

W. E. B. DU BOIS, NAZI GERMANY, AND THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Christina Oppel

Transnationalism has become a buzzword in American Studies. When the American historian Robert Gross proclaimed a “transnational turn” at the conference of the British Association for American Studies in Denmark in 1999, the transnational had already become an established category in American academia.¹ Although the turn reached Germany with great delay,² there, too, transnationalism has now led to new interdisciplinary approaches.³

Transnational approaches expand the focus of historical studies beyond the nation-state and use comparative and interdisciplinary analyses to explore processes of transfer, mutual influence, exchange, and interpenetration. They have not only shifted perspectives but have also opened up nation-focused historical master narratives. That is, transnationalism includes alternative and minority perspectives that were formerly marginalized, yet it is not restricted to them.

While political scientists, sociologists, and historians critical of exclusively nation-centered narratives have lauded the mythical and cataclysmic “turn” to the transnational, others, most notably traditionalist German and American historians, have been skeptical. These skeptics claim that concepts like transnationalism and diaspora subvert and irrevocably replace what they believe to be fixed categories like “the national” with fluid concepts. Moreover, they suggest that the “transnational” is short-sightedly applied to vague, global contexts within which it is understood as a consequence of the allegedly all-encompassing process of globalization. They denounce the uncritical acceptance of transnational paradigms wherein former patterns of thought are hastily abandoned, the new paradigm is proclaimed to be transformative, and its institutional, methodological, and conceptual meanings are conflated without clear definition.⁴

One way to avoid a blurring of meaning and the mere “uncritical mimicking” of fashionable epistemologies is to take the different perspectives, needs, and interests of specific fields of research as starting points for future transnational agendas.⁵ We need self-reflective investigations that strive to contextualize their subjects without falling prey to essentialization. Furthermore, we need to be careful to historicize the transnational accurately. Both advocates and skeptics of the transnational are mostly unaware of the contribution of minority perspectives, and, particularly

Black intellectual thought, to its evolution. For, unlike what some advocates of the transnational pretend, the alleged “turn” to the transnational did not simply “drop from the sky.”⁶ Rather, Black intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century as well as scholars of postcolonial and diaspora studies continually made theoretical and methodological advances that led to this development. Their advances not only have to be given due credit but should be considered for their potential value in interdisciplinary transnational studies. However, transnational concepts from the area of postcolonial and diaspora studies should be read critically to determine their historical accuracy and to counter their essentializing tendencies.

In this essay, I aim to analyze early and mid-twentieth-century African American transnational perspectives against the backdrop of the Black Atlantic, a postmodern concept of Black transnationalism Paul Gilroy elaborated in his 1993 study of Black diasporic encounters. Specifically, I turn to W. E. B. Du Bois, one of the founders of pan-Africanism, as a paradigmatic example of an early twentieth-century historian with an inter- and transnational approach. This African American intellectual moved within the Black Atlantic world and published numerous writings on National Socialist Germany in the United States during the 1930s. Here, I focus on Du Bois’s comparative writings on German and American racial policies, which also feature critical reflections on questions of (trans)nationalism, national identity, and belonging that counter some of the characteristics Gilroy attributes to Black transnationalism in the *Black Atlantic*. Taking the advances of scholars skeptical of transnational paradigms as the starting point for my analysis, I will suggest a way in which the Black Atlantic could indeed serve as a valuable paradigm for future historical studies of the Black diaspora.

Twentieth Century Black (Trans)nationalism

In their efforts to retrace the formation of a collective Black identity, scholars of postcolonial studies and the Black diaspora naturally turned to their discipline’s foundational literature.⁷ Aiming to (re)write history from the bottom up and to examine “the hyphens between places of ‘origin’ and America,” scholars of African American history and culture often looked back to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American concepts of Black internationalism.⁸ Following the social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this new generation of scholars investigated the approaches and writings of intellectuals who had been excluded from the political and historical master narrative of Western civilization. These same intellectuals struggled against racial oppression and constantly fought ostracism while they claimed equality beyond citizenship. Many

even emigrated as a last resort.⁹ These formerly ignored intellectuals, like W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Delaney, had naturally become transnational in response to the "'imagined community' of United States nationalism."¹⁰ Writing against their exclusion, they constructed international global networks and laid the foundations of current transnational perspectives in a continuous critical dialogue with "the national."

Looking back to the period before the American Civil War, these African American intellectuals conceived of a Black *internationalism* that ultimately transformed into the political and cultural concept of pan-Africanism.¹¹ Around 1900, this pan-Africanism encompassed "ideas of equality of political and economic opportunity for Africans everywhere, democracy, majority rule in Africa, and liberty."¹² Emulating the ideals of the French and American Revolutions, pan-Africanism aimed to achieve liberal and non-violent reforms that would promote African nationalism. As one of its most ardent representatives, W. E. B. Du Bois heralded pan-African nationalism in his address to the Pan-African Congress in 1900 as a call for the integrity and independence of the African states.¹³ Pan-Africanism later became a more radical, "nationalistic, unified struggle of African peoples against all forms of foreign aggression and invasion, in the fight for nationhood and nation building." It sought the "total liberation and unification of all African peoples" to achieve "African nationhood and nationality."¹⁴ Early twentieth-century Black internationalism, with Africa as the point of reference and its awareness of the "Negro problem" in the world,¹⁵ was fundamentally marked by its focus on nationalist structures. It either called for a radically separatist Black nationalism or a more moderate, integrationist though nation-centered stance, and made a double consciousness of being *both Black and American* possible.

When colonial power in Africa collapsed and African emancipation movements achieved success, pan-African nationalism, in some respects, evolved into the "imagined community" of the African or Black diaspora and expanded its approach.¹⁶ While earlier cultural studies on Black transnationalism had focused on the teleological and authoritative role Africa played as the ancestral homeland, more recent studies have privileged hybridity and displacement, presenting postcolonial conceptualizations of diaspora. These studies concentrate on practices of travel, migration, and interaction in an increasingly global world and integrate formerly marginalized and intermediary spaces while claiming to transcend racist essentialism.

Paul Gilroy's 1993 *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* is a landmark in diaspora and transnational studies that exemplifies the theoretical premises of many of the cultural studies of the early 1990s. Gilroy draws a conceptual triangle across the Atlantic that connects Africa, the Americas, and Europe, attributing a merely metaphoric presence

to Africa. Gilroy calls upon historians to consider the Black Atlantic as *one* unit of analysis as it modifies traditional nationalist concepts of modern transatlantic history. *The Black Atlantic* offers a basis for (re)writing African American-European, and particularly African American-German history in a transnational and intercultural way. In focusing on formerly silenced voices, it also provides a constructive cultural theory for studying German-American relations that defies the hegemonic white discourse in historical studies.¹⁷ Wanting to transcend structures of nation and state as well as the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity, Gilroy conceives of the Black Atlantic as a “counterculture of modernity” that breaks with the dogmatic nationalist focus of earlier cultural criticism. Like many scholars of African American history who proposed a “Black countermodernism” beside white modernism in the 1980s and 1990s,¹⁸ Gilroy places a Black *counter*history beside the formerly nation-centered historical master narratives.

Gilroy’s postmodern conceptualization of Black transnationalism offers an excellent basis for a critical interpretation of Du Bois’s accounts of Nazi Germany. In his texts, Du Bois explores Nazi racial policies and their impact on the construction of a quintessential, racially defined German identity. Further, he compares these constructions of identity, nation, and ethnicity with American ones. Though he plays with nationalist and socialist ideas in his search for a “world free for democracy and a democracy free for Black Folk,” he ultimately rejects the essentialist ideals of National Socialist thought, implicitly adding to a definition of a Black Atlantic world.¹⁹ However, his views are not restricted to the binary relationship between Germany and the United States. Du Bois’s reflections on Germany’s collapse into perdition mirror a search for a historical and prospective role for Africa in a global context and, therefore, have to be seen as part of a larger global discourse. While Du Bois’s texts corroborate much of Gilroy’s conceptualization of Black transnationalism, they also refute some of Gilroy’s premises, thus calling for a critical adaptation and reevaluation of the Black Atlantic as a tool for analyzing African American-German relations. This essay, therefore, aims not only to outline the ways in which the Black Atlantic can challenge traditional readings of the transatlantic history of the Third Reich but also to reflect critically on the concept of the Black Atlantic itself.

