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**Du Bois, Democracy, and Narrative:  
Elite/Mass Relations in the Early W.E.B. Du Bois'  
Portrait of Democratic/Self Development**

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**ABSTRACT**

Despite the presence of a large body of scholarship that considers the significance of W.E.B. Du Bois' thought for Afro-American and American literature, cultural studies, and critical race theory, few works offer a sustained consideration of Du Bois as a political theorist. Following Robert Gooding-Williams' (2009) methodological example, this paper considers the nature of relations between the elite and the masses in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903, hereafter *Souls*). Where Gooding-Williams criticizes Du Bois for presenting an anti-democratic form of political leadership, I argue for the presence of democratic tendencies within his otherwise elitist theory. In order to substantiate this position, I demonstrate a formal and conceptual continuity between *Souls* and *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899, hereafter *PN*). Where *PN* turns from quantitative to qualitative analysis, *Souls* turns from a sociology of black folk to an autobiography of Du Bois. Following Eugene Victor Wolfenstein's reading of *Souls* (2007), I interpret these turns as phenomenological: in each case, broad descriptions of black folk as a mass become affective portraits where Du Bois attempts to capture what it feels like to be the object of white racism in Jim Crow America. Yet the parallels between *PN* and *Souls* are more linearly developmental than circular; where *PN* ends, *Souls* begins, occupying the previous work's shell while exploring an affective dimension that *PN* only begins to gesture at. I characterize the shared narrative arc between these two texts as a variation on the genre of the nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*. Taken together, they tell a coming-of-age story that culminates in the figure of John Jones as the ideal model of and agent for self-development. Read in this light, Du Bois' political thought accounts for the movement of individuals from the masses into positions of elite leadership—a move that complicates any effort to rigidly map elite/mass relations onto a democratic/undemocratic axis.

## **I. Introduction**

Despite the presence of a large body of scholarship that considers the significance of W.E.B. Du Bois' thought for Afro-American and American literature, cultural studies, and critical race theory, few works offer a sustained consideration of Du Bois as a political theorist. Following Robert Gooding-Williams' (2009) methodological example, this paper considers the nature of relations between the elite and the masses in *The Souls of Black Folk* (hereafter *Souls*). Gooding-Williams criticizes Du Bois for presenting an anti-democratic and elitist form of political leadership—an elitism that he locates in Du Bois' early writings.<sup>1</sup> I argue that Gooding-Williams' analysis too readily equates elitism with the absence of democratic practice. By contrast, this paper argues for the presence of democratic tendencies *within* Du Bois' elitist notion of leadership.<sup>2</sup>

In order to substantiate this claim, I demonstrate a formal and conceptual continuity between *Souls* and *The Philadelphia Negro* (hereafter *PN*)—the one early text that Gooding-Williams does not consider in-depth. Rather than strictly follow Gooding-Williams' interpretation, which considers both texts' formal dimensions to be an ideological trapping that distorts an essentially anti-democratic elitist agenda, I argue for a mutually constitutive relationship between form and content across two of Du Bois' most significant early writings. Where *PN* turns from quantitative to qualitative analysis, *Souls* turns from a sociology of black folk to an autobiography of Du Bois. Following Eugene Victor Wolfenstein's reading of *Souls* (2007), I claim that both of these turns can be interpreted as phenomenological: in each case, broad descriptions of black folk as a mass become affective portraits where Du Bois attempts to capture what it feels like to be the object of white racism in Jim Crow America.

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Yet the parallels between *PN* and *Souls* are more linearly developmental than circular. Where *PN* ends, *Souls* begins, occupying the previous work's shell while exploring an affective dimension that *PN* only begins to gesture at. I characterize this shared narrative arc as a variation on the genre of the nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*—a coming-of-age story that culminates in the figure of John Jones as the ideal model of and agent for self-development. Read in this light, Du Bois' political thought accounts for the movement of individuals from the masses into positions of elite leadership—a move that complicates any effort to rigidly map elite/mass relations onto a democratic/undemocratic axis.

In the first section that follows, I argue that the most substantial considerations of the early Du Bois as political theorist fail to consider the inter-relationship between form and content across the early writings. In the second section, I present *The Philadelphia Negro* as a formally coherent text in a manner that supports Gooding-Williams' basic interpretation of Du Bois as political theorist. I then map this reading onto *Souls*, exposing a previously unnoticed dimension of Du Bois' political thought that significantly complicates Gooding-Williams' otherwise compelling argument. In the process, I demonstrate a new dimension of the conceptual unity in Du Bois' early writings—one that considers the formal composition of *PN* to be central to the theory of leadership communicated in *Souls*. This conceptual unity, I argue, cannot be fully appreciated without a corresponding appreciation of formal points of congruence across Du Bois' early writings. In my conclusion, I present this critique as a challenge to some of the basic presuppositions underlying radical and deliberative democratic theory.

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## **II. Treatments of *The Souls of Black Folk* as Political Theory**

There are few books that rigorously consider Du Bois' early writings. There are even less that consider these writings as a sustained and unique contribution to political thought. Of those that do exist, it is characteristic for authors to argue for an assumed unity of purpose on Du Bois' part. In contrast to Shamoan Zamir's description of Du Bois's early writings as contradictory and fragmented (1995), Adolph Reed (1997), Gooding-Williams (2009) and Wolfenstein (2007) argue for either a consistency in content (Reed, Gooding-Williams) or form (Wolfenstein). To date, however, no interpreter of Du Bois as political theorist has considered the conceptual consistency of both content *and* form as inter-related phenomena across the early writings. In the following section, I present this gap as theoretically significant for the arguments made in the aforementioned collections.

Whereas Zamir's *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (hereafter *Dark Voices*) interprets Du Bois' early writings as fragmentary, Reed's *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (hereafter *Fabianism*) understands them to be coherent. Zamir seeks to identify the relationship between Du Bois' early writings and elements of the Euro-American intellectual tradition that were most prominent toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Reed by contrast is concerned with situating Du Bois' work within the nexus of intellectual discourse that had captured the imaginations of progressive scholars in America at the turn of the century.<sup>4</sup> This difference leads Reed to identify an elite-centered vanguardism—specifically, a collectivist outlook<sup>5</sup>—that he claims crystallizes for Du Bois in *PN* before defining the entirety of the corpus that follows.

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Two dimensions of the differences between Zamir and Reed are of immediate consequence to my argument. The first concerns form—which Zamir incorrectly reifies. He not only categorizes Du Bois’ early writings based on their formal composition but also goes so far as to suggest that the ethnographic approach in *PN* produces a substantive perspective that is irreconcilable with the literary subjectivity found in *Souls*. Reed goes too far in the opposite direction, reducing Du Bois’ writing to its substantive essence. In this regard, Du Bois’ debate with Booker T. Washington over the question of political leadership within the African American community essentially and fundamentally defines all of Du Bois’ writings. The question remains as to whether or not an effort to interpret and understand Du Bois as political theorist requires the disavowal of formal considerations on such stark terms. In other words, does the presence of a coherent political theory in the early Du Bois preclude considerations of formal techniques and the significance of those techniques for the content expressed? I argue below that it does not.

The second relevant point concerns substance—specifically with regards to the nature of elite/mass relations and the question of political leadership. Zamir argues that the written text of *Souls* is Du Bois’ response to a crisis of leadership in the African American community. More concretely, Reed argues that an elite-based and undemocratic theory of political leadership emerges in *PN* and continues to re-emerge in the rest of Du Bois’ writing—including *Souls*. According to this account, Du Bois in *PN* argues for the realization of “proper urban social organization” within the African American community via a training process that would solidify the position of class elites.<sup>6</sup> They were to be the educators of the masses, teaching them not only how to think

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and how to vote but also how to *be*. What remains to be considered is the relationship between form and content in Du Bois' effort to articulate a concrete theory of black leadership—specifically, what an effort to consider the inter-relationship between form and content might mean for an assessment of elite/mass relations within that political theory.

Gooding-Williams' *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (hereafter *In the Shadow*) provides a model within which to answer these questions.<sup>7</sup> The book extends Reed's line of analysis by performing a reading of *Souls* that takes the formal components *within* Du Bois' political theory seriously.<sup>8</sup> According to Reed, Du Bois argues for the preservation of African Americans' distinct collective identity *by* African Americans as a basis from which to facilitate their equal citizenship within the American polity across all of these texts. Similarly, Gooding-Williams argues that *Souls* advances a politics of "expressive self-realization": a politics that aspired to solve the problem of assimilation within—while simultaneously expressing the spiritual identity of—the African American community.<sup>9</sup> In Gooding-Williams' view, however, this theory depends on a particular definition of elite/mass relations—specifically the separation between the masses and the folk. As masses, Du Bois describes African Americans as "an aggregate of uncultured, premodern slaves or former slaves." At the same time, Gooding-Williams demonstrates the ways in which Du Bois describes the same community as possessing "a collectively shared ethos or spirit," thereby constituting a "folk." In sum, his book demonstrates how Du Bois' theory of leadership simultaneously advocated the assimilation of the black masses to "the constitutive norms of modernity" as well as an effort to "heed the ethos of the black folk."

