and fifteen-year-old Celeste Juvet, wearing a low-cut green dress with billowing hoops and morocco slippers, sits under a tree entertaining a gaggle of suitors (96). Part of the island’s hardworking white peasant class, Celeste and her aged grandmother own a small plot of land and cultivate exotic plants at Breda. Her grandmother hopes that she’ll marry a wealthy man, despite the ethical ramifications, “A planter. A nobleman in exile. I don’t know. Somebody grand. Perhaps someone with a good business. A tavern, slave pens, a bordel—I don’t know” (75). Celeste rejects the trappings of aristocracy but allows Mme. de Libertas to groom her to become a “belle” and begin assimilation into the desiccated planter class (69). As a child, she has black slave playmates “She went to bed with dirty feet, tied her braids with rags, made playmates with the black youngsters in the slave quarters, became as brown as a savage in the tropical sun” (71). Too innocently feminine and unworldly to be politicized, she has a rapport with slaves that Diron never could, engaging with them on equal terms.

The revolution dramatically breaks out during dinner, as the voodoo priest Baissou, attending as a waiter, springs up onto the table shouting “*Vive la liberte*” and crashes through the window (123). Despite his declaration of love, Diron leaves Celeste behind to fend for herself in order to protect her pro-slavery rival, the “hot blooded Creole beauty” Paulette Viard. Fleeing to Le Cap, they come upon a group of planters

working their way to the safety of Le Cap. To his horror, when insurgent slaves attack, Diron instinctually returns fire, “He, the Friend of the Blacks, had fired along with the others” (157). At this moment, Diron acknowledges that his mixed allegiances are counter-revolutionary and vows to give the slaves his full support. So as not to “become involved with a company of people who represented precisely the things for which he did not stand” (158), he leaves the planters, including his uncle, to fend for themselves along the road to the capital. However, the newfound resolve brought about by his epiphany disintegrates as he learns that Celeste escaped from insurgents and became lost on the way to Le Cap. He wants to join the revolt, but he fears that insurgents have harmed Celeste. Supporting emancipation, he cannot fight alongside them as brothers and equals. For Diron, Celeste’s endangerment throws “all loyalties, all convictions into a state of chaos” (184). Under romantic conventions, his shifting convictions point not to moral weakness, but rather a privileging of the novel’s central love story. Michael Bibler and Jessica Adams argue that “Diron is the novel’s heroic central character, but Bontemps does not allow him to become a hero of the revolution” (xxv). In this reading, Bontemps chooses his ambivalent hero in order to foreground black agency. And yet, as his relapse into stereotype shows, Bontemps seems to share Diron’s ambivalence towards black violence.

Although Diron fears rebelling slaves have attacked Celeste, it is de Sacy’s insatiable appetites that are unleashed by the revolt. After a hardy slave girl fends him off, de Sacy attacks Celeste. In this dramatic overturning of romantic convention, the planter rapes the belle. However brutal historical planters may have been, romance requires that everyone remain in their place and fulfill clearly defined roles. By

portraying the sexual licentiousness of the planter—the rightful patriarch of plantation culture—Bontemps undermines one of the key tenets and images of romance: the paternalism of the benevolent planter. Furthermore, in contrast to stereotypes of black rapists lusting for white women, Bontemps presents sexual violence wrought by a white man. In raping Celeste, de Sacy enacts a figurative incestuous violence to plantation hierarchies. In this way, the novel demythologizes plantation social relations, showing how the plantation structure indulges and exacerbates the vices of the planter patriarch. Here, the sexual depravity of the aristocracy helps topple the strict social hierarchy implemented by the plantation allowing for new black leadership to take its place.

Despite vows of white support, the slaves don't really need Diron. They are prepared to actualize revolutionary ideals through violent means. With a “mad element” in command (192), bands of slaves rove the countryside, inflicting “cruelty they had learned from their masters” (205). In an earlier scene, de Sacy told the captain that the best way to deal with an errant slave is to “burn a little powder in their hindquarters,” a punishment taken nearly verbatim from the descriptions of plantation horrors in *Black Jacobins* (41).⁷² At the novel's end, insurgent slaves recognize him and inflict this punishment on de Sacy. Bibler argues that in sodomizing de Sacy, insurgent slaves “simply flip the hierarchies of the old society instead of enacting the antihierarchical, egalitarian homo-ness that is the putative goal of the revolution—at least as Diron imagines it” (228). The novel downplays white violence and graphically renders black violence which is then overcome by the calm guidance of the fatherly Toussaint. If the novel's white protagonist took up arms against an unjust white supremacist system, then

⁷² James writes “The blowing up of a slave had its own name—‘to burn a little powder in the arse of a nigger’: obviously this was no freak but a recognized practice” (13).

Bontemps' intended readers may reject his cause as radical abolitionism. Therefore, black characters commit much of the violence in the novel, both just and unjust. The insurgents provide a suspenseful plot and atmosphere while also dispatching the white antagonists de Sacy, the captain, and Paulette.

Although the meta-plantation (and plantation romance) requires rigidly defined roles, many characters are not legitimate members of plantation society. The Count Armand de Sacy assumes the pose of planter master during his infrequent visits, but his cousin owns Breda and its slaves. The novel's eager cavalier, Diron, comes from the wealthy white class, but his father is a botany scholar, not a member of the planter elite. Although innocent and sexually available, the belle Celeste comes from the island's working white poor. This indeterminacy allows for substitutions to the plantation hierarchy. Celeste and Diron are not aristocrats or even pseudo aristocrats; their relationship blends poor and wealthy backgrounds. Through them, Bontemps presents a new bourgeois marriage as the basis for the future. Similarly, the novel substitutes white planters with a black leader for white without disturbing the deeply entrenched meta-plantation. In *Drums*, radical political elements—be they sadistic aristocrats or revolting slaves—inevitably give way to a wholesome capitalist bourgeoisie. A bookish “doctor”, Toussaint becomes a bourgeois hero-planter And a moderating influence on revolutionary violence. He waits to join the revolt until he helps M. and Mme. de Libertas escape from the “lustful pack” as a demonstration of gratitude for all their years of kindness towards Breda slaves. With de Sacy gone, he begins giving orders at Breda, “Now, the whole estate was his to command,” and becomes “master” of the plantation as a step towards becoming master of the revolution (194). Following the principle of the meta-plantation,

Bontemps simply changes the figurehead at the top of the hierarchy. Although a slave assumes control of the modes of production, he continues business as usual, “Toussaint seemed definitely eager to keep things going at Breda, to keep the slaves as busy as they had been when M. de Libertas was there” (197). The plantation stays solvent, a smoothly running contributor to international commerce: capitalist, modern, reformed. This continuity between de Libertas’s management and Toussaint’s points to his ability to create a stable new Haitian society, as an efficiently run plantation leads to an orderly social structure.

Drums at Dusk suggests the difficulties of revising romantic conventions for liberal means. The novel’s end demonstrates a romantic ambivalence as the failed hero and his sexually- tainted bride enter a new plantation society, just as Haiti’s slaveholding past comes to a violent end. Like many romances, *Drums* concludes with an implied marriage and the generation of a new planter family. The promise of a new beginning is undermined, however, not only by Diron’s moral failures and Celeste’s trauma, but by the couple’s escape to New Orleans. Although the U.S. was founded on similar revolutionary-democratic principles as those violently transforming Haiti, their destination is another slaveholding plantation culture. Nonetheless, Bontemps novel is important for its excavation of the Haitian Revolution. Less experimental than Du Bois and Walrond, Bontemps takes a more moderate position, as he tries to reach a wider audience with his revision of plantation history. Yet, white stereotypes of slave brutality largely turn out to be well founded, with a remarkably different effect from Walrond’s story. Bontemps’ inability to fully exorcise the racism of romance points not simply to a failure of imagination, but rather to the continuing power of the plantation mythos in the

early twentieth century. While Du Bois, Walrond, and Bontemps respond in different ways to these stereotypes, all present a revisionary plantation founded on disciplining the black body. In so doing, they paved the way for later writers of African descent like Toni Morrison, Michelle Cliff, and Ishmael Reed who, in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, were able to more radically document the physical horrors of plantation slavery.

Chapter Five
Transplantations: Cosmopolitan Perspectives and Circum-Caribbean Fiction

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. – Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

No longer conceivable as the prerogative of the West, cosmopolitanisms manifest themselves in any instance of sustained intercultural contact and exchange. –Amanda Anderson “The Divided Legacies of Modernity”⁷³

“I gwine tell you ‘bout de English,” begins Una Marson’s “Quashie Comes To London” (1937). In this poem-letter, “Quashie” gives straight talk on the metropole to his friends and family back home in the Caribbean. He describes the police (“nice as can be”), white girls (heavily clothed, but friendly), shows (“something gran”), orchestras (“really gran”), and jazz (“gets in me bones”). He notes a growing West Indian population in the city and speaks positively of Londoners’ appreciation of black art and culture. Although he initially revels in the sights and sounds of the metropole, the incessant stimulus eventually makes him long for the comforts of home—the music, warmth, and food of Jamaica. He speaks tearfully of “some tune date takes me home/ In sweet an soulful tone,” and bemoans England’s characteristic coldness, noting that, even in spring, the crowds of people flooding the city’s parks wear thick coats. He asks a waitress in a Strand restaurant to bring him “Some ripe breadfruit,/ Some fresh ackee and saltfish too/ An’ dumplins hot to suit,” and laughs ruefully when instead she serves him “de dainty ting” that “look like pigeon feed!” As much as he enjoys the visual and auditory spectacles of the modern city—particularly the theater, vaudeville, and concerts—the thrills of cosmopolitan perspectives are no match for the familiar sensual pleasures of home. Marson’s poem demonstrates the ambivalence of colonial subjects

⁷³ See Marx pp. 223 and Anderson page 273.

within the metropole. Like Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners*, "Quashie Comes To London" presents the enchantment of the modern city for West Indian immigrants, but juxtaposes these delights with a diminishing sense of *Gemeinschaft* that cannot be satiated by British metropolitan culture.

Within the plantation complex, cosmopolitanism is often associated with British imperialism. In Ireland, before the Act of Union, transnational mobility and imagined worldliness were primarily the prerogative of Anglo-Irish absentee landlords who identified with the English aristocracy; these early modern cosmopolites spent much of their time working and playing in London. In the New World, plantocratic cosmopolitan perspectives drew on the privileges of imperialism: planter families vacationed in Saratoga and Havana, sold their sugar and cotton in New York and Liverpool, bought Irish linen and French novels, and married bankrupt British aristocrats. Despite the plantation's immense transatlantic reach, planter ideology insisted upon the plantation's parochialism: this image of the plantation as a static pre-modern site relied upon the strictly regulated mobility of plantation laborers, whose construction as "natives" naturalized their transplantation. Plantation modernism reflects the global flows of capital, commodities, and labor that intrinsically link the plantation complex to metropolitan centers. Writers as diverse as Sam Selvon, Una Marson, Jean Rhys, Claude McKay, and William Faulkner illustrate the fraught cosmopolitan social fields that arise within plantation modernity by fictionally entering into the experiential realm of intercultural experience. However disparate their respective narrative styles, these writers draw attention to the cosmopolitical negotiations that attend all forms of transnational mobility for colonial subjects. Despite its elite associations, modernism foregrounds the

cosmopolitan perspectives of the plantation complex's under-classes: its dispossessed belles, bankrupt planters, escaped slaves, and hardworking peasants, those most often affected by imperial expansion. For them, intercultural contact often throws race and gender norms into sharp relief, providing a critical lens for reinterpreting both the plantation and the world. The plantation's hierarchies—its rigid policing of racial boundaries and gender roles—inflect the cosmopolitan experiences of all of its inhabitants. Because the plantation played a formative role in West Indian history and culture, Caribbean literature uniquely documents the cosmopolitical ties that bind the plantation complex to imperial metropolises.