The Black Atlantic—A *Counterculture* of Modernity?

While Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* gives important impulses for critically rethinking the metanarrative of nation-centered historiography, its adaptation to historical transnational studies is not unproblematic.²⁰ Although it seeks to deconstruct universals, essentialisms, and restrictive binaries of

modernist discourse, it is in danger of falling into essentialization and dehistoricization itself. Its present and future-oriented focus on the transnational and the hybrid has been criticized as merely replacing the nationalist with the hybrid and thus adopting a utopian, non-heuristic character.²¹ This is not to say that the Black Atlantic cannot be a heuristic concept. It does persuasively point out the shortcomings of purely national approaches to culture and politics. However, its conceptualization as a "countermodernity" categorically excludes the consideration of complex enmeshments of nationalism, internationalism, and transnationalism that characterize its historical sources. Furthermore, if we understand it as a "counterhistory," then it cannot be incorporated into a global history of colonization, enslavement, and imperialism. This understanding fails to fully acknowledge the strategic importance of categories Gilroy ascribes to modernity such as nation, state, and ethnicity. Gilroy is right to criticize conventional historical interpretations of slavery that ignore the impact of slave resistance and the abolition movement as forms of Black agency in the formation of European modernity. Yet his focus on the interaction between the center and the periphery, and between New World slavery and Europe, excludes Africa.²² Gilroy is charged with generally dismissing pan-African nationalism because he criticizes the nationalist and imperialist zeal of Afro-centrist ideas and a "back to Africa" movement. With this criticism, he seems to implicitly allocate a merely marginal, depoliticized, and decorative role to Africa that stands in opposition to early twentieth-century African American endeavors to make Africa as important as Western nations on the world map.²³ Consequently, he also brackets off African intellectuals who stood in close contact with African American travelers to Europe. Thus, Gilroy is castigated for his alleged ignorance of the importance of negritude and (pan-)African nationalist thinking to the constitution of Black-Atlantic intellectual thought.²⁴

Another criticism leveled against Gilroy involves his reading of "slave ships." Gilroy contends that this emblem of the historical experience of slavery is not only a sign of alienation, "racial terror, commerce and ethico-political degeneration," but that the ships themselves were the "living means" connecting the two sides of the Atlantic, and must be thought of as "cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade." Many cultural historians object that this reading gives slavery and the Middle Passage a merely metaphorical presence that wrenches them "out of a historically specific continuum" and lends a "false idea of choice to forced migration."²⁵

Gilroy centers on Black British and African American conceptions of diaspora and emphasizes the Middle Passage and slavery as a break and geopolitical link that unites African Americans and Black British individuals. Yet this focus sets Africa apart and conceives of the Black Atlantic as a

hegemonic concept not applicable outside of Anglo-American contexts. As crucial as the experiences of slavery and the Middle Passage have proven to be for African Americans and Black Britons, using this constructed collective memory as a defining characteristic for a Black diasporic community implicitly excludes Afro-Germans because, as Tina Campt notes, they lack such “shared narratives of home, belonging and community.”²⁶ Campt has sought to define a diasporic concept that would apply to Afro-German contexts. She argues that “connected differences” between different Black cultures, which Audre Lorde foregrounded in her foreword to *Showing Our Colors*, must be recognized.²⁷ Drawing on Jacqueline Nassy Brown’s critique of *The Black Atlantic*, Campt emphasizes Gilroy’s failure to examine the “asymmetries of power that exist across and between different Black communities and the very different relationships to diaspora that arise as a result.”²⁸ She notes that the “relationships among different Black communities are structured no less by dynamics of power and hegemony than those that came to constitute the diaspora itself.” Anglo-American concepts of diaspora such as the Black Atlantic have dominated the discourse, contributing “to an imbalance in the nature of the transatlantic exchanges that constitute the diaspora.”²⁹

In sum, the list of arguments *The Black Atlantic* evoked seems endless and at times no less essentializing than the flaws critics identified in Gilroy’s concept. Gilroy is criticized for a lack of historical contextualization or rigorous interrogation of his sources³⁰ and for propagating historical discontinuity.³¹ Moreover, critics find fault with Gilroy’s Anglo-American focus, his failure to bestow a “real” and denotative presence on Africa, and the hegemony over different Black diasporas he establishes.³² Most prominently, they denounce his radical claim that the Black Atlantic constitutes an abstract “Black counterculture to modernity”—a claim at odds with the historical cultural and political reality of Black Atlantic culture. In longing to disengage from categories such as race, nation, and geography for the future, Gilroy indeed implicitly dehistoricizes the sources of the Black Atlantic, discarding it as a heuristic model for historical analysis.

Hence, present studies of the diasporic and the transnational face the challenge of producing self-reflexive critical investigations that strive for historical specificity and contextualization while looking at the entanglements, mutual influences, and reciprocal or ambivalent perceptions of transnational and diasporic interconnections. In order to overcome the problems of dehistoricization, decontextualization, and essentialization, I want to argue, as Rogers Brubaker has done, that the diasporic and the transnational should be conceived of as categories of individual practice.³³

Recent conceptualizations of diaspora, including Brubaker’s, use it as a political stance that functions as a normative category; it aims at

remaking the world rather than *describing* it. However, this political, normative, and prescriptive notion prohibits the heuristic use of the diasporic. Yet, as recent criticism of the Black Atlantic has shown, the diasporic must turn heuristic to be viable for future historical study. This, however, is only possible if the at times utopistic, prescriptive, and predetermining political dimension of the diasporic is exchanged for a historically more accurate, sensitive and practice-oriented approach that also involves its tangible geographical scope. Hence, we should be careful not to employ sources according to our individual political interests but scrutinize these interests and focus on the actual practices the sources convey.

Based on W. E. B. Du Bois's writings on Germany, this paper challenges the recent normative approaches to diaspora that oversimplify the concept as the antithesis of nation in their effort to render it hermeneutic. In these writings, Du Bois did not oppose ideas of nation and nationalism but engaged in a very complex process of both conscious and subconscious construction of identity. Although binary oppositions do play a part in this—Du Bois did incorporate notions of nation and nationalism—so do hybrid and highly ambivalent concepts. Thus, Du Bois implicitly refuted the postmodern terminology of *diaspora* as the antithesis of the putatively homogeneous nation. His writings call for a transnational concept more tolerant of the national. They furthermore suggest that diaspora and nationalism need to be viewed as inextricably linked discourses constantly deconstructed and reconstructed rather than as mutually opposed, essentialist, and static categories.

An 'Other Within': W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany

Du Bois's affinity for Germany constitutes an important pillar in Gilroy's construct of ideas. Gilroy uses Du Bois's writings to substantiate his argument that the Black Atlantic constitutes a counterculture to modernity: he emphasizes Du Bois's affection for Germany and acknowledges the salience of German political thought and, in particular, German idealism and nationalism, to Du Bois's concept of modernity. Moreover, Gilroy understands Du Bois's concept of double consciousness and his "cultures of diaspora Blacks" in general as "expressions of and commentaries upon ambivalences generated by modernity."³⁴ He also points out the striking ambivalences in Du Bois's ideological outlook. Du Bois synthesized national and transnational concerns in his concept of pan-Africanism. At the same time, Du Bois toyed with ambivalent ideas of roots and routes when he, on the one hand, temporarily advocated an understanding of what he thought were the roots of a racially homogeneous and ethnically absolute Black culture, into which he leapt "with enthusiasm" while studying at Fisk University.³⁵ On the other hand, Du Bois conceived of the Black

diaspora heterogeneously, as marked by routes of “travel, movement, displacement and relocation.”³⁶ Last but not least, Gilroy mentions Du Bois’s intense engagement with Hegel and neo-Hegelian thought³⁷ and with Heinrich von Treitschke’s (at times racist and fundamentally exclusive) nationalism alongside his continuing admiration of Prussian ideals. While Gilroy acknowledges Du Bois’s ambiguous fascination with nationalist doctrines and the fact that the “idea of nationality occupies a central, if shifting place” in the works of Black post-Enlightenment men, he does not critically reflect on these ideas as a potential argument against his concept of a Black anti-nationalist counterculture.³⁸

Although I agree with Gilroy’s characterization of Du Bois’s frequently ambivalent modes of thinking as rather non-radical,³⁹ I argue that Du Bois’s more extensive writings on Germany in the African American press refute Gilroy’s conceptualization of the Black Atlantic as a *counterculture*. Rather, they exemplify that Du Bois engaged in an ongoing process of creative and affirmative negotiation and oscillation between modern conceptions of nation and race, as well as the implications of race for national belonging.