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Drawing on Du Bois' own terminology, Gooding-Williams summarizes this dynamic as "self-realization," which he in turn defines as self-assertion and self-development. Put simply, self-realization is a two-pronged response to the problems of "prejudice and backwardness" in the context of Jim Crow.<sup>10</sup> Insofar as white "prejudice" foreclosed opportunities for advancement and reinforced a system of impeded development within the African American community, "backwardness" reinforced the prejudicial attitudes about and images of African Americans projected by white supremacy. This web could only be untangled by addressing prejudice and backwardness simultaneously. By consequence, when self-assertion (in response to prejudice) and self-development (in response to backwardness) address one of these problems, they are addressing the other as well. Notably, self-realization represents a form of assimilation. It is defined as the removal of prejudice so that African Americans could live, work and act according to modern norms on equal terms with white citizens. Self-development in turn calls for the development of African American culture according to those norms. What the former implicitly suggests, the latter explicitly advocates: a confluence between African American life and dominant norms in (white) American.<sup>11</sup>

While this portion of his argument is indisputable, Gooding-Williams' next interpretive move merits scrutiny. Gooding-Williams characterizes the formal portions of *Souls* as instrumental features of a more essential theoretical agenda; Du Bois' references to folk culture are thereby subsumed under his larger programmatic goals. In this regard, *Souls* grounds the politics of self-realization in what Gooding-Williams calls an "expressive" model.<sup>12</sup> The choice of phrasing here is not coincidental. The term "expressive" refers to the ability of an ideal black political leader to speak to and draw his

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legitimacy from the collectively shared spirit of black folk; this shared cultural connection facilitates the leader's ability to assimilate the black masses into modern norms.<sup>13</sup> The political theory in *Souls* is in this regard only secondarily, and even instrumentally, concerned with the predicament of the "folk"; despite its titular reference to the folk, *Souls* is *actually* concerned with the politics of self-realization as initially elaborated in "Study."

On these terms, *Souls* presents a model of politics that is exclusively based on the governing relationship between a leader and his followers. Du Bois in turn suggests that the implementation of his reform program constitutes the defining characteristic of good black leadership.<sup>14</sup> There is a paradox however within this definition. Insofar as the collective spiritual or cultural identity of the folk is understood to be backwards by modern standards and the process of assimilation to modern norms requires the negation of backwardness, good black leaders must work to abandon the very source of their legitimacy—the folk. According to Gooding Williams, Du Bois resolves this paradox by providing two definitions of culture: one relating to individuals and the other relating to groups.<sup>15</sup> In the first instance, he speaks of a cultural elite (the Talented Tenth) responsible for spreading civilization among the uncultured masses so that they may assimilate more readily. As uncultured *individuals*, the black masses must develop by following their leaders. At the same time, as a *group*, black folk are "the bearers of a collectively shared spirit" or a common cultural affinity and psyche. Black political leaders must draw on this group culture in order to legitimately instill the other type of culture in each individual.



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According to Gooding-Williams, *Souls* argues for legitimate and self-determined forms of governing the black masses in an authoritarian and decidedly undemocratic manner.<sup>16</sup> If African Americans are understood to be “masses” (i.e. uncultured individuals), then their individual perspectives cannot form the basis of legitimate leadership. Instead, Gooding-Williams shows Du Bois turning to the group definition of culture—the spirit of the folk—as a signifier that interpolates the masses without actually letting them speak. This form of legitimacy “requires that leaders remember their people not by engaging their criticism but by acknowledging the spiritual identity they share with them.”<sup>17</sup> In the process, the ideal leader in an “expressivist” model turns a blind eye to their individual concerns. Cast in this light, Du Bois’ political theory fails to consider forms of black politics that reach beyond the leader-led dynamic.

Gooding-Williams’ consideration of the formal elements goes substantially further than Reed in identifying the substantive coherence of Du Bois’ early political theory. In the process however, it obscures Manning Marable’s pivotal distinction between political and cultural leadership. In *Black Leadership*, Marable differentiates between Washington and Louis Farrakhan (who both possessed considerable charismatic appeal and organizational power), on the one hand, and Du Bois on the other. Where the others successfully represented a model of political leadership, Du Bois was more accurately “a leader of ideas.”<sup>18</sup> By interpreting the content of those ideas as advancing a politics of charismatic authoritarianism, Gooding-Williams collapses this distinction without adequately navigating the nuances between politics and culture. Is political authoritarianism the same as cultural authoritarianism? Within the parameters of Du Bois’ theory, the answer to this question—as Gooding-Williams demonstrates—may be

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affirmative. Here, culture (or form) seems to operate in the service of a political program that disproportionately favors elite leadership.

The answer to this question becomes considerably more complex, however, when we consider the formal composition of that theory (or in other words, the way in which Du Bois expresses it) as significant for the theory itself. Gooding-Williams quite simply does not adequately consider the theoretical significance of Du Bois' rhetoric in the early writings. He instead goes so far as to suggest that Du Bois' formal technique in these writings holds little to no theoretical import.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Victor Wolfenstein's *A Gift of Spirit: Reading "The Souls of Black Folk"* (hereafter *A Gift*) argues that a consistent narrative ties the political theory in *Souls* together, a gesture that compliments Gooding-Williams's effort to present *Souls* as arguing for a single theory of leadership. Unlike Gooding-Williams, however, Wolfenstein's argument focuses on the development of *Souls* itself as a formally and substantively coherent, or unified, text.

The implications of this shift in interpretive focus are noteworthy. It allows Wolfenstein to identify the book's narrative structure around "an aesthetic and affective core"—or in other words, a consistent and coherent response to the experience of misrecognition.<sup>20</sup> According to Wolfenstein, this structure revolves around horizontal and vertical planes of analysis.<sup>21</sup> On the horizontal plane, we witness Du Bois moving from North to South as he uncovers the collective dimensions of black life in America. There is a sociological quality to this portion of the text whereby the reader bears witness to a broad picture of African American life mediated of course through Du Bois' vision. Conversely, the second part of the text moves along a vertical plane of analysis as Du Bois investigates the "psychological heights and depths" of individual experience within

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that collectivity. Importantly, the text does not evolve in a strictly linear fashion.

According to Wolfenstein, the various components of *Souls* inflect one another so that one dimension falls to the background—but does not fall away—when the other becomes prominent. This “palindromic” effect plays out not only within the text but also between the text and its author. *Souls* is, as a result, simultaneously and interchangeably Du Bois’ “personality writ large” and “an exemplification of the souls of black folk.”

This model allows Wolfenstein to assert that two-ness—or, in other words, the response to the experience of mis-recognition—constitutes Du Bois’ most essential political theoretical argument in *Souls*. Wolfenstein defines two-ness as the lived experience of “second-sight”<sup>22</sup> without distortion; it precludes any flight into either one of the racial antipodes and instead suggests the ability to “affirm the hyphen [between African and American] itself.” It is both the realization of individuality by African-Americans as well as the realization of a mutual recognition whereby, on collective terms, “the African’s internalization of American culture has been paralleled by the [white] American’s internalization of African culture.” *Souls* is a book about mutual recognition on these terms—a book whose formal unity significantly alters the substantive theoretical arguments made therein.

Rather than producing an innocuous state of mutuality, this process seems to reinforce the very kind of normative assimilation that Gooding-Williams seeks to critique. Just as *In the Shadow* presents an argument against an integrationist agenda via the rhetorical use of black folk culture, Wolfenstein interprets *Souls* as an assertion of individuality and selfhood on white terms by way of the affirmation of blackness. In both cases, black folk culture is figured as an instrumental medium on the road to modernity

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rather than an end in and of itself.<sup>23</sup> As such, the dual-self realized through recognition is the realization of oneself as an individual in a world where individuality is defined according to white norms.<sup>24</sup>

There are however significant differences between Wolfenstein and Gooding-Williams' respective interpretations of folk culture. These differences can be attributed to variations in their choice of interpretive framework—or, more specifically, Wolfenstein's attention to the form of the political theory in *Souls*. For Gooding-Williams, references to folk culture in *Souls* occur outside of the text's central theoretical argument; the references are like adjectival modifiers that facilitate a larger agenda. By virtue of his interest in the formal unity of *Souls*, Wolfenstein considers Du Bois' autobiography as a central feature of any political theory presented therein. In the end, that which Gooding-Williams considers external and instrumental (i.e. expressive), Wolfenstein takes to be internal and constitutive.