Cosmopolitanisms typically arise at moments of historical crisis, as Amanda Anderson notes, “when the world has suddenly seemed to expand in inassimilable ways” (272). The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was one of these times, as globalization theorists argue.⁷⁴ The global crises of World War I and World War II followed this expansion of technological, communicative, transportation, and economic networks. At the same time, the postslavery crisis within the plantation complex both allowed for and compelled subaltern peoples to experience their own cosmopolitanisms. Displaced from their native countries, Caribbean peoples sought economic opportunities and worldly experience in distant metropolises. Always attuned to the individual's experience within modern society, non-metropolitan forms of modernism often draw attention to the ethics of transnational encounter, and in the process, emphasize the experiences of underprivileged travelers.

⁷⁴ See David Held and Anthony McGrew, as well as Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson.

Despite the association of cosmopolitan perspectives with experiences of deracination and alienation, colonial subjects are not merely victims of metropolitan culture's imperializing gaze; many construct cosmopolitanism for their own ends. Modernist literature, with its focus on practice, rather than idealized pronouncements, provides case studies for these compelled cosmopolitanisms—that is, cosmopolitan perspectives that arise from unprivileged but no less worldly experiences.⁷⁵ In this chapter, I examine early twentieth-century fiction by circum-Caribbean writers that explores the relations between the plantation and the metropole. I begin by surveying the resurgence of cosmopolitan theory in the last fifteen years in order to elucidate the complex ties between imperialism and transnational encounter. The discussion that follows straddles theories of the plantation and cosmopolitanism. As contentious as discussions of the latter can be, I find it a useful critical term for entering into issues raised by twentieth-century plantation fiction because cosmopolitanism's characteristic ambiguity provides a means of discussing imagined worldliness that produces critical perspectives. Next, I turn to three novels from the 1930s that explore the tensions between capitalist imperatives and cosmopolitan ideals in the Atlantic world: William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Jean Rhys's novel, *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* (1933). These novels illustrate the contradictory impulses of twentieth-century cosmopolitanism, its vacillation between democratizing principles and imperializing practices, and demonstrates that colonial subjects may be driven to distant metropolises by economic necessity, but as they work to make themselves

⁷⁵ Sheldon Pollack notes "Just as remarkable as the underdevelopment of macrohistorical comparativism is the fact that analyses of cosmopolitanism are themselves rarely cosmopolitan. The widespread ahistoricism no doubt contributes to this, as does the tendency to concentrate on pronouncements rather than practices" (19).

home in the world cosmopolitan perspectives develop. For plantation modernists, cosmopolitanisms from below undermine the rigid racial and class hierarchies of the metaplantation. The plantation is global but insists on its own parochialism and hierarchy, subordinating its workforce. Critical and imagined worldliness by peasant class is by no means easy or uncontested. A critical lens does not ensure positive intercultural contact or effective political strategy.

Thinking about the Plantation Beyond the Plantation

“Cosmopolitanism” is used to describe, justify, and deploy imagined or lived worldliness, but its janus-faced associations—between elitism and populism, theory and practice, universal and particular, global and local, normativity and liberation—makes it notoriously difficult to define. As Janet Lyon observes, “The world-historical record is such that everything said about cosmopolitanism—good, bad, ugly, banal, or inscrutable—turns out to have been true.” Theoretically, the term has been used to emphasize human rights and equality, celebrate cultural multiplicity and self reflexivity, and advocate an ethic of hospitality and conviviality towards strangers that renders it opposed to imperialism. At the same time, the idealization of unfettered mobility lends itself to a form of shallow globetrotting available only to the upper classes, and in the process, may describe privileged perspectives with the power to deracinate, homogenize, and imperialize. Pheng Cheah argues that it “is primarily about viewing oneself as part of a world, a circle of belonging that transcends the limited ties of kinship and country to embrace the whole of humanity” (“What is a world?” 26). For Cheah, cosmopolitanism is an imaginative, even utopian enterprise that transcends one’s immediate environs and

moves beyond merely familial and national affinities. The version of cosmopolitanism celebrated by Amanda Anderson proves more immediate, supplying “ethical ideals for the cultivation of character and for negotiating the experience of otherness” (267). In its many forms, cosmopolitan perspectives are both imaginatively global and immediately ethical, entailing the subjective negotiation of cultural and national difference—a process through which individuals locate themselves in the world—however partial, fleeting, or slipshod that negotiation may be.

The urge to situate the particular within the universal has marked the latest resurgence of cosmopolitan theory and generated a range of qualified cosmopolitanisms: black, vernacular, actually existing, provincial, to name only a few.⁷⁶ More than gratuitous academese, these qualifications more precisely refocus the lens of cosmopolitan theory on what Bruce Robbins calls the “unprivileged cosmopolitanisms” of emigres, transplants, exiles, refugees, aliens, migrant labor, displaced persons, and other forced diasporas (1). As Robbins observes, these new cosmopolitanisms “take off from a double assumption: first, that any cosmopolitanism's normative or idealizing power must acknowledge the actual historical and geographic contexts from which it emerges, and, second, that such an acknowledgement need not prove fatal” (2). By seeking to account for unprivileged experiences, recent theory recognizes many forms of transnational encounters and sociability.

In the process, recent theory reveals that metropolitan forms of cosmopolitanism that present themselves as universal are ultimately local and grounded. Modernist

⁷⁶ See Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo's *Black Cosmopolitanism*, Homi Bhabha's “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism”; Scott Malcomson's “Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms,” and Leigh Anne Duck's *The Nation's Region*, respectively.

criticism has long been attuned to the ways that a narrow urban cosmopolitics cloaks itself in a “view from nowhere” founded in imperial perspectives. In his influential essay “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism,” Raymond Williams argues that “the magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals and the simultaneous cosmopolitan access to a wide variety of subordinate cultures” generated metropolitan perceptions (44). The product of a unique set of conditions at the core, metropolitan perception draws on the epistemological and economic privileges of imperialism. While empire exerts control hegemonically and militarily, its global reach encompasses many nations, and brings diverse cultures into daily, arduous contact.⁷⁷ In effect, imperialism creates conditions of possibility for cosmopolitan perspectives by bringing people into indirect and direct contact with the world beyond their local habitus—beyond the plantation, village, city, province, nation, or any of the other halos of attachment that subjects navigate on a daily basis. These coerced experiences often impart a critical perspective that helps locate individuals within global, regional, and local networks.

As James Clifford’s concept of discrepant cosmopolitanisms recognizes, “cultures of displacement and transplantation are inseparable from specific, often violent, histories

⁷⁷ In *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, Timothy Brennan argues that academics in the United States contribute to the exportation of American imperialism in the guise of cosmopolitanism: American culture conditions subjects for colonization—in the economic sense of neo-imperialism and also in the traditional sense of military occupation. Brennan’s work suggests that liberal academics, inadvertently contributing to the imperialist project, should stop kidding themselves about the liberatory potential of cosmopolitanism. While Brennan’s warning about the dangers of cosmopolitanism serve as an important reminder of cosmopolitanism’s shared history with empire, his book fails to make a careful enough distinction between internationalism as commodity consumption and cosmopolitanism’s utopian aspirations towards inter-subjective encounter. Also see Sheldon Pollack “Cosmopolitanism and Vernacular in History” and Walter D. Mignolo “The Many Faces of the Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism.”

of economic, political, and cultural interaction” (36). Atlantic history is rife with these sorts of transplantations: Irish “indentured servants” kidnapped into slavery on Barbadian sugar plantations; southern *confederados* who fled to Brazil during the civil war; the international brigades that fought in the Spanish civil war; and the Great Migration of southern blacks into northern cities after 1916: all represent literal forms of displacement and migration that generate cosmopolitan perspectives which are not only “unprivileged” but, in many cases, violent and unchosen by its participants. Despite the coercive nature of these kinds of intercultural encounter, they nonetheless lead to the formation of attachments, however fraught, across national and linguistic boundaries. In short, compelled cosmopolites negotiate an unstable, but no less worldly terrain. Although these intercultural experiences are usually circumscribed by economic constraints, immigration laws, and other sociopolitical limitations, their coercive or restricted nature does not render them less authentic forms of transnational engagement. Rather, plantation modernism indicates that restricted cosmopolitanisms are the rule, not the exception to transnational encounter—that elite cosmopolitanisms are rare and coerced cosmopolitanisms are common.

The global south became a nexus of modern cosmopolitanism at the moment of Columbian contact. The “other America” of the Caribbean basin developed from the ebb and flow of polycentric empires: British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, American, and even Swedish. Conquistadores, adventurers, indentured servants, slave traders and their human cargo, buccaneers, pirates, coolie laborers, and migrant workers drawn from all of Europe, Africa, Asia, and the New World itself left their indelible mark on Caribbean culture. As Antonio Benitez-Rojo observes, the unique cultural *mélange* they

created has been spoken of in many terms: “syncretism, acculturation, transculturation, assimilation, deculturation, indigenization, creolization, cultural mestizaje, cultural cimarronaje, cultural miscegenation, cultural resistance” (37). Inexorably cosmopolitan, Caribbean creolization remains in a state of constant flux—continually constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed.