A Germanophile, Du Bois, who was educated at Fisk, Harvard, and Humboldt in Berlin, was, perhaps, the African American traveler most ambivalent about and interested in the “new” Germany under National Socialism. When he first lived in Germany as a student from 1892 to 1894,⁴⁰ Du Bois experienced “the new and mighty focus of Science, Education and military organization” in Wilhelmine Germany. Remembering the freedom “from most of the iron bands that bound [him] at home,” as well as from the “race problem into which [he] was born,” he returned in 1923 searching for a true democracy “free for Black Folk.”⁴¹ In 1936, he returned yet again as a “sharp and prescient observer.” This time, however, he looked in vain for the characteristic “Gemütlichkeit” and liberal spirit he had previously attributed to Germany.⁴²

Du Bois’s visit to Germany was funded by a grant from the Oberlaender Trust. His choice of this trust was regarded with much skepticism *inter alia* by the liberal German-Jewish anthropologist Franz Boas, as Oberlaender was a known Nazi sympathizer.⁴³ In accepting the grant, Du Bois was prohibited from participating as a founding member of the American Committee for Anti-Nazi Literature, for which Franz Boas had tried to win his support.⁴⁴ In his response to Boas, Du Bois pointed out that the trust indeed prohibited the study of race prejudice but was willing to fund a study on education and industry. Whereas no limits were set on what he could say after he returned, Du Bois considered it unwise “to publicly join any committee” in which his participation might jeopardize the funding of his study.⁴⁵ One could defend Du Bois’s choice by arguing that he may have sought the patronage and funding of a Nazi

sympathizer simply to ensure safe travel to Germany and a stay unencumbered by Nazi racial discrimination. Boas was skeptical about Du Bois's trip. He doubted that Du Bois would be able to "see behind the scenes" as "people in Germany are so terrorized that nobody dares to say anything except to his oldest and most reliable friends."⁴⁶ Yet these remarks did not discourage the optimistic traveler, who trusted his "good deal of experience in seeing beyond surface indications."⁴⁷

Du Bois would keep his promise to report critically about German racial politics. However, it was only after he had left Germany and escaped German censorship that he regained a feeling of personal security. Then, his writings in the *Pittsburgh Courier* took on a sharp, analytical, critical, and provocative tone that had been lacking in his first analyses from Germany. At first glance, Du Bois, in his writings up through December 1936, seemed to evade issues of race and anti-Semitism. On closer examination, however, one finds that he did comment on racial issues in a contained way. His extensive articles on the Deutsches Museum in Munich and the Olympics are of special interest, for he interpreted them as sites where German nationalism, social hierarchy, and inequality were on display.

On the surface, Du Bois's lengthy documentary article on his four-day visit to the Deutsches Museum could be mistaken for the account of a Germanophile blinded by German grandeur. However, Du Bois consciously observed the exposition's omissions and silences, essentially criticizing its exclusively national character and unjustified aggrandizement of the German nation.⁴⁸ While wholeheartedly admiring modernity's scientific and technological achievements, Du Bois read the Deutsches Museum exposition as a public statement of national self-representation and as an allegory of the National Socialist ideology of a grand Nordic *Übermensch*. He maintained that Germany lacked the disposition to establish a culture beyond commercialism and nationality and was not deluded by the nationalistic demonstration of German "fame." Instead, he hailed the international character of scientific achievements and inveighed against the exposition for its exclusive and nationalistic presentation. Well aware that the German postal service would censor his writings, he provided German authorities with what they wanted to see and made use of double consciousness as a rhetorical strategy. In this way, he could hide his pointed criticism behind overt appreciation.⁴⁹

Du Bois's reflections on the 1936 Berlin Olympics offer fertile ground for analyzing the interplay between nation, class, and race in a transnational perspective. Discussions about African American participation and performance in the Olympics had already started in 1933. The NAACP called for African Americans to boycott and abandon the Olympics on the grounds of German and American racism,⁵⁰ but many others argued that

African American participation provided an opportunity to repudiate both Nazi and white American racial theories.⁵¹ They viewed the Olympics as an international arena in which racial equality could be publicly displayed. Hence, successful African American participation was essential, if only to avenge Joe Louis for his devastating defeat by Max Schmeling on June 19, 1936.⁵² These advocates held beliefs similar to the “Double V” campaign of WWI—victory abroad entailing victory at home: they held that the 1936 Olympics, which offered African Americans an opportunity to excel publicly, was too great an opportunity to forgo. Arriving in Germany a month before the start of the Olympics, Du Bois witnessed the changes Germany underwent to prepare for them: signs discriminating against Jews were temporarily taken down, and other measures intended to disguise the true extent of Nazi racism were officially enforced.⁵³ The propagandistic demonstration of Nazi-German superiority and self-sufficiency fooled many journalists and, in Du Bois’s view, made the “testimony of the non-German speaking visitor to the Olympic Games ... worse than valueless.”⁵⁴ To escape this, he chose to be absent for most of the month and watch the goings-on from Paris as an insider outside.

Much of the African American reporting on the Olympics revolved around Hitler’s racist disregard for African American Olympians, especially Jesse Owens.⁵⁵ Du Bois, however focused on Berlin’s “normalcy after the Olympic Games.”⁵⁶ Only much later, in October, did he venture to “estimate the impression” that the Olympic Games and the “colored competitors” had made on Germany and Europe.⁵⁷ His first observations centered on class. In a “world atmosphere of suspicion and distrust,” Du Bois emphasized the games’ importance for the “future efforts of Negroes” because they “typif[ied] a new conception of the American Negro for Europe and ... a new idea of race relations in the United States.”⁵⁸ To Du Bois, the international sports arena mirrored the interrelatedness of race and class in society. While noting that England picked its contestants from a small segment of society, he held that sports in the United States had begun to acquire a far more democratic character.⁵⁹ Carefully distancing himself from the “white” and “Black” press by avoiding racial jargon, Du Bois, in his early reports, was reluctant to interpret African American victories as the result of physical advantages because that would have been essentialist and racist.

Others, however, were not afraid to be more explicit. The entire September issue of *The Crisis*, entitled “Jim Crow in Steel,” was dedicated to the Olympics and the “Jesse Owens saga.”⁶⁰ According to the *Baltimore Afro-American*, K. K. K. Hanfstaengl, a Hitler confidant, had stated that “it was Africa that dominated the Olympic track ... not the United States.”⁶¹ The editor of *The Crisis* responded to this remark with interest. The German belief that the “American Negro Olympic stars” were “not really

Americans but 'Black auxiliary forces'" made a certain amount of sense to him. Europeans were unable to understand the "situation in America where Negroes on paper ... are American citizens, but *in cold reality* are not," for "Germans look at the reality, not the phrases of the Constitution." He held that "Germany knows ... that mobs make sport of black men upon the slightest pretext, without the government lifting a hand to apprehend lynchers.... She knows that in practically all places of public accommodation Negroes are humiliated and insulted."⁶² Similarly, *The Baltimore Afro-American* noted in an article entitled "We Shine for America" that "the glory isn't ours, it belongs to our country."⁶³ Thus, it bitterly alluded to the injustice of white America happily accepting the victories won by African Americans while refusing them equality in practice.