Significantly, Wolfenstein understands two-ness to be a reflection of Du Bois' own experience. The realization of two-ness as an ideal requires that Du Bois actively master white elite norms as well as black folk culture *equally*; as a result of his upbringing in Great Barrington, he must “become who he is” on both sides of the hyphen.<sup>25</sup> In this regard, two-ness romanticizes black folk culture just as much as it valorizes white elite culture<sup>26</sup>—not only for the purposes of legitimacy (which Gooding-Williams rightly identifies as problematic) but also for the sake of its author's self-understanding and survival. Both forms of valorization bear equal weight and must be affirmed on similar terms in order for recognition to occur.

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This insight proves consequential for my analysis of elite/mass relations here. Insofar as Du Bois' personal story requires that he learn from black folk as much as he may wish to change them, Wolfenstein's work suggests that Du Bois' relationship to the masses is not as entirely one-sided as we might otherwise assume. Moreover, to the extent that Du Bois incorporates his autobiographical experience and perspective into his ideas about political leadership in *Souls*, our assessment of his political theory must reflect the text's production process. The following sections examine these dynamics through a comparative reading of *PN* and *Souls*.

### **III. Formal Parallels between *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Souls of Black Folk***

While Du Bois' political theory in *Souls* may be elitist, it is not necessarily undemocratic. Wolfenstein successfully presents the significance of narrative coherence for a theoretical argument about recognition; he does not however systematically consider theories of leadership. The following section builds on his methodological example by tracing substantive and formal parallels between *PN* and *Souls* in the effort to substantiate this claim. These parallels emerge, as I demonstrate, in light of *both* Gooding-Williams' argument regarding substantive continuity across Du Bois' early writings *and* Wolfenstein's reflections on formal coherence within *Souls*.

*The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) was researched and written over the course of fifteen months between the summer of 1896 and the winter of 1897. The book is the product of Du Bois' appointment as an "assistant in sociology" at the University of Pennsylvania—his second appointment after a two-year stint at Wilberforce University. In Philadelphia, Du Bois was charged with the task of studying the Seventh Ward, a predominantly African American neighborhood that also housed "many of the city's most

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distinguished white families.”<sup>27</sup> The study was commissioned to address the prevalence of crime in the Seventh Ward. Despite the expectation that he present the “nature and duration of the quarantine that the city’s notables intended to impose” on the black inhabitants of the Seventh Ward, Du Bois took the occasion to complete the type of social scientific investigation that he had been precluded from conducting during his previous appointment. *PN* ended up examining the relationship between poverty and racism in an effort to scientifically correct the fact that “the world was thinking wrong about race.”<sup>28</sup>

These divergent objectives have led David Levering Lewis to claim that *PN* comprises “two books in one.”<sup>29</sup> There are in fact two apparently contradictory premises underwriting it. On the one hand, Du Bois affirms his sponsor’s preconceived notions when he refers to the moral depravity of the black inhabitants in the Seventh Ward. Along these lines, he argues for the “training” of the masses according to a civilizational ideal<sup>30</sup>—a task that he bestows upon “the better classes” of the city’s African American population.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, every central point in the study refers to “color prejudice” as an explanatory principle, thereby deflecting primary responsibility from “the masses” for any “lack” in their progress along the “scale of civilization.”<sup>32</sup> The presence of these two strands of thought seems to reinforce Du Bois’ own retrospective assertion that he wrote *PN* with a “hidden agenda.”<sup>33</sup>

There are, however, two significant ways in which these apparently contradictory agendas form complimentary elements of a single theory. The first is substantive and directly reflects Gooding-Williams’ arguments about Du Bois’ early writings. The resolution offered by Du Bois in *PN* in response to “the Negro problem” parallels quite neatly the two-pronged schematic that Gooding-Williams identifies in “Study” and *Souls*.

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Throughout *PN*, Du Bois repeatedly calls for the “better classes” to be allowed to guide “the masses” so that they may progress along the “scale of civilization” (i.e. modern norms). More to the point, Du Bois makes it clear that self-assertion works in the service of self-development.<sup>34</sup> While the later chapters concerning race prejudice may seem to suggest a more complicated and balanced approach to the problem, the text in fact presents race-prejudice as the central obstacle preventing self-development from accelerating forward as it should.<sup>35</sup> Du Bois quite explicitly refers to race prejudice as an extrinsic and anomalous feature of social life. As he sees it, “human choice, wish, whim and prejudice” modify the otherwise systematic (and Darwinian) laws of survival that determine individual behavior.<sup>36</sup> The ability to train and be trained according to a higher standard of civilization thus continues to form the essence of his program for reform.

If we were to follow Gooding-Williams’ example, we might say that formal considerations in *PN* serve the author’s substantive agenda in much the same way that political expressivism serves the arguments made for self-realization in *Souls*. In both cases, the rhetoric of the text functions as a tool of legitimacy in the eyes of its imagined audience. In *Souls*, references to folk culture are meant to present a model of black leadership; in *PN*, scientific references are meant to convince people on the other side of color line (specifically, elite philanthropists affiliated with academic institutions) to think differently about race. In both cases, the quest for legitimacy determines the relationship between form and content.

We might understand the relationship between form and content in a less instrumental fashion however with recourse to Wolfenstein’s reading of *Souls*. As mentioned above, he presents the narrative in *Souls* in a “palindromic” fashion. The text

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moves from the collective (horizontal) to the individual (vertical) dimension of African American life in a non-linear manner. This move is accompanied by a change in Du Bois' role as author such that, in the first part of *Souls*, Wolfenstein understands Du Bois to be a "vehicle for displaying the facts of the racial matter" whereas in the second part of the book the "racial matter" becomes the "medium through which we experience the sensibility of the author."<sup>37</sup>

It is my contention that *Souls* is not the first place where Du Bois tells a story in this fashion, but that *PN* possesses an almost identical structure. In his own words, Du Bois introduces the 1897 study as comprising four parts.<sup>38</sup> The first part presents a history of African Americans in the city (two chapters). The bulk of the book then presents "their present condition considered as individuals" (six chapters) and "their condition as an organized social group" (two chapters). A chapter on crime and pauperism is also included in the category of "group life."<sup>39</sup> Du Bois' fourth section concerns the topic of environment, both physical and social.<sup>40</sup>

More than mere logistics or a simple stating of the facts, *PN* can be read as a carefully plotted narrative from individual life to organized (read: civilized) collectivity. In the process of recounting the "present condition" of the black inhabitants of the Seventh Ward, Du Bois presents an almost exact replica of the structure that Wolfenstein identifies in *Souls*. At first, Du Bois demonstrates "their present condition considered as individuals"—a section meant to consider individual life in the Seventh Ward. We receive, however, no individual portraits. Instead, the text presents a general portrait of the community as a whole where each individual's information provides a single tile in a larger mosaic of general trends (sex, age, occupation, education, conjugal condition and



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health).<sup>41</sup> Conversely, the chapters that consider “their condition as an organized social group” offer an abundance of individualized portraits.<sup>42</sup> This portion of the text is overflowing with narrative vignettes that are meant to capture what it feels like to be a member of the African American community in Philadelphia. Just as in *Souls*, the first part of *PN* presents the community as a collectivity of individuals while the second part of the study presents actual individuals as their lives are influenced by virtue of their membership within that community.

This structure is accompanied by a series of methodological developments that suggest an even closer application of Wolfenstein’s model. As *PN* shifts into a focus on individual portraits, Du Bois’ methods shift from the exclusive use of statistics to the increased use of qualitative and mixed methodologies. Du Bois justifies the move with reference to the need to consider “environmental” factors in any effort to adequately assess the prospects for self-development among the black population.<sup>43</sup> Because environmental factors are marked by “human choice, wish, whim and prejudice,” it follows that a less systematic method of analysis must be employed.<sup>44</sup> The methodological transition in *PN* begins to occur in the chapter concerning public health—just before Du Bois concludes the section on “their present condition as individuals,” or rather before he moves out of a general representation of individual life and into an individualized depiction of collective life. This chapter argues for an alternate reading of available statistics, one that considers the differing “conditions of life” between (racial) “classes” of people.<sup>45</sup> The ensuing chapters in turn attempt to capture these conditions through anecdotes and vignettes as statistical analysis falls away.