It's no mere linguistic coincidence that plantation and transplantation share the same root word. Indeed, the displacement and transplantation central to Caribbean history arises from the formative violence and upheaval of the plantation system, which scholars have variously termed a “matrix,” a “laboratory” (Edouard Glissant), an “engine” (Eric Williams) and a “complex” (Phillip Curtin). These terms all seek to place the individual plantation within a larger sphere of socioeconomic and world-historical influence.⁷⁸

Providing the raw materials not only for commodity and cultural production, the plantation allows us to think cosmopolitically, “beyond the nation,” because it is an intrinsically trans-cultural, trans-national, and trans-continental phenomena with far reaching effects. When Marx declared in the *Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie had given a “cosmopolitan character” to production the world over (223), he highlighted the global mobility inherent to capitalism. As one of the earliest forms of agrarian capitalism, the plantation originated in the occident and was effectively impressed across the globe. Benitez-Rojo notes that Europeans “controlled the construction, maintenance,

⁷⁸ Benitez-Rojo makes a similar point when he notes that “For one: the singular feature of this machine is that it produced no fewer than ten million African slaves and thousands of coolies (From India, China, and Malaysia). All this, however, is not all: the plantation machines turned out mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism (see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*), African underdevelopment (see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*), Caribbean population (see Ramiro Guerra, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean*); they produced imperialism, wars, colonial blocs, rebellions, repressions, sugar islands runaway slave settlements, air and naval bases, revolutions of all sorts, and even a ‘free associated state’ next to an unfree socialist state” (9).

technology, and proliferation of the plantation machines, especially those that produced sugar” (9). Portrayed in popular culture as both a wonderfully unchanging Eden and a repressive bastion of parochial stasis, in fact, the historical plantation complex constantly evolved and adapted to the imperatives of global capital. A capitalist system, the plantation both requires and creates imperial expansion to obtain new land, labor, and markets. Facilitating European modernity and conquest, it generated a range of exploitative and coercive forms of intercultural contact; as Glissant notes, in retrospect “the meeting of cultures is most clearly and directly observable, though none of the inhabitants had the slightest hint that this was really about a clash of cultures” (74). The plantation served as both a site and an apparatus of cosmopolitan relationships, bringing together disparate European, African, Asian, and indigenous American cultures in intimate contact. Consequently, the plantation is an important site for the daily negotiation of transnational encounter and sociability.

The Global Designs of Yoknapatawpha

Critics have begun to revise stereotypes of modernist cosmopolitanism that center on unfettered urbanites freed from facile attachments to tradition, community, and country.⁷⁹ However, the association of cosmopolitanism with the modern (European) city—Jake Barnes drinking in the cafes of Paris, Leopold Bloom walking the streets of Dublin, Mrs. Dalloway shopping on Oxford street—has made it difficult to recognize other incarnations, but two recent studies on modernism in the Americas indicate that

⁷⁹ Most recently, Rebecca Walkowitz and Jessica Berman have sought to rethink the relationship between cosmopolitanism and narrative form in the work of metropolitan modernists like Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Henry James.

cosmopolitanism looks different from the perspective of the colonial periphery and the rural. Camilla Fojas argues that Latin American *modernismo* adopted and adapted metropolitan forms of cosmopolitanism in order to contest European imperialism and create new queer and local identities. Similarly, Charles Pollard looks at Caribbean aesthetics within the framework of Clifford's discrepant cosmopolitanisms, arguing that Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott "freely and selectively reshape Eliot's modernism—they creolized it—to achieve their own purpose" (4). Fojas and Pollard suggest that New World forms of cosmopolitanism are negotiated in relation to European metropolises, and that, far from being simple victims of an imperial culture that co-opts the very local cultures that it peripheralizes, colonized peoples use cosmopolitanism as a tool for the creation of new identities.

Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* follows Jason Compson and his son Quentin as they reconstruct the rise and fall of the American plantocracy on the old southwest frontier through the story of Thomas Sutpen, a West Virginia man bent on founding a plantocratic dynasty in Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha county, Mississippi. Following Sutpen and his family from the flush days of southern settlement in the 1830s through circa 1910, the novel demonstrates how external and internal colonialism are mutually reinforcing systems by reconstructing Sutpen's travels through the plantation Americas, from tidewater Virginia, to Mississippi, Haiti, and New Orleans. *Absalom* presents a cross section of competing cosmopolitanisms within a New World plantation economy. Jason recounts Sutpen and Bon's intertwined stories, viewing the Sutpen family and the plantation through the framework of decadence.

Faulkner uses multiple internal focalization, switching between the voices of Sutpen's second wife Rosa, Jason, Quentin, and Quentin's Canadian roommate at Harvard, Shreve, and even at times uses external focalization. However, the term "focalization" insufficiently characterizes this polyglot narrative, which is largely diegetic—that is, the story is "told," not "shown" or "thought." While some sections are told through free indirect discourse, it is predominantly narrated through direct speech; this allows the novel's plot to remain more ambiguous and mysterious than if it were "shown" or "thought" through impressionistic techniques associated with literary modernism, such as stream-of-consciousness. This form of narration allows for each character to be actively involved in imagining the story, as when Quentin and Shreve invent the figure of the lawyer to explain how Bon's mother used Sutpen's wealth to obtain revenge. Rosa's narrative is the only story told from the point of view of someone actually involved in the events recounted. Even so, her involvement is peripheral: she observes parts of, but is not a full participant in, these events. Her story is largely cast aside by the novel's other narrators as the outraged screed of a scorned woman. But the other narrators are no more reliable. Because the other narratives are told and retold by speakers with no involvement in the events narrated, the "facts" of the story are communally agreed upon, negotiated, or created.

Although Quentin uniquely appears in all chapters, functioning both as a narrator and narratee (providing continuity in assembling the various narrative voices), Jason's perspective dominates. However much the narrative voice shifts between various characters who often re-narrate the story to each other, the dominant discourse remains Jason's story. The story changes somewhat as it is told and retold by various characters,

but they largely reproduce his interpretation of events. The overriding voice and point of view is Jason's, which Quentin and Shreve ventriloquize, reproduce, and extend. Violet Harrington Bryan argues that "In *Absalom, Absalom!* Bakhtinian *dialogization* or the diversity of social speech types—especially the various voices of characters regarding race and gender—becomes central to the novel's style and theme" (9). I would argue the opposite: that Jason Compson's voice dominates—that Quentin and Shreve's version is overwhelmed by his voice, since as Quentin notes, Shreve sounds remarkably like Jason.⁸⁰

Jason rejects so-called objective interpretations of history, telling Quentin, "you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs" (80). Positing history as an act of reading, Jason indicates that the past itself is a series of evacuated signifiers unintelligible to the present, which struggles to decode their meaning. Ultimately, the past is interpreted according to the needs of the present. Decadence is Jason's framework; he reads Yoknapatawpha history through a European, metropolitan perspective. From this point of view, Judith too becomes "the blank shape, the empty vessel" for male desire (95). Jason's construction of Bon and Judith as empty shapes underscores the epistemological uncertainty and opacity of history, particularly plantation history.

Bon functions in the novel as surface. With only a single unsigned letter and gravestone left as evidence of his existence, he forms an absent presence, a structural hole

⁸⁰ Continuing Bryan's Bakhtinian framework, Jason's narratives arguably functions as a form of authoritative discourse that cannot be altered or engaged with, but rather is impressed from above.

that the various narrators desperately seek to fill. For Rosa, too, he is an empty signifier, something to imaginatively construct: “*I had never seen him (I never saw him. I never even saw him dead. I heard a name, I saw a photograph, I helped to make a grave: and that was all) though he had been in my house once [...] (I did not love him; how could I? I had never even heard his voice, had only Ellen’s word for it that there was such a person)*” (117). A name, a photograph, a grave: Bon becomes a series of metonyms that fail to signify a whole. None of these point to a corporeal body or a subject for Rosa. Like Jason’s, Rosa’s story is littered with uncertainties. Bon is a free-floating human signifier whose signification must be interpreted and reinterpreted by those who tell his story, “*a shape, a shadow: not a man, a being*” (120), merely “*the abstraction which we had nailed into a box*” (123). While Bon’s ambiguity allows them to write a variety of interpretations, it also makes him ultimately unreachable, unknowable, and epistemologically unattainable. He is a possibility, not a person, that eludes them.

An object of remembrance, Bon’s absence points to a cosmopolitan problematic. Walter Mignolo places narrative at the center of his theories, underscoring the power of storytelling to relay cosmopolitan experience. Amanda Anderson also links narrative and theory, explaining that “Cosmopolitanism generally invites a description from the perspective of the participant as she or he negotiates a diffuse array of affiliations and commitments” (275). Fictionally representing subjectivity, modernist fiction provides these perspectives through first person stream-of-consciousness techniques or third person free indirect discourse. In so doing, it simultaneously provides many perspectives of cosmopolitan experience, from its dizzying euphoria to subjective dissolution. The cosmopolitan perspectives of Sutpen and Bon are never presented. Maintaining focus on

the mutually constitutive relations between empire and cosmopolitanism, in *Absalom*, the colonized voice is absent and the Compsons' strive to recreate it from inside European-American modernity. In a sense, Bon resembles Mignolo's differentiation between forms of cosmopolitanism that impress upper-class hegemony and those that liberate subjugated peoples from the strictures of coloniality. Observing that there are "local histories that plan and project global designs and others that have to live with them" (157), he develops a complex vocabulary to evaluate the imperial imperatives of different forms of cosmopolitanisms, contrasting "global designs" with "cosmopolitan projects" and "critical cosmopolitanism."⁸¹ Using this vocabulary, we can see that in the plantation complex global designs are narratives that advance coloniality by producing ideologies of imperial control, strengthening the hold of European nations over other regions of the world. Cosmopolitanism is a discourse of critique, either from inside European modernity (cosmopolitan projects) or from outside (critical cosmopolitanism). In short, cosmopolitanism can support or refute global designs, such as modernization, underdevelopment, homogenization, the civilizing mission, Christianization, secularization, etc.⁸² *Absalom* is unique among modernist novels in that its central

⁸¹ Mignolo explains that "Narratives of cosmopolitan orientation could be either managerial (what I call *global designs*—as in Christianity, nineteenth-century imperialism, or late-twentieth-century neoliberal globalization) or emancipatory (what I call *cosmopolitanism*—as in Victoria, Kant, or Karl Marx, leaving aside the differences in each of these projects), even if they are oblivious to the saying of the people that are supposed to be emancipated. The need for a critical cosmopolitanism arises from the shortcomings of both" (159).

⁸² Mignolo aims to precisely tease out the normative and imperial facets of cosmopolitan discourse and practice. Given cosmopolitanism's aforementioned multiplicity, this may be an impossible task; global designs, cosmopolitan projects, and critical cosmopolitanisms may be so mutually constitutive as to be nearly impossible to untangle. For instance, if Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals draw on metropolitan European models in order to construct their own critical cosmopolitanisms, and European models appropriate colonial cultural expressions to construct cosmopolitan projects, a point of origin becomes an ever receding horizon. However Sisyphean this task, it remains worthwhile for critics to unravel cosmopolitanism's knotty ethical dynamics in large part because modernist writers themselves sought to do just that.

cosmopolites are the absences around which the narrative is constructed. In this way, Faulkner, like Mignolo, foregrounds the narrative act of constructing worldliness by implicitly differentiating between the global designs of the father and the critical cosmopolitanism of the son. While the former uses his new cosmopolitan mobility in the service of imperial conquest, which seeks to conquer and colonize “unsettled” lands, the latter’s New World dandyism subverts his father’s colonial designs and threatens to topple the Sutpen dynasty.