In contrast, Du Bois attempted to look at the Olympics from a transnational angle. He criticized the racist representations of Black Olympic competitors in the French and German press, in particular the astonishment with which Black participation and victories were commented on. Du Bois also described the two nations' different ways of presenting Black athletes, noting that German papers "pick African American competitors out for comment" and label these competitors "Negroes," whereas the French put a special emphasis on printing their colored faces.⁶⁴ Du Bois's astute observation entails a criticism of overtly German vis-à-vis clandestine and concealed French forms of racism.⁶⁵

Du Bois changed his initially hesitant tone in the articles he wrote after leaving Germany in December 1936. Certain that "his friends ... understood" his reticence for "it simply wasn't safe to attempt anything further," he now fulminated against Germany's racial policies.⁶⁶ Looking at the advances Hitler had made since "riding into power by accusing the world of a conspiracy to ruin Germany by economic starvation," Du Bois characterized the Nazi state as a "content and prosperous whole" on the surface with strongly reduced unemployment rates and "perfect public order." However, his gaze reached beneath the surface: "And yet, in ... contradictory paradox to all this, Germany is silent, nervous, suppressed; it speaks in whispers; there is no public opinion, no opposition, no discussion of anything; there are waves of enthusiasm, but never any protest."⁶⁷

Germany, to him, was a "paradox and contradiction."⁶⁸ Painted in a brilliant, innocent white on the outside, it was overshadowed by a dark abiding presence inside. Analyzing differences between German anti-Semitism and American racism, he asserted that "there is race prejudice in Germany, and a regular, planned propaganda to increase it."⁶⁹ In Germany, the "campaign of race prejudice is carried on ... specifically against the Jews, [and it] surpasses in vindictive cruelty and public insult anything [he has] ever seen." To Du Bois, the "fight of the Jew in Germany ... is an attack on civilization, comparable only to the Spanish Inquisition

and the African slave trade."⁷⁰ However, Du Bois contrasted German anti-Semitism with American racism, arguing that the former was not "the result of long belief backed by child teaching, and outward insignia like color or hair" but as "reasoned prejudice, or an economic fear," thus revealing some of his anti-Semitic sentiments.⁷¹ Nonetheless, his critical vision of the discrimination against German Jews remained clear: he recognized that they were constantly publicly belittled, cursed, and blamed whenever Hitler made a speech. Experienced with American Jim Crow practices, he read between the lines of "cases in the papers": enforcement of miscegenation laws, professional discrimination,

... the total disenfranchisement of all Jews; deprivation of civil rights and inability to remain or become German citizens; limited rights of education, a narrowly limited right to work in trades, professions and the civil service; threat of boycott, loss of work and even mob violence and, above all, the continued circulation of Julius Streicher's *Stuerner*, the most shameless, lying advocate of race hate in the world, not excluding Florida.⁷²

Despite his clear perception of the power and reach of anti-Semitism, Du Bois still appreciated the "essential character of the German people." He described them as "a kind folk, good-hearted, hating oppression, widely sympathetic with suffering, and filled with longing ideals for all mankind." Du Bois enjoyed his stay in Germany because he felt that Germans "[t]reated [him] with uniform courtesy and consideration," which would have been "impossible ... in any part of the United States, without ... frequent cases of personal insult or discrimination."⁷³ Always "an object of curiosity," yet never publicly insulted, he nevertheless looked beyond the surface and continuously pointed to the ambivalences of his "Black" presence in Germany. He was clearly aware of the limits of his personal freedom, which would have been reached immediately had miscegenation come into play.

Although Du Bois reflected positively on his personal experiences, he clearly distinguished between individual encounters with Germans, Germany as a whole, and Nazi politics, both in articles from 1936 and 1941. He bluntly and fundamentally disapproved of Hitler's tyrannical "dictatorship," describing it as based on "espionage" and "backed by swift and cruel punishment" that could lead "without trial, to cold murder."⁷⁴ Unlike the "white" American Press, which he characterized as "beyond belief" regarding Nazism, Du Bois recognized how grave the situation was.⁷⁵ However, just because he articulately denounced discriminatory Nazi politics did not mean that he judged Germany as a whole. He argued that Hitler "and his state would have disappeared" long since

had the establishment of a tyranny been all Hitler had done.⁷⁶ Furthermore, he maintained that Germany's "compromise" was an "immense sacrifice" for "domestic peace" and for Germans as an unquestioning people, disinterested in whether "other and less dangerous roads [would have] led to the same end."⁷⁷

Presumably impeded by his relatively "positive" personal experiences as well as his interest in a "just" characterization of Nazi Germany, Du Bois reflected critically, yet in a deliberately balanced and primarily positive way, on the country in which he had experienced his personal "spiritual awakening" forty years earlier. His positive reflections on Nazi Germany and his criticism of German Jews have often been held against him. Critics have accused him of being pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic; the latter charge is fundamentally substantiated in a much disputed 1937 interview published in the German-speaking New York newspaper *Staatszeitung und Herold*. However, this presents only one side of Du Bois's very complex and nuanced perspective. In his weekly column in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he commented more critically on Nazi Germany.⁷⁸

In 1952, Du Bois reflected on his visit to the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto three years before and on two other visits to Poland and Germany. Although he showed great interest in the mechanisms of anti-Semitism in both Poland and Germany, he stated that "the result" of his three visits was "not so much a clearer understanding of the Jewish problem in the world as it was a real and more complete understanding of the Negro problem."⁷⁹ Hence, we need to place his interest in Germany's political, social, and cultural development and its discriminatory and supremacist politics under National Socialist rule within a larger comparative and transnational perspective. His investigation of Nazi politics would eventually lead him to assert that "the problem of slavery, emancipation, and caste in the United States was no longer ... a separate and unique thing," but "cut across lines of color."⁸⁰ His observations helped him "to emerge from a certain social provincialism into a broader conception of what the fight against race segregation, religious discrimination, and the oppression by wealth had to become if civilization was going to triumph and broaden in the world"—including Africa. Eight years earlier, in 1941, Du Bois had wondered what would become of Africa if Hitler won, which he did not believe possible "in the long run." He saw Africa "parceled out between Germany and Italy." "Subjected to ... a caste system resembling slavery," Africans would be made "valuable to the conqueror," but this would also lead to the conqueror's "eventual disaster."⁸¹

In this dystopia, Du Bois foresaw rebellion, "a frightful whirl of unloosened passion which no power in Fascist Europe [could] long hold back."⁸² This optimistic vision must be examined in context: Afro-America was incredibly exasperated with Italy for its ravaging of Ethiopia. Against

this backdrop, Du Bois sounded as though he was calling for the Allies to prevail and rescue Europe from fascism. The African American press repeatedly expressed concern about Africans and colonial Africa. The shifting balance of power in Europe during World War II made their fate uncertain. In particular, it expressed fear that Germany would demand that the British and French empires cede control of former German colonies to Germany. The press also compared these demands to French and British rule, pointing out the hypocrisy of their “democracies” regarding the colonies: “the natives have as much liberty and freedom in their own countries as the Jews enjoy in Hitler’s Germany.”⁸³

The breadth of Du Bois’s transnational vision becomes more apparent in his elaboration of “Hitler’s New World Order.” In this 1941 article, which must be read as part of the debate surrounding a possible American entry into WWII, Du Bois regarded Hitler and the Nazis as part of a larger phenomenon—as only the second phase of a “revolution sweeping over Europe ... far greater than the Nazis.”⁸⁴ In an attempt to understand the transformation Germany had undergone when he had visited it in 1936, Du Bois looked back at the rise and decline of democracy there.⁸⁵ He pointedly depicted Nazi power as the rule of a “murderous mob” composed of “ex-soldiers, socialists, capitalists, Jew-baiters and psychopathic fanatics” that had “sabotaged the Weimar Republic” and “erect[ed] an oligarchy on its ruins.” Here Du Bois demonstrated a critical understanding of Nazism’s “success” without underestimating its complexity. He warned that it was a “grave mistake to assume that Hitlerism either in method or in will is all propaganda.” Regarding Germans as “a population much more intelligent” than others, Du Bois assumed that a higher force was at work in “Hitlerism’s” success: it was “based on a revolution so profound and a doctrine so fundamental that it cannot entirely fail” for “all this smoke and propaganda rose above a much more significant movement which pre-dated Hitler and the Nazis,” the revolution of “industrial rationalization.”⁸⁶ In Du Bois’s view, with planning and international economic cooperation aimed at achieving a world economy, this revolution would ultimately give formerly disadvantaged “racial” minorities a chance to rise. In this fantasy, Du Bois envisioned a socialist pan-European system. He clearly distinguished, however, between the socialist elements he appreciated within National Socialism and his own vision of a transnational pan-Africanist movement. Reflecting on “Neuropa,” Du Bois led a transnationalist discourse in dialogic exchange with fundamentally nationalist ideas.