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In this manner, Du Bois' role in *PN* parallels Wolfenstein's depiction of his role in *Souls*. In the first part of *PN*, he is like a medium through which the individual lives of the black community as a whole are communicated. In the second portion of the text however he directly expresses his own thoughts and sensibilities. Information is no longer presented to us in a passive fashion; instead, Du Bois explicitly demonstrates an argumentative agenda that he finds statistical methods inadequate to express. The chapters following his discussion of public health present "concrete manifestations" of race prejudice—a "feeling" that Du Bois claims has otherwise been presented through "vague characterizations" but which constitutes "the real foundation" of the perceived difference between black and white citizens.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, the methodological shift in *PN* simultaneously signals Du Bois' emergence as author as well as his presentation of the experience of the masses.

These developments are more than coincidental. In a pattern that recalls Du Bois' soon to be uttered reflections on second sight and double consciousness, the process of ethnographic work requires the researcher to see the imprints of his own work—and by extension himself—as an object apart from who he immediately is. The ethnographer asks a question that in turn produces a response taken to be objective data; in turn, when writing vignettes, the ethnographer paints a portrait of human life rather than taking a snapshot. More than just being implicated, the ethnographer is understood as being changed by the process. Du Bois duly notes this point in the following retrospective passage:

...I became painfully aware that merely being born in a group does not necessarily make one possessed of complete knowledge concerning it. I had learned far more from the Philadelphia Negroes than I had taught them concerning the Negro Problem.<sup>47</sup>

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The kind of truth produced by this process—like the kind of truth produced by portraiture—is inherently imprecise, suggestive and self-reflexive. Put differently, the ethnographic portrayal of that which has otherwise been rendered invisible or perceived incorrectly—in this case, the experiences of members of the African American community in the Seventh Ward—goes hand-in-hand with a process of self-exposure and thus, indirectly, autobiographical self-depiction.

My reference to the ethnographic research process is meant to foreground the ways in which the writing of *PN* may have influenced the early Du Bois' political theory. As Lawrie Balfour points out in her recent book on the innovations in democratic theory within Du Bois' writing, "sight" plays a central role through out the various phases of his life work. Following Sheldon Wolin's definition of political theory as "a practice of seeing and articulating what is and can be seen," Balfour reads Du Bois' work as an articulation of how we might "see the living legacies of slavery"—or in other words, that which dominant norms relentlessly render invisible—in the contemporary moment.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, *PN*'s shift to a qualitative/ethnographic register can be read as an effort to "lift the Veil" and make the invisible portions of the everyday visible, creating the grounds for an alternate and more inclusive practice of democracy in the United States. Insofar as the completion of the study made the invisible visible for Du Bois as well—a Du Bois who in *Souls* intertwines his autobiography with an argument about ideal black leadership—his theory of leadership is, I claim, more democratic than Gooding-Williams depicts it to be.

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#### **IV. Du Bois, the *Bildungsroman*, and Black Leadership**

Thematically, *Souls* can be read as picking up where *The Philadelphia Negro* leaves off. While the earlier ethnography ends by considering the “feeling” of race prejudice, Du Bois’ most celebrated book begins by framing the separation between black and white in America in terms of an ever-present “unasked question”: How does it *feel* to be a problem? And yet *Souls* is also a companion text to *PN*. It reiterates the substantive arguments (as Gooding-Williams demonstrates) and formal composition (as I seek to demonstrate) initially crafted in the text that precedes it. This section presents the points of congruence between these two texts as the basis for reading the theory of leadership expressed in Du Bois’ early writings as more democratic than otherwise presumed.

In an effort to appreciate the parallels between *PN* and *Souls*, I argue for an interpretation of the two texts as complimentary elements of a single narrative arc. This narrative I claim takes the form of a nineteenth-century *bildungsroman*.<sup>49</sup> Zamir offers a similar reading of *Souls* in an essay published before *Dark Voices* where he interprets the formal consistency of the text as a *bildungsbiographie*; he elaborates on this reading in *Dark Voices* when he depicts *Souls* as an adaptation of G.W.F. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>50</sup> As noted above, Zamir interprets the Sorrow Songs as a response to what Du Bois takes to be a crisis of leadership. “The souls of black folk” are the protagonist in this *bildungsroman*; they (it?) are fully realized by the end of *Souls* when Du Bois presents the actual writing of the text as a resolution to the crisis.

Gooding-Williams and Wolfenstein’s recent contributions create the grounds for a re-assessment of Zamir’s hypothesis. Zamir imagines the masses and Du Bois’

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autobiography as manifestations of—or stages along—the more essential formation of these “souls.”<sup>51</sup> Gooding-Williams and Wolfenstein move beyond such a strictly textual reading. They are more concerned with a historical, as opposed to metaphorical, reading of the larger programmatic (Gooding-Williams) and personal (Wolfenstein) stakes involved in Du Bois’ political theory.<sup>52</sup> Drawing on their respective insights, I interpret *PN* and *Souls* as substantively and formally coherent variations of the *bildungsroman*. Insofar as both of Du Bois’ texts intersperse the author’s personal development with a story about the developmental of the masses, they narrate a process of formation that remains grounded in and bears equally upon not only the experiences of the masses but also Du Bois himself.

In this regard, *PN* and *Souls* can be classified alongside some of the more nuanced versions of the *bildungsroman* where grand historical transformations are configured within the developmental process of the “protagonist.”<sup>53</sup> The emergence of Du Bois’ authorial persona runs hand-in-hand with the development of the masses—who in turn can only realize their self-development when and where the “environment” of race prejudice changes (i.e. self-assertion). While Gooding-Williams’ general framework of interpretation remains viable—a novel of formation ultimately recounts a process of assimilation into a broader social setting—this reading also opens avenues for a re-evaluation of his characterization of Du Bois’ political theory. Read as *bildungsroman*, *Souls* culminates in the figure of John Jones. Here, Du Bois presents an ideal model of black political leadership that requires the continuous movement of individuals, as well as knowledge, from mass to elite.

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The story begins in *PN* where, for the first time, Du Bois presents the development of the masses as the central plot in a coming-of-age story. The black inhabitants in the Seventh Ward are configured as the “protagonist,” incrementally taking steps to assimilate into an evolving and yet-to be realized model of civilization.<sup>54</sup> Despite the differentiation that Du Bois makes between various classes within the black community, this program, as Gooding-Williams suggests, is uniformly applied to all members of the non-elite.<sup>55</sup> We begin the story seeing facets of their individual lives before slowly moving toward the principle that Du Bois expressly presents as the ultimate manifestation of human civilization—organized social life.<sup>56</sup> The prevalence of crime within the Seventh Ward—which constituted his sponsor’s most immediate concern—is presented as a failure of said ideal. Crime thus appears in the story as a climactic moment. Its resolution requires Du Bois to re-characterize the *real* “Negro problem” as a lack of assimilation and thus a failure on the part of the masses to live up to their historical epoch’s civilized ideal.<sup>57</sup> Put differently, the problem is that which, if resolved, would simultaneously allow the “protagonist” (i.e. the masses) to achieve self-realization while pushing the American political order to live up to its civilized ideals. As in the *bildungsroman*, all aspects of the plot occur in a simultaneous and interrelated process of change and emergence.<sup>58</sup>

The methodological development of *PN* compliments this reading. While the earlier chapter on public health signaled Du Bois’ dissatisfaction with statistical analysis, his chapter on crime at the end of the section on “their present condition as a group” contains the first significant instance where qualitative evidence is incorporated within the body of the text.<sup>59</sup> The inclusion of individual stories at this stage corresponds with

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Du Bois' suggestion that "environmental" factors, deriving from a general sense of unfamiliarity with the lives of the masses, prevent the plot (i.e. self-development) from progressing as it should. Hence, the effort to describe the failure of the masses (the prevalence of crime) on the road to development (as represented by 'organized social life') impels a change in methodological approach and interpretive perspective on the part of the investigator (Du Bois). Those same "environmental" factors—because they operate on more "whimsical" terms—permit a less objective and more obviously rhetorical voice on the part of the author. In the end, the storyteller presents himself as intimately invested in the story that he tells; his work, his voice and his perspective (in short, his methodology) change in step with the protagonist's development.

A similar dynamic marks the relationship between form and content in *Souls*. Here too we find a coming-of-age story. The narrative begins in Tennessee before moving to Atlanta and then further South into the Black Belt. In each stage, Du Bois unveils increasingly advanced stages in the life-trajectory of the masses as "protagonist." He begins with the initial, Reconstruction-era effort to establish schooling (in "Of the Meaning of Progress") before moving to chapters that discuss the purpose of university education (in "Of the Wings of Atlanta" and "Of the Training of Black Men"). As if the masses have graduated from a period of formative education, the following sections ("Of the Black Belt" and "Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece") present portraits of economic life. And then, as in the concluding chapters of *PN*, Chapter IX ("Of the Sons of Master and Man") argues for "intimate contact" between the races so as to counteract the irrational attitudes that unnecessarily obstruct the potential development of the masses.