Capitalist-imperial imperatives drive Sutpen’s cosmopolitan mobility. After a childhood spent in Appalachian poverty, he moves to the tidewater region of Virginia. There, in the birthplace of American plantocracy, his colonial aspirations develop when he is denied entrance at the front door of a big house by a well-dressed house slave. Recognizing his low status in the plantocratic social hierarchy for the first time, he seeks retribution. Sutpen determines that he must become a planter himself in order to achieve his revenge, and leaves for the West Indies at the age of fourteen to acquire the master’s tools. Jason, and later Quentin and Shreve, reconstruct Sutpen’s cosmopolitan past within this circum-Caribbean context. Together, they narrate Sutpen’s involvement in the defense of a big house against Afro-Caribbean insurgents in Haiti. His engagements with other cultures are instrumental, and his travels in the circum-Caribbean world are aimed at furthering his plantocratic aspirations. He initially believes that marriage to an unnamed Creole heiress with a Haitian estate will fulfill his plantocratic designs, suggesting continuity between American and West Indian plantocracy. In this, he miscalculates the extent of the similarities between the U.S. and Caribbean plantation systems, but eventually realizes that the Caribbean plantation’s Creole hybridity holds

significant racial differences. When he discovers that his wife's light skin cloaks her Afro-Caribbean ancestry, he casts her aside.

Tearing "violently a plantation" from the soil of northern Mississippi, Sutpen's methods are novel, but nonetheless engage in the typical plantocratic process of colonial standardization (5). Part of what makes Sutpen so monstrous in the eyes of Yoknapatawpha's white community is that although east coast plantocracy recreated plantation institutions as they moved west, both Sutpen and Bon arrive in Yoknapatawpha without pedigrees and histories. While the American plantation mythos casts the plantation as a bygone relic of the pre-modern age, Sutpen's Hundred is an unrepentant product of capitalist expansion, spreading modernization into previously "unsettled" lands appropriated from displaced Native Americans. In this, Sutpen's Hundred, despite its unconventional construction, looks like—and functions like—every other plantation in the region. Because the plantation's homogeneity is the very prize Sutpen seeks in order to avenge himself upon the planter caste, he requires a plantation virtually identical to those of tidewater Virginia, be it in Haiti or Mississippi; the eastern plantocracy's reproduction of itself on the southwest frontier—its colonial standardization—serves his purposes well.

Sutpen's Hundred is nearly identical to other plantations; consequently, its decay stands in for the decadence of the plantation system as a whole. Originally it functions as part of imperial capitalism, a social system that standardizes the land and black bodies, creating a rigid and exploitive socioeconomic hierarchy. In its links to imperial capitalism, the plantation falls prey to the ills of modernity already experienced in modern post-industrial cities. While the plantation mythos positions this decline as a

tragic effect of the American Civil War, Faulkner places blame within the oedipal family romance of the antebellum plantation system itself. Rather than becoming infected by urban vice, as L.H. Bailey argued in *The Country Life Movement*, in *Absalom* the rural is corrupted from within. The novel follows “The Fall of the House of Usher” in constructing a parallel between the house and family that lives within its walls, the literal and figurative “house of Sutpen.” As with conventional plantation novels like Caroline Gordon’s *Penhally* or even Allen Tate’s more ambiguous *The Fathers*, *Absalom* is a multigenerational epic that follows the big house from its founding to its inevitable destruction. In these novels, when the plantocratic family falls, so too does their home. The “house” of Sutpen destroys the big house of Sutpen’s Hundred, with his mixed race daughter Clytie lighting the match that ignites the fire. Not merely serving as the economic base from which family wealth and status is derived, the house reflects familial health, or more often, its descent into degeneracy, decay, and death. Inevitably, everything plantocratic turns decadent: the big house, the region, and even the plantation mistress, Ellen, becomes “the esoteric, the almost baroque, the almost epicene object d’art” (81).

While Sutpen’s cosmopolitanism derives from his colonial acquisitions, Bon’s cosmopolitanism poses a threat to his father’s colonialism. With ties to Haiti and New Orleans, Bon embodies the Creole cultural and ethnic mixing that his father repudiates. Faulkner brings the decadence usually associated with European metropolitan centers to bear on that most European—and paradoxically American—of New World cities, New Orleans. Long known for its cultural heterogeneity, the city’s demographic makeup made it unique. As Violet Harrington Bryan observes, “As an international port city, [New

Orleans] has from its earliest days attracted settlers of diverse nationalities and social and political traditions—Native American, French, African, Spanish—and the city has had waves of immigration from Canada (Quebec and Nova Scotia), Germany, Ireland, the Canary Islands, Italy and Greece, as well as Santo Domingo/Haiti, Cuba, and other Caribbean countries” (1). In the nineteenth century, New Orleans’s essential hybridity—Catholic, French, black, and “nonsouthern”—stood out from the rest of the region and the nation.⁸³ One of the most “old world” of American cities, it served as an entry point into and escape route from the Caribbean and Europe, and became a center for New World—Caribbean and southern—modernity.

Like Latin American *modernismo*, Faulkner adapts the cosmopolitan subculture of European dandyism to New World contexts. A quintessentially modern countercultural figure, the dandy emerged predominantly out of the metropolitan capitals during the Regency period, particularly in London and Paris. As Jessica Feldman comments, the dandy is an unmoored figure who is “less a product of any particular time or place” (3) and more an act of self-creation. This itinerancy allows dandyism to emerge in unexpected, seemingly parochial, places—like Yoknapatawpha.⁸⁴ Born in the West Indies to Sutpen’s repudiated wife, Bon’s itinerancy through the circum-Caribbean world exemplifies the dandy’s unfettered mobility. He embodies the essential characteristics of the dandy: beauty, elegance, artificiality, whimsy, style, drama, distance, mobility, and of course an ethos of displacement. He seduces Henry, Judith, and their mother Ellen with

⁸³ See Hirsch and Logsdon xi.

⁸⁴ Feldman argues that Willa Cather places the dandy in the rural Midwest, translating dandyism into a regional and modernist context that underscores the dandy’s flexibility and adaptability (143-179). For a definition of dandyism, see Feldman’s *Gender on the Divide: the Dandy in Modernist Literature*, particular pages 1-5.

his “Frenchified” and “feminised” clothing (76). Like his father, he possesses “merely the name of a city for origin history and past” (77), but the name of New Orleans is evocative enough to construct Bon’s metropolitan image for the Compsons. New Orleans’s power to signify decadence is central to the novel’s construction, for Bon is absent from the text. All we “know” of him comes from the various narrators of the story who interpret the traces he leaves behind as a destructive and narcissistic cosmopolitan dandyism.

Through Jason’s decadent narrative reconstruction, Henry and Bon embody the rural-urban dichotomy: the one quintessentially parochial, the other quintessentially cosmopolitan. For Jason’s story to work, Henry must be utterly “unworldly” (80), the naïve progeny of an “isolated puritan country household,” buffoonishly “provincial, the clown almost” (76). The types that they must fulfill determine their relations with each other. Jason imagines Bon attempting to hail Henry as cosmopolitan in order to interpellate him into New Orleans culture and transnational modernity, “the mentor’s voice still bland, pleasant, cryptic, postulating still the fact of *one man of the world talking to another* about something they both understand, depending upon, counting upon still, who knew Henry so much better than Henry knew him” (89 italics mine).

In his unknowability, Bon personifies the dandy’s fundamental idiosyncrasy. Feldman argues that the dandy cannot be pinned down, that he is the ultimate “expression of anti-essentialism” without an “essential time, place, or figure” but rather free moving “human signifiers” (5). Similarly, Rhonda Garelick notes the dandy’s “singularity,” “In a world of universal equivalence, he is exchangeable with no one, remaining enclosed in a hermetic, autoseductive circle of narcissism” (5). While this may be true of many literary

dandies, something very different occurs in *Absalom*. Bon becomes calcified by the dandy archetype. Particularized only by his mixed blood, he remains superficial, without subjectivity, voiceless. Lacking the dandy's inviolable control and self-creation, he is the creation of strangers (Rosa, Jason, Quentin, and Shreve), who use the dandy's cosmopolitan style to limit his subjective range and turn his very flexibility against him. Bon lacks subjective depth, what Feldman calls the dandy's "labyrinthine" self (81). In contrast to Sutpen's monstrous self-possession, Bon is a silent absence. Jason uses this silence to radically reinterpret the past and reduces Bon to a type stripped of subjective particularities, doing a kind of narrative violence to the dandy's ethos of self-creation.

The dandy exemplifies the way that narratives are integral to the construction of cosmopolitanism. The dandy inevitably melds reality with fiction, paradoxically performing his (or her) own identity. Feldman observes, "the 'realer' the dandy, the more a product of (his own) make-believe he is": in essence, "a dandy is a person who plays the part of himself" (2). Modernist novels often present cosmopolitan perspectives, as in the case of Mrs. Dalloway, but here, the perspectives present belong to Jason and Quentin. Just as the lines between dandy-authors and their dandy-characters is blurred, the line between the storytelling Jason Compson and his narrative creation Charles Bon, between the fictional Yoknapatawpha and its real counterpart Lafayette county, are blurred. Faulkner unsettles the plantation mythos of nineteenth-century plantation romance, which by the 1930s blended ideology and history, fiction and fact. Plantation ideology presents imagination as truth, and so too does *Absalom, Absalom!*, but in a more subversive way. By foregrounding the process of storytelling itself, Faulkner undermines our sources of information, the processes through which myths are produced and

reproduced. Sutpen's Hundred, the plantation complex, and the south itself are transnational social constructions, as demonstrated by Quentin's Canadian roommate's participation in the storytelling. The novel disturbs the certainties of plantation history: in plot and content, depicting a plantation world that is neither benign nor static, but rather violently created and destroyed from within. As such, *Absalom* functions as a cosmopolitan project in Mignolo's sense, a narrative critique launched from within modernity/coloniality itself.

Plantation London: Jean Rhys and Cosmopolitan Subjectivity

Taking transnational encounter and sociability as central themes, modernism represents the subject in the midst of larger intersecting social spheres by fictionally entering into the realm of individual practice. As such, modernists portray the interior spaces of cosmopolitanism and prioritize unmediated encounter between strangers. Their novels expose the consequences of false cosmopolitanisms run amuck and, in so doing, reveal both its possibilities and fallibilities. Early twentieth-century fiction abounds with examples of failed cosmopolitanisms: modernist writers critiqued urban salon culture (Mary Butts' "From Alter to Chimney Piece"), the vapid tourism of English and American elites (Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*), and the fragility of expatriate community (Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*). Their work indicates that, for some, transnational mobility comes at a steeper monetary and psychological price.

Modernist fiction frequently details the anomie, enervation, and alienation of urban life, but, as Raymond Williams showed, these themes are not entirely unique to early twentieth-century fiction. Since the Enlightenment, European literature about the

city has shared certain key themes. In his influential essay “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism,” Williams catalogues these recurrent tropes: “the city as a crowd of strangers,” the “individual lonely and isolated within the crowd,” “the ‘impenetrability’ of the city,” “new kinds of human solidarity,” and “the new illuminations of the city” (39-43). New kinds of cosmopolitan experience had a formative impact on literary production. Modernism’s emphasis on formal innovation makes it distinctive from earlier movements that shared its urban sociopolitical concerns. Producing new perspectives on familiar themes, modernism also demonstrates a remarkable “diversity of methods and emphases,” which arise from the particular “cultures and situations” unevenly available throughout the city (43). The metropole—as the administrative center of empire—becomes a locus of cosmopolitan influences, drawing cultural expressions from a wide variety of colonial cultures. Creating new forms of community, the transnational concentration of artists, writers, and intellectuals spawned by empire galvanized modernist formal experimentation. Because so many writers were immigrants, “markers of strangeness and distance, indeed of alienation” are integral to modernist literature (45). For Williams, then, modernism uniquely registers the cosmopolitan environs of the modern city at the level of form.