Du Bois’s attitudes toward Germany were complex and highly ambivalent. While sharply critical, he also profoundly respected and empathized with Germany and its people; he sought out what was essentially good in what he saw as a deplorable development that, though not irrevocable,

could lead to Germany's self-destruction. Du Bois was indeed "a sharp and prescient observer"⁸⁷ of Germany whose reflections were at times softened by his admiration of the country. The complexity of these reflections demonstrate that Du Bois understood Germany's paradoxes and ambivalences and had a fundamentally positive view of the nation without condoning its dictatorial and racist policies.

Du Bois held the provocative view that Nazi tyranny was an inevitable consequence of Germany's social, economic, and political struggle after WWI, and furthermore, he argued that it was Germany's only alternative to turning communist. At first glance, one might see this as uncritical acceptance of Nazi Germany.⁸⁸ Yet, Du Bois severely criticized the racist, propagandist dictatorship, even though he expressed understanding for the depressive mood in Germany following the Versailles Treaty and credited National Socialism with social achievements.⁸⁹ His empathy for the country and people he still thoroughly respected and his ability to dissociate and abstract his appreciation of Germany as a *Volk* and nation from its contemporary tyrannical politics distinguished Du Bois from many of his contemporaries.⁹⁰ In 1936 and even in 1941, Du Bois still hoped that the situation could improve and was sorely disappointed when he witnessed the full dimension of Nazi Germany's genocide on traveling to Warsaw after the war.⁹¹

Du Bois's repeated attempts to see "beyond the surface" and to look for higher ideals driving political developments in Nazi Germany not only make his observations interesting but also offer a broad spectrum of analysis on issues ranging from class to race and nation. He regarded the "exaggerated and childish theory of race" as fatal to the success of any economic or political system on an international scale. Further, he recognized and censured Nazi Germany's determination to eliminate "Jewish brains" and its intention to construct a state based on the "utter subordination of the Poles and Slavs."⁹² However, he saw a great opportunity in the idea of "sweeping" away national and linguistic barriers that had "so long hindered and disorganized Europe."⁹³ While he rejected Hitler's dream of a pan-German superstate under the National Socialist dictatorship, he approved of the idea of making Europe transnational. Hence, he dreamed of a united but democratic Europe only temporarily shattered by the wars that ravaged the continent during the first half of the twentieth century.

* * *

Du Bois's reflections on Nazi Germany are part of a larger transnational, antiracist, and anticolonial discourse. Like other Black intellectuals such as C. L. R. James, George Padmore, and Oliver Cox, he "viewed fascism as a blood relative of slavery and imperialism, global systems rooted both in capitalist political economy and in racist ideologies that were

already in place at the dawn of modernity."⁹⁴ At the same time, his writings manifest a continual dialogic exchange with fundamentally nationalist ideas. Although he was torn between his "love for his oppressed race" and his "love for the oppressing country," that is, the United States, Du Bois portrayed both the U.S. and Germany with surprising tolerance, which reveals that he did not decide against either country.⁹⁵ Rather than oppose modernist ideas of nation and culture, he found them compelling. At the same time, he criticized social hierarchies and continually fought the African (American) struggle for racial equality. In his writings, the diasporic and the national must be understood not as mutually exclusive but as mutually constitutive, intertwined, and overlapping discourses. He held an intermediary, oscillating position, continually negotiating ideas of nation, ethnicity, nationalism and transnationalism. He attempted to create a pluralistic view that went beyond apparent forms of racial discrimination and national borders. He was especially interested in the very complex process of both conscious and subconscious constructions of German national(ist) identity, discerning binary and antithetical elements in it, but in his view, these were not its only determining factors. In reflecting on the multilayered interdependencies of social, cultural, economic, and, not least, racist elements that he regarded as the foundation of the German National Socialist state, he developed a multifaceted perspective that included notions of nation as a constitutive and forward-looking element. In focusing his analysis on Germany's political, social, and racial structure, Du Bois was influenced by his personal inclination towards the country of his "spiritual awakening," but not so much that he neglected his underlying interest in the role of "the Negro" and Africa in the world. In his critical views of Germany, Du Bois not only looked at striking parallels between German and American social and racial politics but continuously asked what these political developments meant for Africa and Africans in the Black Atlantic diaspora.

Du Bois's positions were divergent and, at times, ambivalent, and his transnational perspective was broad. To understand them fully, we must modify the mutually exclusive, antagonistic opposition of nationalism and diasporic culture. Du Bois constantly worked to combine national and diasporic elements in his writings and tried to integrate an important geo- and historiographical component: Africa. Underlying his and other Black diasporic intellectuals' writings, for example, George Padmore's, was a constant exploration of the meaning that fascism and World War II had for "the darker races."⁹⁶ These writers continuously questioned the impact that a shift in Europe's distribution of power, as well as its economic deficits during World War II, might have on European colonialism in Africa.

It is not easy for historians aiming at historical specificity, continuity, and contextualization to follow transnational approaches. They face the

difficulty of combining comparative and interdisciplinary methods, and they should carefully analyze the relationship of the variables they pack together. In reaching beyond nineteenth- and twentieth-century conceptions of “nationality, ethnicity, authenticity and cultural integrity,”⁹⁷ historians who choose the Black Atlantic as a paradigm for historical study must be cautious not to re-establish mutually exclusive oppositions like those they wish to overcome. Such new binaries merely shift the analysis from the center historians have criticized (i.e., Europe) to the formerly marginalized edge. Furthermore, it would be prudent for historians studying diasporic and transnational themes to leave sufficient space for the hybrid, intermediary, and ambivalent states of Black Atlantic individuals like Du Bois. Like him, many such individuals oscillated between the “camps” of nation, culture, and ethnicity and affirmatively integrated nationalist ideas in constructing a quintessentially Black diasporic transnationalism.⁹⁸ The recent foregrounding of hybridity, inbetweenness, and métissage is often perceived as presupposing anti-essentialism and plurality, yet historians of the transnational must be careful not to simply replace the former essentialist categories with hybrid ones. They should continue to question the interactions and connections that stretch beyond the borders, as well as the structural categories of nation-states. Referring to Brubaker’s idea of conceptualizing diaspora as a category of practices,⁹⁹ I would like to suggest that the Black Atlantic can be reconceptualized as a dynamic transcultural and transnational concept. It combines the ambivalences of inbetweenness and belonging, as well as opposition to modernity and efforts to transform modernity into a more inclusive concept. The Black Atlantic, if used in a way that is sensitive to its historical sources and geographical specifics, that allocates a real, rather than merely metaphoric, space to Africa, and that strips it of its utopianism, could indeed serve as a valuable heuristic concept for future historical study.

Notes

¹ Robert Gross, “The Transnational Turn: Rediscovering American Studies in a Wider World,” *Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000): 373–93. The term was used as early as 1916 in an article by Randolph Bourne in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Bourne defined the U.S. “not as a nationality but a trans-nationality ... of many sizes and colors” and a “trans-nationality of all the nations.” Randolph Bourne, “Trans-National America,” *Atlantic Monthly* 118 (1916): 86–97; repr. in Carl Resek, ed., *War and Intellectuals: Essays by Randolph S. Bourne, 1915–1919* (New York, 1964), 107–23, 121f. On the term’s genesis in the German and American historical sciences, see Kiran Klaus Patel, “Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52 (2004): 626–45.

² German reunification in 1989, with its impact on German national history, led the majority of historians of twentieth-century Germany to focus temporarily on national rather than transnational matters. Cf., e.g., Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (London, 2003), 2ff.; and Stefan Berger, “Historians and Nation-Building in Germany after Reunification,” *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 187–222.