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In this *Souls*, the narrator's autobiography is directly woven into the fabric of the text so that we witness not only the masses come-of-age, but also Du Bois. When and where he appears in the chapters that rest along what Wolfenstein calls the horizontal plane of sociological analysis, Du Bois is progressively growing older. He first appears as a New England schoolboy whose visiting-card is rejected. He then appears at the beginning of Chapter IV as a young (18- or 19-year old) Fisk student turned schoolteacher in Tennessee. He makes his final appearance in Chapters VII and VIII in what we might take to be his most 'present' guise as an investigative sociologist riding through the Deep South.<sup>60</sup> All of the chapters in the subsequent section—where we shift to an affective register that primarily considers individual experience—are cast under the shadow of death. Like all living things, the narrative progresses from childhood to youth and then finally from (the "current" Du Bois') adulthood to death.

Behind the veil, where the experience of living death defined the lives of African Americans under Jim Crow, Du Bois re-enacts the same coming-of-age story on affective terms. We may thus interpret the prominence of individual portraits in Chapters XI, XII and XIII as an inversion of the collective life-world presented in the previous chapters. A similar inversion marks *Souls* as *bildungsroman*. At every point along the horizontal plane of analysis where Du Bois appears as a living hero-narrator, the later chapters present a counter-point of death; and each of these deaths occur at a progressively later stage in human life. In Chapter XI ("Of the Passing of the First Born"), death strikes in infancy. In the ensuing Chapter XII ("Of Alexander Crummell")—despite the fact that the protagonist's physical death occurs in old age—Du Bois presents Crummell's "deeper death" as occurring in his formative youth (parallel to Du Bois' age while at Fisk). When



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Bishop Onderdonk refuses to allow him to sit in his diocese because of race, Du Bois describes Crummell as experiencing “a death that is more than death,—the passing of a soul that has missed its duty.”<sup>61</sup> Chapter XIII (“Of the Coming of John”) by contrast recounts the fictitious tale of a man from a small town in the South who, unlike Crummell, not only completes his formative training in the North but also, again unlike Crummell, begins to realize his soul’s duty when he returns down South to become a schoolteacher.<sup>62</sup> John Jones too has his path obstructed by prejudice and, like the others, suffers a premature death—only now as a mature adult. The second portion of *Souls* thus moves in a parallel fashion to the first: the experience of death comes-of-age from infancy to youth and finally from adulthood to the Sorrow Songs where death is immortalized for the living.

We might add more weight to this interpretation by pointing to the temporal quality of each death. The death of Du Bois’ infant son happens “before” the experience of “living death.” His passing represents one possible response to an environment marked by white supremacy: to regulate oneself to history before the pain of the present may occur. By contrast, Crummell’s story offers a full portrait of the present. Du Bois in turn describes his impression of Crummell as follows:

Some seer he seemed, that came not from the crimson Past or the gray To-come, but from the *Pulsing Now*—that mocking world which seemed to me at once so light and dark, so splendid and sordid. Four-score years had he wandered in this same world of mine, within the Veil.<sup>63</sup>

Crummell’s is a “living death” (the kind that Du Bois’ son had avoided); his experience fully encapsulates what it is like to be a “problem” in the “Pulsing Now.” While the other two die prematurely, Crummell is the only figures who actually completes the course of his physical existence. Unlike the others, John Jones’ story is marked by the prospect of “the gray To-come.” The town, both black and white, sits in anticipation of a promised

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future when and where each of their respective Johns will return home. The entire story unfolds in anticipation. The fact that John Jones' return is cut short by his death represents the failed promise of the future—or in other words the unrealized potential of self-development.

If we are to read the three chapters sequentially as a coming-of-age story, they present the (mal)formation of an ideal black leader turned “criminal.” In *PN*, Du Bois defines crime—the turning point in his narrative—as “the open rebellion of an individual against his social environment.”<sup>64</sup> *Souls* picks up on this theme when it ends the story of “the gray To-come” with a “criminal” act. Indeed, the tragedy of John Jones is encapsulated by the fact that his social environment gave him no choice but revolt and revenge. In both cases, crime is the central axis around which the drama is organized insofar as it represents what the “Negro problem” is perceived to be. With the figure of John Jones, as he does in *PN*, Du Bois shows how this perception obscures what the problem really is. Jones is the embodiment of training, an emergent leader who exercises his bid to leadership through education (i.e. the self-development of the masses). His social environment obstructs his bid to leadership—the very kind of leadership that might implement a program of self-realization in order to prevent crime from occurring in the first place—and instead casts him as a criminal—the very kind of criminal which it abhors and sees to be the essence of the problem.<sup>65</sup> In this regard, the formation of the ideal black leader in the latter part of *Souls* parallels the development of the masses depicted in *PN* and the former part of *Souls*. In all three cases, self-realization is obstructed by race prejudice.

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The fictional figure of John Jones—the only truly fictional figure to appear in Du Bois’ early writings—represents a point of intersection for all of the formative tales that Du Bois tells. “Of the Coming of John” can be interpreted as a tale of “immigration” from South to North. In this sense, Jones’ story parallels the story of the “submerged tenth” in Philadelphia—the masses who migrate to the city and thereby return what appear to be strides in development by the already established inhabitants of the city to a low level on the “scale of civilization.” As a complimentary study, *Souls* can be seen as investigating the depths of the South from which the persistent “under-development” of the black masses in the Northern metropolis derives. Insofar as Du Bois’ portraits of African Americans in the Black Belt performs this function, *Souls* answers the question that *PN* poses in a more comprehensive fashion with John Jones representing the potential for leadership from within the masses. His story articulates the idea that in the “gray To-come” it may be possible for the masses to develop in a “civilized” (i.e. normative) fashion and that the leadership to do it may come from one of their own.

At the same time, Jones’ story, like Du Bois’, recounts a process of migration from North to South. As Wolfenstein points out, Jones’ character is like a “shadow” of Du Bois’ personality.<sup>66</sup> In a departure from Wolfenstein’s primarily affective analysis, we might consider points of similarity and difference between Jones and Du Bois that concern elite/mass relations.<sup>67</sup> Insofar as *Souls* recounts Du Bois’ autobiography and process of formation right alongside the development of the masses, John Jones encapsulates both stories in one (fictional) figure. Like Du Bois, he possesses elite training and the will to “develop” the masses. Like Du Bois, he experiences misrecognition as double-consciousness by virtue of his elite training.<sup>68</sup> Yet where Du Bois’

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bid to leadership is tainted by his lack of legitimacy, the question of legitimacy has already been answered for Jones. He is of the masses and therefore legitimate in a way that Du Bois can never be. It is in this sense that Jones represents the figure of *self*-development that Du Bois strived to be.<sup>69</sup>

We might interpret Du Bois' use of a fictional register to articulate this ideal as significant. The presence of fiction signals the culmination of a general movement from quantitative to qualitative forms of analysis. Toward the end of the first (horizontal) portion of *Souls*, Du Bois—in words that could as easily facilitate the aforementioned transitions in *PN*—describes the difficulty of recounting to strangers “the atmosphere of the land, the thought and feeling, the thousand and one little actions which go to make up life.”<sup>70</sup> In order for the “casual observer” to come to an “awakening” he must “linger long enough” until he “gradually” reaches a sense of things that “he had not at first noticed.” These words offer a direct articulation of the pedagogical process that marks the researcher's experience with ethnographic fieldwork. Du Bois projects his experience of “awakening” not only onto his readers but also, in a sense, onto the black masses as they wait for the coming of John. Just as the first portion of *Souls* ends with the promised “coming” of understanding to casual observers who have witnessed the life-world of African Americans from afar, so too does the second, inverted portion of the text end with the promised “coming” of the ideal leader from within the life-world of African Americans itself. Where ethnographic work offers the truth of portraiture in its effort to capture the “atmosphere” of an intangible experience, fiction presents a medium through which to understand a promise of leadership that exists only as potentiality in the “gray To-come.”