Jed Esty also associates modernist form with cosmopolitan practices. In *A Shrinking Island*, Esty draws on Tom Nairn and Fredric Jameson to argue that “while the culture of imperial modernism represented itself as an expanding and synthesizing universalism *at the periphery* (where it encountered the putatively whole cultures of tribal premodernity), it registered an attenuated or absent totality *at the core*, where knowledge of the inside was mystified into the atomized but dazzling unreality of metropolitan

perception” (7). Metropolitan aesthetics originated in the cultural appropriations made available by British imperialism abroad, even as it fragmented national life at the core. Modernist techniques like free indirect discourse portray the unique blend of cosmopolitanism exoticism and subjective dislocation that characterizes individual experience in the modern city. As national life became more incomprehensible and unrepresentable as an organic whole, modernists sought totality within the subject itself. Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) demonstrates this introspective turn. Middle-aged housewife Clarissa Dalloway defies prevalent stereotypes of modernist cosmopolitanism that center on roving dandies and uprooted expatriates, but is nonetheless quintessentially cosmopolitan in Esty’s sense. Walking the streets of London, Clarissa takes in a variety of cultural expressions made available by British imperialism abroad, reveling in the dazzling unreality and subjective play of metropolitan perceptions. She makes transient connections with others—becoming a “part of people she had never met” (9)—and enjoying the new forms of community offered by the city before returning to the comfort of the bourgeois home.

These accounts of high modernist experimentation and cosmopolitan practices retain a celebratory tone, but few writers debunk the expatriate ideal as thoroughly as Jean Rhys. English characters in the Rhysian world of itinerancy differ markedly from Woolf’s model of cosmopolitan street walking. Rhys suggests that British citizens at the heart of European modernity and capitalist privilege do not feel good will towards less privileged Londoners—the poor, the colonized, the disabled—that they pass on their walks through the city streets. Exploring its complex economic and psychological costs, her work considers the ways that cosmopolitanism can be deeply normative, particularly

for women and ethnic minorities. Her third novel, *Voyage in the Dark*, adopts the voice of eighteen-year-old Anna Morgan, a planter's daughter from Dominica, to represent the perspectives of subordinated cultures. Denied access to the city's delights, she nevertheless experiences metropolitan perceptions produced by the clash of incommensurate cultures, but these cosmopolitan perspectives fail to compensate for urban deracination and atomization. Anna's narrative telescopes Caribbean and European culture to fictionally reproduce the glittering unreality of metropolitan perceptions produced by empire's brutal transplantations. A remainder of waning plantation colonialism, Anna cannot be assimilated into a metropolitan culture that has turned away from plantation economies. Her decline proves the deficits of cosmopolitanism, which the novel suggests merely serves as a mask for national and cultural orphanhood. Rhys testifies to the exploitation of inhabitants of the postslavery plantation in a world that promises, but fails to deliver, cosmopolitan acceptance.

In her letters, Rhys commented that the novel illustrates "that the past exists—side by side with the present, not behind it; that what was—is. I tried to do it by making the past (The West Indies) very vivid—the present dreamlike (downward career of girl)—starting of course piano and ending fortissimo" (24). In *Voyage*, the present encompasses not only Anna's downward career, but also London, the iconic city of imperial modernity. The metropole's centrality places Dominica outside modernity, and therefore outside Occidental narratives of progress which posit the West Indies as unmodern, even pre-modern. Of course, the plantation was a vast engine of modernization in the Americas in general and the Caribbean in particular. The plantation and metropole have been mutually dependent socioeconomic formations since the

sixteenth century, but by the 1830s finance capitalism superseded the plantation complex and the West Indies became “increasingly negligible to British capitalism,” as Eric Williams argues (132).⁸⁵ Dominica, like other West Indian colonies, became another casualty of uneven development as the plantation complex moved ever westward in the Caribbean basin (Not coincidentally, the time period in which Rhys sets *Wide Sargasso Sea*).

Rhys sets *Voyage* within the context of this postslavery decline. Anna’s family—her Welsh father, a relatively recent arrival in Dominica, and mother’s family, the Creole plantocracy Costeruses—exemplify the socioeconomic decline wrought by the failing imperial model of the plantation. While some modernist novels like *Banana Bottom* and *Barren Ground* point to an emergent agribusiness plantation model, *Voyage* witnesses only deterioration. Originally from Wales, Anna’s father Gerald immigrates as a young man to Dominica in the late nineteenth century and never partakes in the successes of the plantation’s boom time on the island. She explains to her lover Walter “He had a big estate when he first went out there; then he sold it when he married Hester and we lived in the town nearly four years and then he bought Morgan’s rest...” (54). He cultivates cocoa, nutmeg, and coffee on a small scale. Because these crops require large scale production to turn a profit, Morgan’s Rest is largely insolvent. The new estate serves an imaginative, not socioeconomic, function; Gerald uses it as a retreat from British colonial culture, “shut-in there, between two hills, like the end of the world” (69). He sells his estate presumably because Hester fears and loathes the rural periphery and its mixed race inhabitants.

⁸⁵ Like Eric Williams, C.L.R. James also details metropolitan dependence on the plantation. See Black Jacobins, particularly pages 47-50.

The Costerus family's plantation "Constance Estate" stands in ruins; overrun with weeds, its days of productivity are long past. Anna may boast "I'm a real West Indian[....] I'm the fifth generation on my mother's side" (55), but all that remains of the estate's solvent years are its slave rolls. These documents make a lasting impression on her. "I saw an old slave-list at Constance once," she tells Walter, "It was hand-written on that paper that rolls up. Parchment, d'you call it? It was in columns - the names and the ages and what they did and then general remarks" (52). Slave rolls are a recurring motif in twentieth-century plantation fiction, as Melanie Benson argues in her study of postcolonial economics in the U.S. south. She notes that upper-class southerners betray "a sense of compensatory entitlement incited by the loss of automatic privilege and prosperity in a postslavery economy" (4). This "plantation math" is evident in the McCaslin slave ledgers of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, which reflect "not only an awareness of a traumatic colonial legacy but also, because of the capital culture the ledger signifies, a chilling recognition that the plantation's priorities carry into the New South's global economic exchanges" (39). The McCaslin ledgers provide evidence of both the family's previous capitalist success and also the original sin which undercuts that success and dooms their descendents. For Anna, the surviving traces of the plantation point not to lost white privilege or the emergence of a postslavery neplantation economy, but rather present an unknowable past radically and racially different from the present within the homogenous metropole. She struggles to interpret their full meaning. Slave ledgers transform subjects into objects, reducing lives to data and market value. However, the Costerus slave rolls follow a different, less quantifying, template: name, age, general remarks. Anna is drawn to one entry "...Mailotte Boyd, aged 18, mulatto,

house servant.” (54). Later, in bed with Walter, she thinks “*Maillotte Boyd, aged 18. Maillotte Boyd, aged 18...But I like it like this. I don’t want it any other way*” (56). This entry highlights the slave’s similarities to Anna. While Maillotte was once owned by, and sexually vulnerable to, the Costerus family, Anna is placed in an exploitative relationship with Walter. The Compsons may struggle to interpret history, but Anna looks at the remnants of the plantation past and identifies not with her Costerus ancestors, but with their human property.

Maillotte in nineteenth-century Dominica, Anna in twentieth-century London: Rhys indicates that the conditions for sexual exploitation are remarkably similar. Despite her white skin, the other chorus girls call her “the Hottentot” because of her Caribbean origins. In London, she is tainted by the Caribbean’s history of race-mixing. Because she’s not white enough, she can never achieve middle-class English respectability. Rhys underscores the smug superiority and hypocrisy of residual Victorian values in the modern city. Single women are in a particularly untenable position—economically pressured to become mistresses, but also scorned for promiscuity. Like Margaret Mitchell, Rhys underscores the importance of economic security for women, recognizing that their tenuous social status requires money. Anna is continually subjected to the categorizing imperatives of a rigidly hierarchical imperial culture, including the construct of the “lady.” Her friends Ethel and Maudie frequently comment on her ladylike mannerisms, but another friend, Laurie, mocks her innocence by calling her “The virgin” or “the silly cow” (16). Anna lacks the money, pedigree, and will to satisfy the demands of English gentility, a category she’s supposed to aim for but can never fully achieve. Not only do these antiquated gender norms offer no protection in the modern city, but

Englishness itself is an elusive identity, even provisionally. Anna tries to reject Englishness and whiteness altogether, “I hated being white. Being white and getting like Hester, and all the things you get - old and sad and everything.” (72). After menarche, she attempts to commit suicide through sunstroke to avoid her seemingly inevitable fate as a white woman, becoming like Hester. As an adolescent in Dominica, Anna sees English ladyhood as an inescapable universal, but in London, she discovers that it is an unattainable ideal.

The false universalism of British culture is a recurrent theme in Rhys’s work. In her first novel *Quartet* (1928), values like common sense and logic only serve to enforce British hegemony as English expatriates recreate imperial hierarchies in Paris. While Williams and Esty focus on metropolitan modernism’s ability to absorb a variety of colonial cultural expressions, *Voyage* finds a metropolitan culture that fully rejects colonial peoples and cultures. Rhys suggests that transnational encounters rarely lead to meaningful intersubjective engagement or lasting affinities. Some cosmopolites remain strangers everywhere, never attaining a foothold. In contrast to *Quartet*’s faux cosmopolites, the English citizens of *Voyage*—from the lowliest chorus girl to the most affluent businessman—show no interest in colonial cultures. Rather they look down on non-English cultures with suspicion and derision. Instead of synthesizing or absorbing subordinate cultures into a blank meta-culture, their national identities are stagnant, unwilling to accommodate even colonial cultural expressions. Perry Anderson observes that the very success of British imperialism abroad gave English culture its seemingly timeless style, “it was this ostensible apotheosis of British capitalism which gave its characteristic style to that society, consecrating and fossilizing to this day its interior

space, its ideological horizons, its intimate sensibility” (qtd. Esty 26). Similarly, Esty concludes that “If empire hallowed Englishness by virtue of its projection to (and invention for) the colonies, it also hollowed Englishness by splitting its being into core and periphery” (26).⁸⁶ In this framework, the British are both exemplarily modern—the ultimate capitalist modernizers abroad—and shockingly unmodern—resistant to cultural modernization at home. In *Voyage*, Englishness is hollow—that is, ethically and historically ungrounded—but also calcified, its residual Victorian mores resulting in a stagnating culture urgent to establish domination through imperialism abroad and internal colonialism at home.