³As late as 2001, the German historian Jürgen Osterhammel held that the transnational had hardly reached the (German) historical sciences. Jürgen Osterhammel, "Transnationale Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Erweiterung oder Alternative?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001): 464–79, 471.

⁴Methodologically, transnational approaches face the challenge of establishing larger contexts of transnational interactions while abstracting and remaining specific enough to allow for comparative analysis. Cf. Jürgen Kocka, "Comparison and Beyond," *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 39–44. Involving both comparative and interdisciplinary approaches, the transnational runs the risk of becoming an "escapist term," "preventing an analysis of the relationship of variables [it] pack[s] together." Cf. Bernd Ostendorf, "Transnationalism or the Fading of Borders?" in *Transnational America: The Fading of Borders in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. Bernd Ostendorf (Heidelberg, 2002), 1–22, 19. Conceptually, the transnational conveys a "fascination with the liberating, transgressive and subversive," it foregrounds hybridity, inbetweenness, and métissage, presupposes anti-essentialism and plurality, and thus promotes the "empowerment of diasporas." Katharyne Mitchell, "Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography Back In," *Antipode* 29, no. 2 (1996): 101–14, <http://faculty.washington.edu/kmitch/transnat.htm> (14 February 2008). Focusing on diasporic conditions and intercultural spaces, many conceptualizations of transnationalism, however, risk dissolving former nation-centered objects of study into "diffuse globalisms." In their search for a common transnational formula, they replace former national foci with globally defined categories. Winfried Fluck, "Inside and Outside: What Kind of Knowledge Do We Need? A Response to the Presidential Address," *American Quarterly* 59 (2007): 23–32, cf. in particular pages 23 and 25.

⁵Cf. Fluck, "Inside and Outside," 25.

⁶Mae M. Ngai, "Transnationalism and the Transformation of the 'Other': Response to the Presidential Address," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 59–65, 59.

⁷Robin D. G. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem': Black History's Global Vision 1883–1950," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1045–77; David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 965–75. On the importance of international perspectives for Black intellectuals, see Lisa Brock, "Questioning the Diaspora: Hegemony, Black Intellectuals, and Doing International History from Below," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 24 (1996): 9–12.

⁸Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem'," 1045.

⁹Kelley and Thelen refer to the early development of transnational narratives from the antebellum era, particularly among those denied suffrage: women, African Americans and individual groups of immigrants. Cf. Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem'," 1048f.; Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond," 970; Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 765–78.

¹⁰In his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, a sociological study of the Black struggle after Reconstruction and one of the key texts in early twentieth-century African American Studies, Du Bois envisioned a transnational America which, however, was still restricted by the color line that "prevented 'black' folks from drawing from both their African and American identities." Cf. David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond," 970.

¹¹Kwame Nantambu, "Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism: An Afrocentric Analysis," *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (1998): 561–74, 565. Martin R. Delaney proclaimed the "Back-to-Africa" dream long before the outbreak of the American Civil War: Martin R. Delaney, *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party* (New York, 1861), 24.

¹²W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., "The Report," *An A.B.C. of Color* (Berlin, 1963), 19–23, 10–12, qtd. in Clarence G. Contee, "The Emergence of Du Bois as an African Nationalist," *The Journal of Negro History* 54 (1969): 48–63, 49.

¹³Du Bois further defined pan-Africanism as the "intellectual understanding and co-operation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about ... the industrial and spiritual

emancipation of the Negro peoples" and "black liberation." Cf. Du Bois, "Pan-Africa and New Racial Philosophy," *The Crisis* 40 (1933): 247, 262. Other decisive figures in the pan-African movement with diverging interests included Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, and George Padmore.

¹⁴Nantambu, "Pan-Africanism Versus Pan-African Nationalism," 569.

¹⁵Du Bois's writings reflect a general interest in "a real and more complex understanding of the Negro problem" in the world. See Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," *Jewish Life* (May 1952): 14–15.

¹⁶George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes," *Phylon* 23 (1962): 346–58.

¹⁷Paul Gilroy defines the Black Atlantic as a "system of historical, cultural, linguistic and political interaction and communication," originating in the enslavement of Africans. It includes the dynamic process whereby slaves gradually adapted to the slaveholding culture, their emancipation and ongoing struggle against racial oppression, as well as slaveholders' assumptions about slaves' lack of creativity and humanity. It is a fluid, hybrid, and transnational alternative form of power, "opening out into theories of diaspora culture and dispersion, memory, identity and difference." Cf. Paul Gilroy, http://www.blackatlantic.com/general/gilroy_essay.pdf (1 Oct. 2008). See also Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge, MA, 1993). I will refer to Paul Gilroy's publication *The Black Atlantic* in italics and to the general concept as the Black Atlantic.

¹⁸Cf. Houston Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago, 1989).

¹⁹Qtd. in Frederick Woodard, W. E. B. Du Bois: *The Native Impulse: Notes Toward an Ideological Biography, 1868–1897* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1976), 26.

²⁰*The Black Atlantic* has spawned a great deal of criticism. The debates that erupted after it appeared in 1993 cannot be fully retraced here. I draw my argument from the following titles: Christine Chivallon, "Beyond Gilroy's Black Atlantic: The Experience of the African Diaspora," trans. Karen E. Fields, *Diaspora* 11, no. 3 (2002): 359–82; Laura Chrisman, "Journeying to Death: Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*," in *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism* (Manchester, 2003), 73–88; Yogita Goyal, "Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies: Caryl Phillips' *Crossing the River*," *Diaspora* 12, no. 1 (2003): 5–38.

²¹Ruth Mayer, "The Atlantic in Black and White: A Critique of the Black Atlantic," in *Europe and America: Cultures in Translation*, ed. Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, Markus Hünemörder, Meike Zwingenberger (Heidelberg, 2006), 177–184, 179.

²²Although *The Black Atlantic* seeks to establish past Black cultural connections between Africa, Europe, and the Americas, Africans seem to be missing. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 49; George Lipsitz, "Review of *The Black Atlantic*," *Social Identities* 1, no. 1 (1995): 193–200; Simon Gikandi, "In the Shadow of Hegel: Cultural Theory in an Age of Displacement," *Research in African Literatures* 27 (1996): 139–50, 147.

²³Goyal reproaches Gilroy for relegating Africa to the margin and thus reinstating the binary between Africa and the West. Echoing Simon Gikandi's earlier argument in some ways, Goyal also denounces Gilroy's lack of historical specificity from his paradigm, his ignorance of the role of Africa for Du Bois's understanding of modernity, and, above all, his reconfiguration of Martin Delaney, the "father of black nationalism," as a critic of nationalist perspectives. Goyal, "Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies," 9f.

²⁴Gikandi, "In the Shadow of Hegel," 147; Goyal, "Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies," 5.

²⁵Joan Dayan, "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes: The Middle Passage as Metaphor," *Research in African Literatures* 27 (1996): 7–14.

²⁶Tina Campt, "The Crowded Space of Diaspora: Intercultural Address and the Tension of Diasporic Relation," *Radical History Review* 83 (2002): 94–113, 102.

²⁷ Ibid., 100; Audre Lorde, "Foreword to the English Language Edition," in *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, ed. May Opitz, Katarina Oguntoye, Dagmar Schultz, trans. Anne Adams, xiii-xiv (Amherst, 1992).

²⁸ Campt, "The Crowded Space of Diaspora," 101; Jacqueline Nassy Brown, "Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic Space," *Cultural Anthropology* 13 (1998): 291-325.

²⁹ Campt, "The Crowded Space of Diaspora," 102.

³⁰ Gikandi, "In the Shadow of Hegel," 147; Dayan, "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes," 8ff.

³¹ Dayan, "Paul Gilroy's Slaves, Ships, and Routes," 7ff.

³² Gikandi, "In the Shadow of Hegel," 146ff. Goyal, "Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies," 1, 4ff.

³³ Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (2005): 1-19, 12. See Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 66, Vol. 19, no. 1 (2001): 46-73; idem, *The Practices of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, 2003).

³⁴ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 117.

³⁵ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1997); Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 115.

³⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 117.