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In this sense, counter to Zamir's suggestion that the *bildungsroman* in *Souls* culminates in the sorrow songs, we may read "Of the Coming of John" as the yet-to-be realized telos of black folk.<sup>71</sup> This reading also runs counter to Gooding-Williams' interpretation of Jones' character. To the extent that Gooding-Williams reads the chapter on the Sorrow Songs as Du Bois' effort to present his own "authorial persona" as the realization of charismatic and authoritative leadership where Crummell and Jones fail, he loses sight of Marable's aforementioned distinction between cultural and political leadership.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to these claims, a reading of *Souls* as *bildungsroman* highlights the centrality of death and time in the interpretation of this chapter. On these terms, Du Bois' turn to the sorrow songs occurs as a result of Jones' inability to embody the kind of charismatic and authoritative *political* leadership that Du Bois believed the African American community needed, by no fault of his own. The turn to the written text as a form of *cultural* leadership occurs as the second best option—the only viable one at that time under Jim Crow.

Insofar as John Jones represents the ideal model of political leadership in *Souls*, Du Bois' theory necessarily involves a movement from mass to elite. The presence of this movement suggests that Du Bois' elitism is not entirely one-sided and undemocratic. We might accordingly revise Gooding-Williams' interpretation with reference to its own precepts. *In the Shadow* takes issue with Du Bois' model of rule or ruler-centered politics because it is organized around questions of legitimacy. Political expressivism—manifest in the form of appeals to folk identity—is accordingly taken to be an insincere form of dialogue in the effort to cultivate legitimacy. Yet in John Jones, we find a configuration of political leadership that posits ideal elite leadership as legitimate because it comes

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from the masses. The masses are, in this sense, presented as leading themselves. This configuration, while far from deliberative, cannot fairly be characterized as undemocratic either. It precludes a romantic politics that would celebrate the politics of the elite or the masses in an either/or fashion.<sup>73</sup> Instead, rule should be understood as an unavoidable part of democratic practice that all sides engage in. In the end, the idealization of John Jones—and the potential movement from mass to elite that his character represents—demonstrates Du Bois’ intense engagement with this problematic in a way that Gooding-Williams’ framework overlooks.

## **V. Conclusion**

Gooding-Williams contrasts Du Bois’ model of leadership (what he calls a rule and ruler-centered notion of political leadership) with an alternate model of leadership that he derives from Frederick Douglass’ second autobiography. Douglass presents a “politics without rule” or, as Gooding-Williams puts it, “a politics of a few” that stands in contrast to “a politics geared to ruling the many.”<sup>74</sup> This model of politics is organized around a sense of solidarity among equals with a clear and common stake in an effort to create political change; it presents a sharp break from the rule and ruler-centered models of leadership that presuppose a vanguard at the fore of a social movement.

As this paper demonstrates, Gooding-Williams’ critique of Du Bois’ political thought goes too far. While his book makes an extremely convincing and compelling argument for a rejection in our contemporary moment of Du Bois’ “politics with rule,” his tendency to present overly generalized binaries—politics with or without rule, elite versus mass, and finally aristocratic/authoritarian versus democratic—partially obscures his reading of the political theory in *Souls*. As he puts it, Douglass’ “action-in-concert

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and affiliation-based conception of plantation politics” is a “rejection of the view...that politics is *exclusively* a practice of rule” (*emphasis mine*). The use of the term “exclusively” here is telling. The process of politics—and in particular, I would add, social transformation—involves numerous forms of practice that may simultaneously be rule and non-rule oriented. In the effort to create the space for a consideration of non-rule oriented forms of political practice, Gooding-Williams loses sight of the nuance within Du Bois’ rule-oriented model by characterizing it as *exclusively* rule-oriented. A more measured assessment of elite/mass relations in Du Bois’ work requires that we add an important addendum to Gooding-Williams’ interpretive framework. In this regard, the early Du Bois presents an elitist theory of leadership predicated on the continuous movement of information and people between mass and elite.

Without condoning Du Bois’ celebration of elitism, this insight can be used as a counter-point to both deliberative and post-structuralist versions of democratic theory that imagine forms of democratic practice without elite/mass distinctions. Drawing on the post-structuralist insight that the ability to respect and communicate differences necessarily involves the continued instantiation of those differences and thus the undoing of any seemingly uniform normative consensus,<sup>75</sup> we might interpret the presence of a positional distinction<sup>76</sup> between elite and mass as an ugly yet inevitable part of democratic practice. Where Gooding-Williams imagines a “politics without rule,” this line of reasoning brings attention to his need to qualify his argument with the term “exclusively” by asking: is such a politics possible? If not, how might the effort to radically reform an “oppressive social order” require that we contend with “a politics with rule,” whether we like it or not?

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A re-consideration of Gooding-Williams' argument along these lines brings attention to the fact that Du Bois early writings grappled with one of the longest existing problems in democratic thought and practice. This paper investigates the nuances of that intellectual project by comparing the formal and substantive points of congruence between *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Souls of Black Folk*. In the end, Du Bois' ideal vision for black political leadership can only be grasped in its entirety—as the self-realization of the masses by the masses—when and where these parallels are pronounced. As we seek to move out of Du Bois' shadow (or rather to replace it with Douglass'), our acknowledgment of this dynamic may provide the grounds for an effort to imagine new political possibilities by affirming and building upon that which has come before.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> With regards to the distinction between the early and late Du Bois: *The Philadelphia Negro* was published in 1899. *The Souls of Black Folk* was published in 1903. Shamoan Zamir dates Du Bois' early career from the beginning of "his undergraduate work in philosophy at Harvard University" in 1888 until the publication of *Souls* in 1903. See Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-2. More substantively, Nikhil Pal Singh presents Du Bois' early thought as possessing an elitist and "anti-democratic cast" which Singh (unlike Adolph Reed) understands as being in "constant revolution" for the remainder of Du Bois' career. See Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 47-48.

<sup>2</sup> One of the central theoretical tensions that this paper addresses concerns Gooding-Williams' association between Du Bois' political thought and Max Weber's conception of politics as leadership and rule in "Politics as a Vocation." Gooding-Williams establishes a sharp distinction between Weber's ideas, on the one hand, and the theories of democratic action presented by Hannah Arendt and Sheldon Wolin, on the other. See Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois: Afro-Modern Political Thought in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 9-13. In a parallel fashion, his critique of Du Bois involves a reevaluation of Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) as an ideal model of democratic politics—one that privileges debate, deliberation, and acting in concert with others. In arguing against Gooding-Williams' reading of Du Bois, I am also arguing against the sharp contrast that he—following George Kateb—assumes between Weber and Arendt. See George Kateb, "Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> His effort to demonstrate the ways in which Du Bois' work was influenced by and adapted this tradition results in his presentation of Du Bois as three different and "contradictory" figures. According to Zamir, Du Bois is at once an "idealist philosopher of history," interpreting his world according to notions of heroic vitalism and collectivism; a positivist proponent of scientific objectivity and empiricism; and finally "a literary artist who resists generalizations." Zamir identifies the "idealist" Du Bois with an 1897 address entitled "The Conservation of the Races" as well as Du Bois' 1903 "Talented Tenth" essay. In this regard, Du Bois' references to an "African-American vanguard pulling the black masses into modernity" go hand in hand with his references to the political and cultural leadership of a spiritually distinct race as defined



according to an idealist philosophy of history. Zamir identifies the second perspective with Du Bois' 1899 ethnographic study of the African-American community in Philadelphia entitled *The Philadelphia Negro*. In "The Strivings of the Negro People" and "A Vacation Unique," Du Bois emerges as a literary artist who expresses an unresolved crisis of consciousness. This Du Bois is committed to undermining simplistic unities, and instead seeks to assert the multiplicity of African-American identity via a poetic writing style. See Zamir, *Dark Voices*, 1-6 for an introductory note on the schematic relationship between these three different perspectives. Significantly, the third of these representations emerges from Zamir's reading of *Souls* as a "poetic" text that "resists generalizations" and instead communicates a "radical sense of subjectivity." Zamir, whose argument privileges this version of Du Bois, extrapolates from the perspective it offers in order to interpret all of the early writings as similarly fragmented. We might say that he presents a bird's eye view that takes off from the retrospective offered by *Souls* as a *fait accompli*.

<sup>4</sup> Zamir assumes the presence of an established tradition of thought that Du Bois, as an outsider, adapts components of in order to make sense of his marginalized relationship. Reed by contrast sets out to demonstrate the extent to which Du Bois' theory of political leadership for the African-American community is a reflection of, rather than a response to, the dominant intellectual trends of the late nineteenth century. It can be argued that Reed contrasts his approach in *Fabianism* with what we might call—using his language—the presence of "racial vindicationism" in Zamir's work: the effort to assert the comparative value or presence of intellectual work by African-Americans in light of standards of greatness set by prominent European and white American theorists. See Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11-13 and 105-107. For a less critical analysis of racial vindicationism in Du Bois' later work see Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 75-78 and 82-93.