Rhys overturns the core-periphery dichotomy that subordinates colonial subjects by exposing the blinkered parochialism of European modernity. Upon first arriving in England, Anna notices “hundreds of thousands of white people white people rushing along and the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together - the streets like smooth shut-in ravines and the dark houses frowning down” (17). Gray, hard, cold, bereft of flora and fauna: Rhys’s London is overwhelmingly homogenous: its architecture and urban planning create a standardized cultural grid. Although the city swarms with people “perpetually moving to another place which was perpetually the same” (8), this sense of constant movement lacks meaningful telos. Its frenetic activity hardly cloaks the deadly stagnancy caused by its imperial hierarchies. The monotony of glowering architecture and bland food is broken only by the jingoistic ads and commercialism that saturate the cityscape. A metropolis, not a cosmopolis, the

⁸⁶ Tom Nairn observes that “...Nobody knows what an “Englishman” is, in that sense...Too internally differentiated for the vulgar measurements of nationalism, the English then spread themselves too far externally” (qtd. Esty 33).

London of *Voyage* isn't a bastion of democratic principles and humanities, nor does it even purport to be. Far from welcoming or appropriating subordinated cultures, Londoners virtually ignores them. English citizens roam the streets like so many zombies and animals, and Anna fears becoming like them (as she inevitable does). "Perhaps I'm going to be one of the ones with beastly lives. They swarm like woodlice when you push a stick into a woodlice-nest at home. And their faces are the colour of woodlice" (26). Even a couple kissing in Brunswick Square look like "beetles clinging to the railings" (34).

Rhys's characters can be mapped according to degrees of remoteness from an implicit core society of native Londoners who erect social barriers to keep them at bay—for Anna, Walter and her stepmother Hester. Nearly twenty years her senior, Walter is Anna's mirror image: male, rich, established, respectable, and most likely married. Under imperial ideology, English citizens like Walter serve as stand-ins for universals of humanist progress. He tells her "I work in the City. I work very hard." (15). Rhys places Walter in the technocratic heart of global capitalism, London's financial district. The City's very name reflects its ability to generate universals at the metropolitan core from which the administrators of capitalist power exert control and craft global designs. Ever the businessman, his efficiency and cautiousness extends to his personal life; we never learn much about him and presumably neither does Anna. In the framework of metropolitan perceptions, Walter ought to be an enlightened citizen of colonial modernity, enjoying the plunders of empire at the imperial core. Yet this is not the case. While his imperial-capitalist endeavors help create the modern city, Walter is largely untouched by its affective powers. Recognizably, parochially British, he exploits his

imperial privilege through sexual conquests, but lacks the detachment from national culture that is a prerequisite for cosmopolitan engagement, what Amanda Anderson calls “cultivated detachment from restricted forms of identity” (226). Indeed his transnational encounters, and relationship with Anna, reinscribe British imperial hegemony. In high modernism, metropolitan perception compensates for this cultural evacuation of English identity. While the first person narration denies readerly access to Walter’s thoughts, Rhys gives no indication that he shares in the dizzying thrills of metropolitan perceptions.

Like *Mrs. Dalloway* or *Ulysses*, *Voyage* portrays the subjective realm of cosmopolitan experience, but while Clarissa Dalloway and Leopold Bloom are denizens of the intoxicating sensory experience of their respective cities, Anna fails to find a foothold in the metropole because all of her connections remain transient. Cosmopolitan euphoria and domestic stability are unavailable to Anna. Rhys’s work demonstrates that the inequities of cosmopolitanism can be subjectively ravaging, leading to the disintegration of identity. Rather than strategically cultivating detachment, Anna is rapidly stripped of epistemological and emotional attachments; the resulting trauma produces subjective dissolution. She cannot return to the stabilizing strictures imposed by family and friends because she has lost her few meaningful affinities in Dominica and has been unable to cultivate new ones in London.

Typically Rhysian in its blending of modernist techniques and naturalist thematics, *Voyage*’s first person narrative captures Anna’s sense of socioeconomic and subjective precariousness. For Anna, the clash of shockingly incommensurate things, of subordinated cultures brought into violent contact with a ruthlessly universalizing culture, evokes a physical and psychological reaction. Her narrative begins with this traumatic

experience: “It was almost like being born again. The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself were different” (7). Dominica and England can “never fit” together cohesively (8). This fundamental incommensurability between core and periphery not only imbues Anna’s experiences with a sense of unreality, but makes a cohesive interiority impossible. She experiences the fragmented subjectivity associated with the metropole, but metropolitan perceptions provide no compensation for the deleterious effects of *Gessellschaft*. Ideally, cosmopolitan practices would develop the potential of the individual self and avoid instrumentalism. As Anderson notes, “Although cosmopolitanism has strongly individualist elements (in its advocacy of detachment from shared identities and its emphasis on affiliation as voluntary), it nonetheless often aims to foster reciprocal and transformative encounters between strangers variously construed” (269). But, in *Voyage*, Anna experiences intersubjective encounter so powerful that it renders a coherent sense of self impossible. Metropolitan perceptions become a morass from which Anna cannot escape.

The narrative registers Anna’s disintegration of self impressionistically, interjecting a host of other discourses—songs, letters, poetry, etc.—into her first person narrative. Rhys once commented that *Voyage* consists “almost entirely in words of one syllable. Like a kitten mewling perhaps” (*Letters* 24). This modernist use of pastiche accounts for cultural influences on Anna’s subjectivity, such as positivist discourses of the social sciences used for the qualification and quantification of colonial subjects. For instance, Anna describes Dominica: “Lying between 15* 10` and 15* 40` N. and 61* 14` and 61* 30` W. ‘A goodly island and something highland, but all overgrown with

woods,' that book said. And all crumpled into hills and mountains as you would crumple a piece of paper in your hand—rounded green hills and sharply cut mountains” (17). This passage blends the quantification of the imperial social sciences with Columbus’s demonstration of the island’s topography to Ferdinand and Isabella—two Eurocentric attempts to make sense of the West Indies within the Occidental imaginary. The novel underscores the inability of these discourses to adequately account for the colonial periphery within Western paradigms.

Caribbean plantation romance often resorts to a glorification of landscape and natural beauty to detract attention from the exploitative labor practices of the plantation. Rhys also emphasizes the natural beauty of the Caribbean: in contrast to London’s grim deadliness, Dominica pulses with life: lush, colorful, green, blooming. While the Caribbean may be more desirable than the metropole, for Anna, it proves no more stable. When Gerald dies, Hester sells Morgan’s Rest, effectively severing Anna’s ties to Dominica. While modernist criticism often finds atomization in the metropole, Rhys locates anomie in the West Indies as well; narratively imposing this vivid plantation past over the unreal English city. In the novel’s final scene, Rhys transposes images of carnival in Dominica over Anna’s illegal abortion in London. More than simply recreating the ties between finance capitalism and New World plantocracy, her narrative reenacts their collision. In this way, Rhys constructs a plantation London that telescopes both core and periphery.

Claude McKay's Transplantations

Modernist fiction abounds with instances of false cosmopolitanism, but it also abounds with examples of coerced cosmopolitanisms that nonetheless achieve positive intercultural engagement, however haphazardly. The army of hotel workers in George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, the nightclubbing expatriates of Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*, and the cruising Trinidadians of Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* all provide affirmative—if transitory, provisional, and fragile—examples of successful cosmopolitanisms from below. Even Rhys's work, pessimistic as it generally is, shows glimpses of cosmopolitan possibility.⁸⁷ While *Voyage in the Dark* illustrates how cosmopolitanism at the core marginalizes colonial subjects throughout the empire, Claude McKay's third novel *Banana Bottom* (1933) suggests that, for some of these people, cosmopolitanism can become a tool for subjective liberation. The plantation is at the center of the novel, which explores the imperial dynamics of cosmopolitanism in Jamaica. *Banana Bottom* explicitly shows how postslavery social relations are irrevocably constituted by the plantation. The village of the novel's title is founded by a Scotsman—an “unpuritan liberator” (9)—who immigrated to the island in 1820, bought a large plantation and big house, freed all its slaves, and married a black woman. He broke the estate up into lots and sold them to his freed slaves. This new community of freed people became Banana Bottom. In many ways, the means of production would seem to be in native hands, but the former slaves and their descendents adopt the methods of colonial agriculture, and consequently, they're susceptible to the whims of the global market. At the same time, the big house itself remains in the Scotsman's hands, before

⁸⁷ As I have argued elsewhere, Rhys's first novel *Quartet*, for example, juxtaposes the false cosmopolitanism of British expatriates with its protagonist's bohemian counter-cosmopolitanism.

falling into disrepair. Seventy years later, McKay's protagonist, Tabitha "Bita" Plant, is raped by the Scotman's mixed race descendent, and adopted by Malcolm and Priscilla Craig, a white missionary couple who send her to Europe for a metropolitan education. Bita's benefactors hope that this elite cosmopolitan experience will serve as preparation for missionary work in her native village of Banana Bottom. Although Bita's cosmopolitanism grants her access to the privileges of empire, these privileges require her to become a colonial agent. For the novel's black characters, cosmopolitanism brings profound ambivalence. Some associate literal mobility with economic mobility, while others seek out urban centers and travel throughout the Caribbean basin as a means of learning about the world at large. For both groups, their experiences deflate pragmatic and high-minded motivations alike. Upon her return, Bita struggles to reconcile new found cosmopolitan perspectives with a longing for local forms of sociability.

Through Bita's benefactors the Craigs, McKay highlights the parochialism of a metropolitan culture that presents itself as universal at both the core and the periphery. Both Malcolm and Priscilla Craig descend from prominent missionary families who fought for abolition in Jamaica in the early nineteenth century. Once a source of liberation for people of African descent, the missionaries have out lived their purpose and become deeply normative. By the turn of the twentieth century, they uphold the very plantation hierarchy that they once sought to dismantle, in part by seeking to control local forms of cosmopolitanism. From the perspective of the missionary community led by the Craigs, "good" black cosmopolitanism prepares locals to become agents of empire in their communities, while "bad" black cosmopolitanism not only empowers them economically, but inflates their expectations and erodes their deference to white

authority. Priscilla scorns the enlarged worldviews acquired by black Jamaicans abroad, “Our Negroes are not the same after contact with the Americans” she says, “They come back ruder. [...] They come back hard-drinking and strutting with bad manners, loud clothes and louder jewelry” (34-35). Priscilla fears the black community will articulate their own values—the “wrong” values—rather than embrace European macronarratives of postslavery progress. In contrast to the Americanized Jamaicans, the Craigs’ cosmopolitan ideal is effectively a process of Anglicization. In keeping with the civilizing imperative, Priscilla works to control the villagers’ mobility hegemonically by using etiquette and manners to instill shame and gain compliance. The church is particularly successful in controlling the behavior of the aspiring black middle classes who want to join the white-collar, white-dominated bourgeoisie. These ambitious young villagers go to Kingston to become clergymen or teachers “the main civilizing professions for the dark peasantry” (15). With limited professional options, they can achieve only a modicum of success by carefully regulating their behavior and cutting themselves off from local black culture. Many return to the village “aloof from, if not actually despising, the tribal life in which they were nurtured” the narrator tells us (41).