³⁷ In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois unmistakably appropriated Hegelian ideas when he characterized the "Negro" as "a sort of seventh son" (New York, 1994 [1903]), 3.

³⁸ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 35, cf., in particular, page 134.

³⁹ Ibid., 112. Here Gilroy objects to Cedric Robinson's "Black Radical Tradition," arguing that Du Bois's complex and shifting positions could be used to dispute this "both illuminating and misleading" term.

⁴⁰ On Du Bois's 1892 Berlin sojourn, see Sieglinde Lemke, "Berlin and Boundaries: *sollen* versus *geschehen*," *Boundary 2* 27, no. 3 (2000): 45-78.

⁴¹ Quoted in Woodard, W. E. B. Du Bois: *The Native Impulse*, 26. In 1926, Du Bois passed through Germany briefly on his journey to Russia.

⁴² Werner Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany: A Surprising, Prescient Visitor," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 12 (1999): B4f. Du Bois arrived less than four months after the German Wehrmacht had invaded and reoccupied the Rhineland and eleven days after Joe Louis had been defeated by Max Schmeling in Madison Square Garden (June 30). Cf. David L. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century: 1919-1963* (New York, 2000), 395f.

⁴³ Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany," B4.

⁴⁴ In his 1935 grant application, Du Bois stated that he aimed "to study the way in which popular education for youth and adults in Germany has been made to minister to industrial organization and advance; and how this German experience can be applied so as to help in the reorganization of the American Negro industrial school, and the establishment of other social institutions." W. E. B. Du Bois, 1935 grant proposal to the Oberlaender Trust of the Carl Schurz Society, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, quoted in Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany," B4.

⁴⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, Letter to Franz Boas, May 5, 1936, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, Vol. 2 (1934-1944), ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst, 1997), 135f.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Letter from Franz Boas, May 11, 1936, 136.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 136f.

⁴⁸ In his article entitled "Fame" (published in the Forum of Fact and Opinion [FFO], *The Pittsburgh Courier* [PC], October 10, 1936), Du Bois described the "splendid," "predominantly

German" hall of fame in the German Museum. He remarked that it "would have been a finer and bigger thing if, ignoring nation and language, [it] could have brought together the great contributors ... the world over." Though he noted that, "on the whole ... commercialism and nationality ha[d] been restricted" in the Museum's exhibition, he pointedly added that just this "restriction [was] sometimes poor." Whereas German inventions "which came years after" were highlighted and "given the place of honor," the real invention was "simply there."

⁴⁹Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 2.

⁵⁰In 1933, the NAACP demanded that Germany unequivocally accept "colored" competitors. If Germany resisted, the NAACP would ask the American Olympic Committee to deny Americans permission to compete in Berlin. See *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 19, 1933; "Boycott the Olympics," *The Baltimore Afro-American (BAA)*, December 15, 1934; "Stay out of Nazi Olympics," *The Crisis*, September 1935, 273. For a more detailed discussion of this African American debate, see Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (New York, 2003), 222ff.; Arthur A. Ashe, Jr., *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African American Athlete, 1919-1945* (New York, 1988).

⁵¹*The Chicago Defender (CD)*, December 14, 1935.

⁵²This Louis-Schmeling fight brought the struggle for racial supremacy to the center of an international stage. Schmeling's victory was exploited propagandistically to display "Hitler's hypothesis of Aryan supremacy." Both German and African American newspapers exploited the fight on racial grounds. "Hitler still frowns on Max Fighting Joe Louis in the U.S.," *CD*, May 2, 1936, 14; "Hitler Attacks the Louis and Schmeling Battle," *CD*, April 16, 1936, 13; "Uncle Sam Pulls Out Chestnuts," *CD*, July 27, 1936, 14.

⁵³In its self-portrayal during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Nazi Germany intended to create a tidy, friendly, non-racist atmosphere, and it succeeded in assuaging foreigners' fears. *The Los Angeles Times* had rather positive reports (*Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1936, section 2, 9; August 2, 1936; and August 4, 1936, sec. 2, 4). *The New York Times*, July 6, 1936, however, opposed U.S. participation in the Olympics and initially warned readers that Germany intended to use the games to restore its good image. See also *New York Times*, August 3 and 16, 1936. Among the African American newspapers, the *Chicago Defender*, especially, rather skeptically relayed similar ideas: "Olympic Stars Given Welcome in Berlin; Prejudice Missing as Athletes Arrive" and "U.S. Athletes Well Received by Hitlerites: Hand of Prejudice is as Yet Unseen," *CD*, August 1, 1936, 2.

⁵⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, "Germany and Hitler" (FFO), *PC*, December 5, 1936. In this article on the Olympics, Du Bois retrospectively assesses the silencing and whitewashing effects of Nazi propaganda and underestimates the critical potential in the African American press.

⁵⁵Hitler's alleged snub of Jesse Owens, in particular, generated a great deal of discussion. It was said that Hitler disappeared to avoid congratulating the Black athlete for his track-and-field victories. Jumping at the occasion, the African American Press and the president of the Olympic Committee harnessed the incident to promote civil and human rights: "Newspapers are criticizing Hitler for not congratulating Owens, yet when he finishes running and comes back here to live among Nordics, will he not meet the same thing from them?" "Hitler and Owens," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 13, 1936, 13. See also "Hitler's Aryan Superman Myth is Exploded as Colored Americans Stampede Olympics," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 8, 1936, 8; "Jesse Owens Thrills Nazis," *BAA*, Aug. 1, 1936; William N. Jones, "'Adolf' Snubs U.S. Lads: Hitler Won't Shake Hands: Intentional Discourtesy is Shown Owens, Johnson," *BAA*, August 8, 1936, 1f.; Editorial in *The Crisis*, September 1936, 273. Later perspectives point out the mythical character of the alleged "snub": Richard Shenkman, *Legends, Lies and Cherished Myths of American History* (New York, 1988); William J. Baker, *Jesse Owens: An American Life* (New York, 1986), 74ff.

⁵⁶In his column on "Sport" (FFO, *PC*, September 19, 1936), Du Bois described Berlin's return to everyday life as the decorations disappeared, the streets became ordinary, and the cafés

half empty again. However, he also remarked that it was great numbers of Germans who had “poured into Berlin” during the games, outnumbering foreigners by a large margin, thus criticizing the games’ national(ist) character.

⁵⁷Published while Du Bois still lived in Germany, his early observations (“The Olympics,” FFO, PC, October 24, 1936) evaded obvious race matters that the African American press, in contrast, had already largely explored. Cf. Du Bois’s articles in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 19, 1936. Later, he published more extensive and critical remarks.

⁵⁸Du Bois, “Sport,” FFO, PC, September 19, 1936. His reflections on class appear under the headings “Health,” “The Olympics,” “Future Amateurs,” and “Income” in the same article.

⁵⁹In his analysis and criticism of amateur versus professional sports, Du Bois revealed his fascination with socialism. Wondering whether Olympic sports required class or health, wealth or skill while reflecting on the establishment of “professional sports” as “diversions of the wealthy” and privileged, he observed that the new idea of “bodily health and physical ability as a method of social uplift” renewed the traditional social function of sports. Du Bois saw the United States as “compelled to select even Negroes if they wanted to win,” while Germany won partly because of its wide basis of selection.

⁶⁰A one-page caricature entitled “Twilight of the Gods” shows an obese, long-haired, blond Viking with a horned and winged Viking cap, clad in a skirt with a swastika emblem. Holding a sign that reads “We Aryans Can Lick Anybody,” the Viking watches Jesse Owens disappear down the track with a laurel wreath in his hands. *The Crisis*, September 1936, 272.

⁶¹“K. K. K. Haufstaengl,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, August 23, 1936. The article comments on Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstaengl—whose name is misspelled in the article—who by 1936 had fallen out of Hitler’s favor: “Ernst Haufstaengl, white, is a Hitler aide and Harvard graduate who offered a scholarship to his Alma Mater ... only to have it refused because Harvard wants no gifts from anti-Jewish Hitler followers.” The article reproduces Hanfstaengl’s comment on “colored Athletes at the Olympics”: “There is not the slightest objection here to the colored people. We are looking for the best. But in our own case we would enter them from the colonies, not from Germany. It was Africa that dominated the track field, not the United States. Why not give the home nation the credit due?” Referring to “America’s melting pot,” the editor of *The Baltimore Afro-American* retorts that “all have melted ... Ernie knows that today Africa is as strange to us as Germany or France. He knows that colored people are as much Americans as are any Americans. But today Ernie lives in a land which has decided that colored people and Jews cannot be citizens. His statement on the Olympics is a snooty suggestion to America to adopt the German Ku Klux program.”