<sup>5</sup> Reed defines collectivism in terms of intellectual responses to the cultural dislocations within American life that occurred with the advent of corporate models of industrial organization. The intellectuals who prescribed to this outlook appealed to an antimodernism that celebrated pre-modern symbols of the America way of life prior to its institutional reorganization along corporatist lines. At the same time, they were specialized problem solvers intent on solving the vexing puzzle of the very institution that defined their vocation. Intellectual labor came to be defined as the work of expert functionaries who could provide a consciously organized plan to remedy social ills. This emphasis on planning—and its concomitant reference to "allegedly objective or scientific standards of efficacy"—placed the socially influential activity of intellectuals at a remove from open political discussion with and amongst the general populace. See Reed, *Fabianism*, 17-28.

<sup>6</sup> See Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought*, 29-31.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that Reed's account, while echoing Gooding-Williams', reveals an alternate resolution. Reed suggests that a different political-economic orientation on the part of the intellectual elites (i.e. Du Bois) would have resolved the later "ambivalence" before it occurred. By contrast, Gooding-Williams rejects the isolated agency of elite leadership altogether. He instead focuses on the open-ended criticism of elites. One cannot, on Gooding-Williams' account, begin with a different political-economic orientation as the *a priori* organizing principle, in that case, would remain elite. As I demonstrate below, Gooding-Williams insists upon a conceptual re-orientation that prioritizes the agency of the non-elite *in the first instance*.

<sup>8</sup> By "within" I am referring to the content of the ideas that Du Bois expresses. Considering the formal elements "within" his political theory would involve descriptions of how, for example, a political program is to be implemented. As I demonstrate below, this stands in contrast to the formal elements "of" that theory. The latter refers to the way in which Du Bois himself expresses his ideas i.e. the rhetorical composition of his texts.

<sup>9</sup> Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 64.

<sup>11</sup> Like Reed, Gooding-Williams locates its origins in Du Bois' earlier writings. Yet in contrast to Reed's consideration of *PN*, Gooding-Williams focuses on a shorter essay entitled "The Study of the Negro Problems," which he takes to be emblematic of the conceptual structure underlying Du Bois' political theory. In this essay, Du Bois follows the conceptual example of Gustav Schmoller in defining the "Negro problem" as a conflict between group ideals and social conditions. He lays out an agenda for research (and eventual action) that promises to resolve this conflict by adapting group (i.e. "Negro") ideals to social (i.e.

dominant white American) conditions. See Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Jan. 1898): 2. For a discussion of Du Bois’ debt to Schmoller see Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 58-65. On these terms, Gooding-Williams argues for a fundamental congruence between “Study” and *Souls* by identifying the reform agenda in the shorter essay as the model for leadership that Du Bois presents in the longer collection. In a review of Zamir’s *Dark Voices*, Gooding-Williams contrasts this approach with Zamir’s. According to Gooding-Williams, “Study” succinctly unifies all three of the apparent “contradictions” that Zamir identifies, thereby demonstrating an expressed unity of purpose in the early Du Bois that can be identified across all of these texts if not simultaneously present in each. See Robert Gooding-Williams, review of *Dark Voices: W.E.B. Du Bois and American Thought, 1888-1903*, by Shamoon Zamir, *American Literature* 69, no. 4 (Dec 1997): 855-856.

<sup>12</sup> Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 54-58.

<sup>13</sup> Gooding-Williams follows Zamir in framing Du Bois’ discussion of political leadership in *Souls* in terms of a crisis of leadership. “Expressivism” thus emerges as a response to what Du Bois perceives to be the failures of the assimilation strategies advocated by figures such as Booker T. Washington (for whom Du Bois does not exhibit much sympathy) and Alexander Crummel (whose example Du Bois strives to advance and develop). See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> In order to effectively do so, these leaders must move beyond the limitations of double consciousness—a process whereby educated black leaders come to understand their individual and group identity through prejudiced white eyes—so as to directly appeal to the authority of a collective black ethos. While much of *In the Shadow* directly engages the theme of reform through proper leadership, Gooding-Williams develops the parameters of the problematic early on. For example, see Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 20-28.

<sup>15</sup> Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 132-133.

<sup>16</sup> When discussing Washington’s model of leadership, Du Bois exhibits a democratic strain of thought: he sees a leader as legitimate when and where the ruled have selected him through search and criticism. Du Bois, *Souls*, 37. Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 54-55. Yet Du Bois sets this open-ended and democratic perspective aside in favor of an “expressivist” model. As mentioned in fn2 above, Gooding-Williams makes reference to the writings of Arendt and Wolin in order to identify a tension between interpretations of politics as a “practice of ruling” and democracy. According to these authors, the latter contains an unpredictable quality that contravenes any effort to impose rule. Insofar as Du Bois’ model of leadership is predicated on rule, it fails to be democratic. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadows*, 24.

<sup>17</sup> Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 56-57. In a similar vein, Reed argues that the perspective underlying *Souls* was not as fundamentally opposed to Washington’s thought as Du Bois’ strident tone would lead us to believe. See Reed, *Fabianism*, 59.

<sup>18</sup> Manning Marble, *Black Leadership* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xi-xvii.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in a footnote to the passages that describe Du Bois’ two-pronged political response to the problems of “backwardness and prejudice,” Gooding-Williams justifies choosing to consider “Study” instead of *PN* because of the shorter essay’s “more philosophical, more programmatic contribution.” While *PN* promotes an agenda of assimilation, “Study” “can be read both as a statement of the key, social-theoretical presuppositions informing the longer, empirically driven study of black Philadelphia.” “Study” “presents a clearer picture of the conceptual ‘deep structure’” that he is most concerned with. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 277n140. This justification is followed by an endorsement of Reed’s book, specifically his chapter on *PN* (Chapter 3), with Gooding-Williams asserting that both authors similarly identify Du Bois’ “integrationist/assimilationist” agenda. While considerable substantive parallels exist between the two texts, this equation overlooks important differences in form. This paper discusses the extent to which a consideration of *PN*, as opposed to “Study,” would change Gooding-Williams’ interpretation of *Souls*.

<sup>20</sup> Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 1. Wolfenstein develops the notion of recognition—which he then uses to interpret *Souls*—from the Hegelian tradition. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces the concept of mutual recognition when two self-consciousnesses emerge on the scene and confront one another. The initial self-consciousness had been on a quest to affirm his self-certainty of himself in the world that exists outside of and around him. This can only be achieved when and if another parallel self-consciousness emerges and recognizes the first in the same way that he now also wishes to be recognized. Taken together, the process as a whole is referred to as mutual recognition. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 104-113, especially ¶ 178-184. An extensive literature exists where primarily North American and European authors make use of this concept in order to describe

and propose resolutions to problems ensuing from the presence of increasingly plural/multicultural social orders. See for example Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Wolfenstein's analysis of Du Bois' experience in *Souls* involves a psychoanalytic interpretation of the model that Taylor advances—and thus an affirmation of Hegel's basic framework. See Wolfenstein, *Psychoanalytic Marxism* (London: Free Association Books, 1993), 197-207.

<sup>21</sup> Where the narrative in Chapters II-X plays out across the horizontal plane, there is a simultaneous movement between high culture and folk culture along the vertical plane of analysis. And then, when this vertical plane takes precedence in Chapter XI-XIII (albeit in a modified form as “psychological heights and depths”), the sociological framing of the horizontal plane persists so as to contextualize the individual experience of insult and injury as part and parcel of a broader social problem. See Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 2-5.

<sup>22</sup> Wolfenstein and Gooding-Williams interpret second-sight and double consciousness in a similar fashion. According to Gooding-Williams, Du Bois' references to “second-sight” in *Souls* suggest a spiritual attribute particular to black folk that allows them to both see and see themselves being seen. Double consciousness represents a self-assessment of black folk by black folk via a white perspective that is far removed from the original group's essential identity. It is in other words the distortion of a potentiality inherent to black folk where the members of this racial group see themselves from the perspective of white supremacy. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 70-88.