Of course, the regulation of black mobility in the Atlantic world is nothing new, as McKay shows. Most obviously, both prior to and after emancipation, white planters and colonial administrators violently controlled the mobility of African slaves and free blacks. Yet even as slave labor, indentured servitude, and the tenant system enabled planter cosmopolitanisms, colonial laborers also travelled—sometimes by choice, often by necessity and coercion. In *Turning South Again*, Houston Baker stresses that, for people of African descent, cosmopolitanism is associated with modern citizenship.

Similarly, Iffeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo argues that black writers and intellectuals in the nineteenth century were often pressured to choose between national American affinities and cosmopolitan Pan-African affinities. Both Baker and Nwankwo speak to the fraught negotiation of cosmopolitanism for underprivileged subjects within a circum-Caribbean context.

In *Banana Bottom*, many members of the black underclass also develop cosmopolitan perspectives despite the Craigs' best efforts: living at the colonial periphery, they negotiate a shifting transnational terrain of imperial influences. Villagers move widely throughout the West Indies and the Americas seeking economic opportunities and many obtain jobs building the Panama Canal. Once again, for black subjects, cosmopolitanism requires facilitating American imperialism and the expansion of global markets. These Panama Canal workers make more money than they could have at home in Jamaica, but the work there is dangerous and potentially fatal. Furthermore, their newfound cosmopolitan perspectives make them unfit for the agricultural work and racial hierarchies that their families endure back home in the village. Just as the Craigs fear, they return home with a sense of themselves as part of modern culture, with heightened expectations and less deference toward the local power structure. For these working class Jamaicans, travel brings with it cosmopolitan perspectives, but their expanded worldview also reveals how tightly white authorities control their labor and agency. Able to situate their communities within regional and hemispheric contexts, they become unruly and defiant, but also demoralized and lazy. Travel allows these characters to develop critical perspectives towards their native cultures, but without economic opportunities within Jamaica, their new cosmopolitanism brings them only

dissatisfaction. One canal worker, the village dandy Hopping Dick, explains to Bitá, “You will find [the town] too small to live in after living abroad. The whole island's too small” (44). For both the black working and middle classes, imposed cosmopolitan perspectives alienate them from their native cultures.

Bitá's cosmopolitanism is part of the Craigs' civilizing mission. Arriving in their home as an ignorant girl of 13, she conformed easily to the mission's lifestyle. After two years, Priscilla is “seized by the idea of giving her the benefit of a thoroughly English education” (28). The Craigs hope that after an elite education in the “mother country” (1), “she would be English trained and appearing in everything but the colour of her skin” (31). As Paul Jay notes, Bitá's very name, “Tabitha Plant,” underscores the Craigs' attempts to “graft Englishness onto her” (179). They carefully sever all her connections to home in order to assimilate Bitá into white metropolitan culture, and during her seven years abroad, she doesn't even communicate with her family. In Europe, her metropolitan education at an all girls college effectively immerses her in Anglo-European traditions. She reads the Great Books of Western literature, speaks French, plays the piano, dances elegantly, and visits iconic landmarks of English identity: like Trafalgar Square, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Tower Bridge, Hyde Park, and the Crystal Palace. Not surprisingly, this curriculum excises African and Caribbean cultures in favor of British universalism and colonial hierarchies. Effectively uprooted and Anglicized, she returns to the island at the age of 22 “a real young lady” in fashionable European clothing (1), her assimilation into English values seemingly complete.

But Bitá finds the transition from England back to Jamaica difficult. Her dark skin prevents her from joining the aspiring light-skinned black middle class, while her

metropolitan education closes her off from village life. At first, her only solution seems to be to abandon native dress, sociability, and religion, and assent to the Craigs' plan that she serve as an aloof role model in town. Their patronage comes with the expectation of a reciprocal exchange in which Bitá marries Harold Newton Day, a young black minister they also patronize. Together, they would serve as extension agents for the mission. By adhering to Victorian gender roles, she can demonstrate the success of their "experiment" with "native leadership" (26). But she yearns for the pleasures of village life and increasingly looks forward to excursions to the village that allow her the freedom to assume local dress and engage in local activities (49).

Unlike the aspiring black middle classes, she does not simply adopt Eurocentric perspectives but rather gains a critical lens. Despite her initial conformity to English values, Bitá's travels inculcate her with metropolitan perceptions, and, returning to Jamaica, she sees native culture with new eyes.⁸⁸ She's particularly exhilarated by local forms of sociability. Bitá revels in the energy of the market crowd, which gives "her the sensation of a reservoir of familiar kindred humanity into which she had descended for baptism" (40). "Accents and rhythms, movements and colours, nuances that might have passed unnoticed if she had never gone away, were now revealed to her in all their striking detail" (41). "[S]he thought that if she had never gone abroad for a period so long, from which she had become accustomed to viewing her native life in perspective, she might never have had that experience" (40). A sort of rebirth, these cosmopolitan perspectives create an engaged detachment from local culture that allows her to situate

⁸⁸ As Fojas argues, New World cosmopolitanism "offers a counterpoint to European cosmopolitanism," by "increasing and expanding worldviews" and "adding new points of reference, new contexts, and understandings of social and cultural phenomena" (5).

Banana Bottom within global contexts, to compare her particular culture to European universals firsthand. Bitá's worldly experiences let her more fully appreciate her native village, and also become cognizant of its unique cadences. McKay articulates her enjoyment of the market in a rhetoric of sensation, emphasizing the dynamic physical experience of cultural difference that is for Bitá a "big moving feeling" (40).

Like the village migrant workers, Bitá is transformed by cosmopolitan experience and finds herself unable and unwilling to conform to the roles delegated to her. No longer dazzled by the material trappings of white privilege, she more clearly recognizes missionary paternalism, hypocrisy, and racism. Armed with worldly experience, she chafes under the church's parochial influence and resists their design for her future. The Craigs may initially control Bitá's mobility and cultural experience, but these experiences nonetheless develop her nascent intellectual and ethical independence.

Despite these struggles, Bitá ultimately reconciles cosmopolitan perspectives with the desire for black community. Through her, McKay offers a counter-cosmopolitanism that negotiates local and global cultural expressions, eventually reconciling the two. Replacing British universals with concepts of universal humanity, Bitá's cosmopolitanism brings renewed attachment and conscious pleasure in local, agrarian life, and becomes a means through which she locates herself in the village, and locates the village in the world. Indeed, *Banana Bottom* suggests that black national identity must be constructed through cosmopolitan affinities and worldly experience.⁸⁹ Thus, Bitá enters the global human community through local sociability—which she could not have done if she had merely stayed in Jamaica.

⁸⁹ Michael Stanislawski makes a similar point with regards to Zionism, arguing that it emerged out of the cosmopolitan experiences and intellectual communities of early twentieth-century Jewish thinkers.

In this way, McKay highlights the importance of entering the local through the global. Bitá's father had aspired to buy the decaying estate house and lands once owned by the "unpuritan liberator." After his death, Bitá herself purchases the 'State House, and, with her husband, revives its land. They resist risky colonial agricultural methods, like monocropping, which leave locals vulnerable to white planters, and through hard work and skillful planting, they become the most successful farmers in the village. By acquiring the big house, the institution of colonialism and modes of plantation production finally pass fully into native hands, and Bitá becomes a model of self-determination and economic independence for the black community. At the same time, she moves past her resentment towards white missionaries and manages to carve out some agency in a rigidly hierarchical system even as she reforms the plantation for the people and models an autonomous Jamaican future for all. Tracing Bitá's evolution from a submissive schoolgirl to an independent young mother, McKay imagines a cosmopolitanism that doesn't rely on the malingering racial and class hierarchies of the metaplantation. In some ways, of course, this ending is romanticized, even utopian as the novel imagines an autonomous Jamaican future. As McKay shows, critical worldliness by the peasant classes is by no means easily achieved or uncontested, and a critical lens does not ensure either positive intercultural contact or effective political strategy. Nonetheless, McKay's emphasis on psychological and perspectival decolonization foreshadows later developments in Caribbean thought in the 1940s and 50s, and does so by showing how black Jamaicans can use the ever adaptable colonial apparatus of the plantation to free themselves from neoimperialisms and the whims of the global market. In this lens, the

forms of cosmopolitanism once denied by the plantation becomes a means to overcome the plantation.

Conclusions

The cosmopolitanisms explored by Faulkner, Rhys, and McKay are all influenced by a complex mix of economic and social imperatives. Together, they highlight the parochialism of a metropolitan culture that presents itself as universal at both the core and the periphery. Their plantation modernism interrogates the binaries—virgin/whore, rich/poor, native/missionary, core/periphery, parochial/cosmopolitan, local/global—that structure Anglo-American culture. Documenting the transplantations and dislocations inherent to the plantation system, plantation modernists reject the happy movement and pleasant passing affinities of metropolitan models like *Mrs. Dalloway*, and suggest that a truly local life is impossible under modernity. Early twentieth-century writers find reverberations of the plantation in London, and London in the plantation. For them, lived cosmopolitan practices frequently contest the ethical ideals of transnational encounter, as the vexed relationship between modern urban centers and unevenly developed rural peripheries often strains or even inhibits transformative intercultural engagement.

In all these cases, the plantation continues to structure social relations long after emancipation. Critics often make reference to “post-plantation” literature, a term which assumes that the plantation is an obsolete economic and social system. But these discussions beg the question: is the *post* in post-plantation the same as the *post* in post-colonial? If so, we should be suspicious of it. Just as Anne McClintock and Ania Loomba

warn, the colony lives on in the free state.⁹⁰ After all, the plantation continues to be a viable agricultural model in many places. Not only was the plantation adopted by western agribusiness through the twentieth century, but third world nations sought to curb its potential for capitalist- imperial exploitation by administering state owned plantations that continue in the global south even today.⁹¹ Furthermore, as Faulkner, Rhys, and McKay demonstrate, the legacies of the plantation continue even after its ostensible agricultural demise. While it is tempting, for instance, to refer to the “post-plantation” Caribbean or U.S. south, the nineteenth-century plantation in the Americas was only one phase in the history of the plantation complex, which continues to manifest in exceptionally versatile ways the world over.

⁹⁰ Loomba observes that the term postcolonial indicates progress and ignores the new forms of imperialism that arise in the postcolony, while McClintock argues that the term implies a similarity in the experiences of newly independent nations that is illusory.

⁹¹ See Tiffen and Mortimore for a brief history of this process.