⁶²If “Jesse and his people ... were given all the rights and privileges of American citizens[,] [t]hen, the next time some nation casts aspersions on our athletes and our country we can produce more than sickly smirks.” *The Crisis*, September 1936, 273.

⁶³BAA, August 16, 1936.

⁶⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Olympics,” FFO, PC, October 24, 1936.

⁶⁵In “The Olympics,” Du Bois compared the French and German reception of Black victories and optimistically appreciated African American victories as a step forward in the struggle for equality. He believed that “all this is going to be big with promise for the future.” However, he also appealed to African Americans not to be satisfied with this success on the world stage in sports but to follow it up intellectually in science, literature, and the arts.

⁶⁶W. E. B. Du Bois, “Germany,” FFO, PC, December 5, 1936.

⁶⁷Du Bois, “Germany and Hitler.”

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹W. E. B. Du Bois, “Race Prejudice in Germany,” FFO, PC, December 19, 1936.

⁷⁰W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Present Plight of the Jew,” FFO, PC, December 19, 1936.

⁷¹Du Bois, “Race Prejudice in Germany.”

⁷²Du Bois, "The Present Plight of the Jew": "From my window as I write I see a great red poster, seven feet high, asking the German people to contribute to winter relief of the poor, so that Germany will not sink to the level of the "Jewish-Bolshevist countries of the rest of the world.... Every misfortune of the world is in whole or in part blamed on Jews—the Spanish rebellion, the obstruction to world trade, etc."

⁷³Du Bois, "Germany."

⁷⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Hitler State," *PC*, December 12, 1936.

⁷⁵Cf. Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York, 1986).

⁷⁶Defending the German people, Du Bois stated that Hitler "showed Germany a way out when most Germans saw nothing but impenetrable mist, and he made the vast majority of Germans believe that this way was the only way...." Du Bois, "The Hitler State."

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸See, for instance, Du Bois, "As the Crow Flies," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 24 and June 14, 1941. In this column, Du Bois described Rudolf Hess (who had just flown to Glasgow intending to negotiate peace with Britain in a clandestine act of diplomacy) as "the one Nazi leader concerning whose honest beliefs and lofty idealism there could be no question." In contrast to Hess, "Goehring is a fat Junker and Goebbels is Mephistopheles." Du Bois's appreciation of Hess is highly dubious, for it "mattered little" to Du Bois "whether he did it with Hitler's consent or in opposition to the whole Nazi set-up."

⁷⁹Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," 14.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

⁸¹W. E. B. Du Bois, "Africa," *The Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1941.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³George Padmore, "The Second World War and the Darker Races," *The Crisis*, November 1939, 327f.

⁸⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, "Neuropa: Hitler's New World Order," *The Journal of Negro Education* 10 (July 1941): 380–86, 380.

⁸⁵Comparing Wilhelmine Germany to the Weimar Republic, he observed that the latter was more democratic but weak. In Wilhelmine Germany, "the people who counted ... were the nobility," but then "a series of startling economic changes" occurred, including "sudden deflation" which threatened the middle class. An extraordinary revolution, a "wild and desperate struggle," followed, which "sinister elements," such as "impoverished, unscrupulous ... noblemen and the Nazis," entered into. Du Bois, "Neuropa: Hitler's New World Order," 381ff.

⁸⁶Du Bois, "Neuropa: Hitler's New World Order," 382.

⁸⁷Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany," B5.

⁸⁸In "The New Philosophy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 12, 1936, which deals with Germany, Du Bois at first does come across as completely taken with National Socialist propaganda. He praises the Nazi dictatorship: "There must be a dictatorship.... Democracy must go, and parliamentary institutions. The dictator must be a popular figure. Hitler filled the bill ... all opposition in the state must disappear.... They must, by superior authority, be forced into unity.... Moreover, this new state which Germany is building is something holy and superior. It is composed of pure Nordics, with no contamination of Jews or inferior races. Its in-born superiority is proven by history and experience." The success of the new Germany "depends on strong government, obeyed without discussion or argument or hesitation, with the power in the hands of a supreme Leader, who today is Adolf Hitler." While these lines echo anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda, they have to be read in conjunction with other articles Du Bois wrote both before and after it in which he strongly criticizes Germany. In this larger context, Du Bois's remarks in "The New Philosophy" could be read as a

pastiche. Even in this article, he continues with a more ambivalent remark: "the philosophy of Hitlerism is not logical nor complete. Nor, on the other hand, is it wholly illogical and hypocritical." In the ensuing article entitled "Propaganda," he criticizes Germans' ignorance and willingness to be blinded: "to secure such a government, and keep it in power, it is only necessary for the mass of the people firmly to believe that the thing works.... Part of such proof is a matter of plain sight—homes, roads, order." Du Bois's characterization of the "philosophy of Hitlerism," thus, can be read as an emphatic analysis of National Socialist ideology verging on parody—as imitation with a difference.

⁸⁹Du Bois's critique of National Socialist propaganda also comes to the fore in "Propaganda," *PC*, December 12, 1936: "the greatest single invention of the World War was Propaganda. This systematic distortion of the truth for the purpose of making large numbers of people believe anything Authority wishes them to believe, has grown into an art, if not a science." Du Bois's understanding of Germany's turn to National Socialism as a consequence of its difficulties after the Versailles Treaty is revealed in some of his preceding articles, for example, "The Background," *PC*, December 5, 1936. In the same volume of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he explained Hitler's success in "The Hitler State" (December 12, 1936): "Adolf Hitler rode into power by accusing the world of a conspiracy to ruin Germany by economic starvation." A week earlier he had written, as "industry was frightened; the Junkers were frightened; the managers, engineers and small shopkeepers were frightened; they all submitted to a man who had first been a joke, then a pest, and who suddenly loomed as a dictator." Du Bois, "Depression and Revolution," *PC*, December 5, 1936.

⁹⁰In "The Hitler State," Du Bois clearly distinguished between "Hitler" and "Germans" or "Germany" as a whole.

⁹¹Reflecting on the political consequences of a potential German victory in World War II for the future of Africa, Du Bois in 1941 expressed his hope for a better turnout: "If Hitler wins, and in the long run he cannot win, Africa will be parceled out between Germany and Italy.... If Hitler wins, and he cannot win, there will be no recognition of Chinese or Indian nationality," Du Bois, "Africa." In another article in the same publication, he continued, "but Hitler cannot win, simply because no such organization as he has today built up, can command the brains, the loyalty and the man-power which will enable it to conquer the world." Du Bois, "Hitler." In 1952, however, Du Bois melancholically expressed his shock at the effect and extent of Nazi extermination policies: "I have seen something of human upheaval in this world: the scream [sic] and shots of a race riot in Atlanta; the marching of the Ku Klux Klan; the threat of courts and police; the neglect and destruction of human habitation; but nothing in my wildest imagination was equal to what I saw in Warsaw in 1949. I would have said before seeing it that it was impossible for a civilized nation with deep religious convictions and outstanding religious institutions; with literature and art; to treat fellow human beings as Warsaw had been treated." Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," 15.

⁹²Du Bois, "Neuropa: Hitler's New World Order," 386.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 385.

⁹⁴Kelley, "'But a Local Phase of a World Problem,'" 1067.

⁹⁵W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy of Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of its First Century* (New York, 1968), 169.

⁹⁶George Padmore, "The Second World War and the Darker Races," *The Crisis*, November 1939, 327f.; David H. Pierce, "Fascism and the Negro," *The Crisis*, April 1934, 107, 114.

⁹⁷Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 2.

⁹⁸Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Race, Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line* (London, 2000).

⁹⁹Rogers Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," 12f.