Coda: Post-Plantation Modernism

“In 1966 the old colonial system is not what it was in 1866; in 1866 it was not what it had been in 1766 or 1666. The fundamentals outlined above, however, have not changed. The old colonial system in the West Indies was not a democratic system, was not born as such. It cannot live with democracy.”—
C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins*⁹²

Far from dying into obscurity after universal emancipation, the plantation complex became truly global in the twentieth century. Just as the sixteenth century saw the plantation expand from island to island in the Caribbean, exhausting resources and then moving on to colonize another “clean slate,” so too did it inevitably exhaust its initial circum-Atlantic haunts. As plantation agriculture became insolvent in these locations, new forces—the U.S. military, agribusiness, and nation-states—emerged to harness its remains. History has shown that the plantation cannot be easily dismantled. As a result, postcolonial states often adopted colonial infrastructures already in place. In *Black Jacobins*, C.L.R. James argues that such was the case in Haiti after the revolution, “Toussaint could see no road for the Haitian economy but the sugar plantation. Dessalines was a barbarian. After Dessalines came Christophe, a man of conspicuous ability and within his circumstances an enlightened ruler. He also did his best (a cruel best) with the plantation” (393). As James suggests, even after successful liberation movements, newly emergent states in the plantation complex were compelled to adopt its modes of production. This trend increased in the 1960s and 1970s as nation-states came to control and operate massive plantations.⁹³ Even today, state-run plantations stretch from Malaysia to Madagascar. Postcolonial attempts to harness the economic potential of

⁹² See *Black Jacobins* pp. 406.

⁹³ For instance, after the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro set out to reorient the economy around the cultivation of sugar, and in the process, turned the island into a giant neo-plantation (Skierka 18).

the plantation for “the people” have repeatedly failed throughout the twentieth century. In 1966, James underscored the role of agribusiness and imperialism in shaping the modern plantation complex in the Caribbean. In modern Haiti, he wrote “As they have been from the first day of slavery, financial power and its mechanism are today entirely in the hands of metropolitan organizations and their agents. The few industries of importance, such as oil and bauxite, are completely in the hands of foreign firms, and the local politicians run a ferocious competition with each other in offering inducements to similar firms to establish new industries here and not there” (406). At the same time that states sought to manage plantation agriculture, the late twentieth century saw the metaphorical re-emergence of the plantation in new, urban settings. Houston Baker sees the plantation morphing into the prison industrial complex. Similarly, Edouard Glissant sees the plantation complex spreading into urban areas as a means of disciplining colonial bodies. He comments that, after slavery, the plantation “spread thin to end up in mazes of sheet metal and concrete” and calls this extension the “second Plantation matrix” (73). For these theorists, new forms of control exerted within the modern city—tenements, housing projects, segregation, the war on drugs—resemble the forms of control exerted over people of African descent and other laborers on the plantation.

These sociohistorical factors have a dramatic influence on new plantation fiction, which continues to enjoy popularity. Contemporary plantation narratives tend to expand upon the project instigated by plantation modernism: excavating a range of voices from plantation history and documenting the harsh material conditions of everyday life. Much of this fiction is only moderately experimental, diverging from modernism’s euphoria of formal innovation. Contemporary writers reimagine the personal suffering of

disenfranchised individuals within plantation modernity, but are less invested in modernist subjectivity and more concerned with reconstructing lost histories, even as they acknowledge the ultimate futility of this recovery. Novels like Josephine Humphrey's *Nowhere Else on Earth* (2000) and Cristina Garcia's *Monkey Hunting* (2003), which respectively follow native Americans and Chinese indentured servants within New World plantation economies, show the influence of revisionist histories and postcolonial theory.

Focusing on revisionary history from below and unmasking the horrors of plantation life, contemporary writers make broad connections between the plantation complex and other forms of colonialism. They emphasize the gaps and aporias of the plantation archive. This history of “what we call the Americas,” explains Junot Diaz, “is underpinned by a vast sea of silence and erasure. The majority of American history, whether it’s the Dominican Republic or in the U.S., can’t be accessed because the major participants have either been exterminated, worked to death, or just straight out erased from history.”⁹⁴ Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise: a Novel of Mary Ellen Pleasant* (2004) links this “official” history to the distortions of plantation romance: “The official version [of history] is presented to the people. With friezes of heros, statues free-standing in vest-pocket parks, in full costume on Main Street, on auditorium stages in elementary schools, through two-reelers, in silence—who will forget *The Birth of a Nation?*” (16). Cliff's

⁹⁴ This passage is worth quoting in full: “What we call the Americas, its history is underpinned by a vast sea of silence and erasure. The majority of American history, whether it’s the Dominican Republic or in the U.S., can’t be accessed because the major participants have either been exterminated, worked to death, or just straight out erased from history. And there’s no way to get that stuff back. And in some ways, if you’re going to write an American story, which I’ve always felt this book [*The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*] was, an America story is all about trying to figure out a way to communicate story and simultaneously communicate the enormous absence in which that story in some ways drifts” (*Sydney Writers Festival*).

novel underscores the impossibility of retrieving an accurate history from the annals of the plantation past, but nonetheless asserts the necessity of constructing alternative narratives to supplement the official version with histories that are “good for the people” (16). Consequently, Mary Ellen Pleasant repeats romanticized stories about her sea captain father undertaking voyages to the West Indies in order to liberate slaves. Pleasant knows that there’s more to her father’s past than these heroic tales allow, yet believes that his legend of black heroism is needed to counter white supremacist histories. Cliff locates the construction of these counter narratives on the Indian Camp Plantation, which was converted into a leprosarium in 1894. The structure of the leper “colony” parallels what Glissant calls the “autarky” of the plantation: enclosed to prevent escape, yet dependent on the outside world. In this setting, a diverse group of lepers—a native Hawaiian, a Tahitian, a poor white Kentuckian, a Latin American Jew—tell their respective revisionist histories. The slaughter of runaway slaves in Appalachia, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Captain Cook’s discovery of the Sandwich Islands, the Mutiny on the Bounty, John Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid—all are retold from the perspective of colonial subjects. Here, the plantation becomes the site for rewriting global colonialism in its many forms. If modernism began to unravel the intricate and nonlinear connections between various plantation cultures, then contemporary plantation fiction draws more explicit connections among the plantation and other kinds of imperialism.

In tracing these colonial legacies, contemporary writers, much like theorists such as Houston and Glissant, suggest a continuation of plantation oppression and hierarchies in non-agricultural settings. Diaz’s darkly humorous novel *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) illustrates this point, as the narrator observes that Dominican

dictator Rafael Trujillo “came to control nearly every aspect of the DR’s political, cultural, social and economic life through a potent (and familiar) mixture of violence, intimidation, massacre, rape, co-optation, and terror, treated the country *like it was a plantation* and he was the master” (2 italics mine).⁹⁵ Installed by the U.S. military, Trujillo implemented a system of control that mimicked plantation structures, what Michael Bibler terms the “meta-plantation,” turning Dominican citizens into virtual slaves. *Oscar Wao* follows the decline and fall of a Creole family through the twentieth century. Abelard Cabral, the head of the family, inherits property throughout the Dominican Republic, including a “string of fincas [plantations] in the Septentrionales” (213).

Diaz illustrates how the neo-imperial plantation evolved out of sovereignty enforced not only by the U.S. military but by local militias, law enforcement, and gangs. When Trujillo dies, the oppressive plantation structure that empowered him remains: in her youth, Belicia Cabral is beaten and left for dead by Trujillo’s thugs in a cane field; decades later, her son Oscar is beaten in a canefield by Dominican police officers. “Where did they take him?” the narrator asks caustically, “Where else. The canefields. How’s that for eternal return?” (296). The eternal return of the plantation seems all but inevitable for cultures founded on its structures. The Cabrals who owned sugarcane fields now die in them. Oscar’s sister Lola swears that the Dominican people have become “Ten million Trujillos” (324). Diaz’s novel illustrates not only that the plantation matrix

⁹⁵ Diaz makes this point several times, writing “Homeboy [Trujillo] dominated Santo Domingo like it was his very own private Mordor; not only did he lock the country away from the rest of the world, isolate it behind the Planto Curtain, he acted like it was his very own plantation, acted like he owned everything and everyone, killed whomever he wanted to kill, sons, brothers, fathers, mothers, took women away from their husbands on their wedding nights and then would brag publicly about the ‘great honeymoon’ he’d had the night before” (225).

elucidated by Glissant extends into New York's diasporic communities, but that Dominican subjects have internalized, and colluded in, plantation colonialism. Not surprisingly, then, Diaz indicates Glissant's influence in a footnote.

The exception to these developments in plantation narrative has been the Irish plantation. The policies that emerged out of the Land Acts of the late nineteenth century and the Irish Free State of the 1930s redistributed the land to the middle and lower classes. Without an agricultural base, opulent big houses became unsustainable. In the last century, Ascendancy families auctioned off heirlooms and houses, many of which were converted into hotels or tourist attractions. Once the symbol of the injustice of a two-tiered colonial system, the big house has been sanitized and repackaged. As Jessica Adams writes in regard to the United States and heritage tourism, "the plantation is reduced to a 'home' precisely as part of the process that attempts to separate slavery from the meaning of the plantation" (17). This is particularly true in Ireland, where the "big house" has been transformed into an aristocratic home turned national-heritage site. Yet, as the big house is romanticized for tourism, the Ascendancy remains politically and economically ineffectual. Even so, in the Irish Republic, the big house novel continues to enjoy literary currency among writers like Aidan Higgins, Caroline Blackwood, John Banville, William Trevor, and Jennifer Johnson. Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, where it took the strongest hold, this year marks the 400th anniversary of the Ulster plantation. There, the peace wall of Belfast and surveillance towers of Derry show that while the plantation may no longer have agricultural significance, its boundaries continue to be ardently policed. The militarization of the plantation suggests that the "second plantation matrix" may not be exclusive to New World cities.

Because Irish nationalism empowered the Irish middle classes, writers in the Republic struggle less with the legacies of plantation romance. Ulster regionalist Sam Hanna Bell's *Across a Narrow Sea* (1987) is unique in contemporary literature for its portrayal of the Irish plantation from a romantic lens. Bell's adventure tale negotiates the minefield of Northern Irish politics by recognizing plantation brutalities and corruption. The sectarian violence that has troubled industrialized Belfast is a consequence of British plantation strategies in the seventeenth century, while the consecutive civil rights movements of Ulster and the U.S. south in the 1960s and 70s show that these plantation cultures continue to forge important political and affective links. Contemporary writers have also begun to reconstruct Irish involvement in the New World plantation, as in the case of Kate McCafferty's *Testimony of the Life of an Irish Slave Girl* (2002), which follows a Cork-born indentured servant kidnapped into slavery in Barbados who unites with African slaves in a revolt against plantocracy. Northern Irish writers in particular, like Brian Moore and Patrick McCabe, have engaged with model of Irish identity presented by Margaret Mitchell in *Gone with the Wind*.⁹⁶

In the twenty-first century, the plantation remains an engine of imperialism. Plantation modernism and contemporary fiction support James' conclusion that the plantation cannot be democratic. Plantation modernism engages with the burgeoning critique of colonialism that predates mid-century liberation movements, and in so doing, foreshadows projects of postcolonial revision by beginning the process of dismantling colonial ideology and iconography. Yet even today writers struggle to revise mystifications and idealizations first perpetuated by romantic writers in the early

⁹⁶ See Brian Moore's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Herne* and Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*.

nineteenth century. Because the distortions of romance still capture the popular imagination, modernist challenges to plantation ideology continue to be exigent. Modernist style may no longer be revolutionary, but in a day and age when publishing houses compete with blogs for the public's transient attentions, modernist complexity, perspectivalism, and worldliness still hold subversive potential.

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