<sup>23</sup> Du Bois' response to mis-recognition becomes an effort to “plunge into the redemptive spiritual depths of the black race” in the effort to realize “a black self that surpasses its white rivals”—a state of being that is characterized simultaneously by blackness, on the one hand, and an individuality that is “whiter than white” on the other. See Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> It may be said that Wolfenstein description of two-ness as the achievement of recognition by a “dual self” through “mastery” and “self-mastery” parallels Gooding-Williams' description of self-realization. Where self-realization involves self-assertion, Wolfenstein defines mastery as “proud and disciplined resistance to the impositions and injustices of white supremacy.” Both concepts communicate the same idea. Self-mastery however marks a significant break from Gooding-Williams' notion of self-development. Self-mastery is defined as “the developed capacity to rise above the field of battle and survey it from on high.” It is, in other words, the moment of renunciation, “the possibility of turning away,” where and when a victim of discrimination (if he or she is able to do so) “break[s] off contact.” In these scenarios, “[t]he battle for recognition is interrupted; wounded and angry, one lives to fight another day” (*A Gift*, 25). Self-development does not refer to (much less theorize) the act of renunciation.

<sup>25</sup> Du Bois defines two-ness as a condition as well as an ideal. As a condition, it is an unrealized possibility. The affirmation of this condition results in the creation of “a better and truer self.” See Du Bois, *Souls*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> See Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 94. For a comment on Du Bois' “orientalist” relationship with black folk culture, see Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 98. For a more elaborate discussion of the Orientalism in Du Bois' work see Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> David Levering Lewis describes the Seventh Ward at the time as housing 25 percent of the city's African American population. The majority of this population lived in four wards despite the fact that Philadelphia's ethnic groups were otherwise dispersed across the city. Lewis suggests that “respectable Philadelphia”—specifically those who were inclined to fund Du Bois' research—may have continued to care little about the condition of the African American population in the Seventh Ward were it not for the presence of the aforementioned white families that lived there. See David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 186-187.

<sup>28</sup> The study was commissioned by a group of influential philanthropists who were keen on implementing a progressive (i.e. collectivist) agenda. In his conceptual autobiography, Du Bois contrasts his own objectives with those of the philanthropists. He claims that he seized upon the city's pre-occupation with the “crime and venality” of its black population in order to “study an historical group of black folk.” See W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 58.

<sup>29</sup> According to Lewis, Du Bois' elite inclinations made his work amenable to the moralizing perspective of progressive reformers who believed that the black inhabitants of the Seventh Ward should take full responsibility for their circumstances. Yet Lewis identifies a hidden agenda within this hidden agenda where Du Bois speaks “calmly yet devastatingly of the history and logic of poverty and racism.” In a sense, Lewis' interpretation parallels Zamir's. Both authors see fragmented selves when they interpret what appear to be contradictory paths in one of Du Bois' works. See Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 189-190.

<sup>30</sup> By civilizational ideal, I am referring to Du Bois' repeated references to the inhabitants of the Seventh Ward as lacking in development—as if they were being measured according to a linear and teleological pattern of history. This was a popular view in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century European, specifically German, philosophical texts where a faith in progress was linked to a faith in scientific reason. An increase in knowledge would ostensibly correspond with societal advance and the improved condition of citizens. Examples of Du Bois' "civilizing" rhetoric in *PN* can be found in the chapters on conjugal relations—where he refers to the inhabitants of the Seventh Ward as "a people comparatively low in the scale of civilization" as well as those that refer to crime—where he describes "stealing and fighting" as "ever the besetting sins of half-developed races." See W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 66, 257.

<sup>31</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 385-393.

<sup>32</sup> Early on, Du Bois identifies the central problems among the black inhabitants of the Seventh Ward as "poverty and crime." They constitute "the darker side of the picture" or the "disease" which *PN* attempts to investigate. He not only links the two together—whereby one (poverty) leads to the other (crime). He directly argues that "race prejudice" causes poverty by determining the employment opportunities available for black citizens. Making a statement that prefigures his later ground-breaking work around the intersection between race and class in *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois states that "one of the great postulates of the science of economics—that men will seek their economic advantage—is in this case [where race prejudice is prevalent] untrue..." The same type of historically revisionist logic is applied in his evaluation of health statistics and his discussion of property ownership. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 145-147, 160-161, and 184-185.

<sup>33</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 58. Lewis goes so far as to refer to *PN* as Du Bois' "great schizoid monograph." See David Levering Lewis, *Biography of a Race*, 210.

<sup>34</sup> Most, if not all, of Gooding-Williams' points of criticism may be applied to the text—specifically, his critique of Du Bois' ruler or ruler-centered model of politics and Du Bois' unapologetic celebration of modern norms. For example, when discussing employment opportunity, Du Bois refers to discrimination as a phenomenon that unnecessarily prevents improvement in "the real weakness of the Negro's position, i.e., his lack of training." See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> In this regard, *PN* follows one of Du Bois' central arguments in *Souls*. It celebrates what Du Bois interprets as Frederick Douglass' model of assimilation-through-self-assertion in contrast to Booker T. Washington's model of assimilation-through-submission (not to mention the tradition of separatist thought). See Du Bois, *Souls*, 39. In turn, Gooding-Williams' develops one of his central arguments in response to this point. He argues that assimilation—and the concomitant binary between assimilation and separatism in evaluations of African American political thought—remains the operative terms through which thinkers have understood political activity. He thus characterizes Afro-Modern political theory as situated "in the shadow" of Du Bois' thought. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 5-8.

<sup>36</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 98.

<sup>37</sup> Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 102.

<sup>38</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> There are some discrepancies between Du Bois' stated organization of the book into chapters and the organization that we find in the most recent published edition. In the 1996 edition, the chapters on "organized social life" are in fact four in number where Du Bois refers to three. He seems to suggest that the three chapters are divided between "a study of the family, of property, and of organizations" with a discussion of crime and pauperism somewhere included. In the current edition, the discussion of property is subsumed within the chapter on family life with crime and pauperism constituting their own separate chapters.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to these four parts, we as readers would be warranted to consider two additional sections that book-end Du Bois' organizational schema: a set of introductory remarks (including one chapter on methodology and another on the definition of "the problem") and three concluding chapters, each of which offers a programmatic commentary on contemporary race relations. The fact that Du Bois does not include these considerations in his stated schematization further supports my reading that *PN* is organized as a *bildungsroman* (see below). The "novel of emergence" would essentially end within these four sections.

<sup>41</sup> While graphs and charts are interspersed through out *PN*, they are particularly prominent in Chapters V–X. See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 54-57, 66-71, 78, 85-88, and 99-109 for representative examples.

My intention here is to demonstrate the contrast between the reduction of individual lives to figures in these sections and the more vivid description of those lives in the later chapters.

<sup>42</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 189-190, 259-268, 275-277, 332-336, 341-347.

<sup>43</sup> Throughout the second section of *PN*, Du Bois repeatedly refers to race prejudice as one of two causes, alongside “the lack of training,” which prevent the advancement of the black population in Philadelphia; at each of these points, he writes that “the second cause [i.e. prejudice] will be discussed at length, later.” See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 111 for a representative example.

<sup>44</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 148. The chapter is divided into two sub-sections, both of which directly refer to the use of statistics: sub-section 25 discusses “The Interpretation of Statistics” while sub-section 26 is concerned with “The Statistics of the City.” The nature of these sub-headings suggests that the chapters are just as much about epistemology and methodology as they are about any substantive content (public health).

<sup>46</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 284.

<sup>47</sup> This passage is taken from an autobiographical essay published over 40 years after the completion of *The Philadelphia Negro*. See W.E.B. DuBois, “My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom,” in *What the Negro Wants*, ed. Rayford V. Logan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 45.

<sup>48</sup> See Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy’s Reconstruction*, 6-7. Her argument is crafted as a response to the current prevalence of blind spots in self-perceptions of the United States as a ‘post-racial’ state, using a rigorous engagement with Du Bois’ work as a platform for the purposes of generating alternate conceptualizations in the contemporary moment. In many ways, Singh’s *Black is a Country* provides an historical accompaniment and intellectual precursor to the type of argument that Balfour makes. Singh argues that Du Bois “was after a black reconstruction of democracy” that would fundamentally change the normative architecture of American politics by recognizing race and racialization as foundational to the republic. Along these lines, he makes note of the later Du Bois’ effort to bring the question of democracy into the discussion of leadership within the African American community—and his corresponding departure from what he perceived to be an undemocratically elitist organizational structure within the NAACP. See Singh, *Black is a Country*, 94-97.

<sup>49</sup> In an essay that surveys English-language treatments of the genre over the course of the last two centuries, Tobias Boes characterizes the *bildungsroman* (or “novel of formation”) as a vexing term with a variety of at times overly expansive traits. Generally understood, it involves a process of “teleological and organic growth, in the manner of a seed that develops into a mature plant according to inherent genetic principles” (232). The genre depicts this process through a story that “intimately links personal to historical development” (236). Its various forms either describe the “integration of a particular ‘I’ into the general subjectivity of a community” (238)—what Georg Lukacs refers to as “the happy resolution of poetic ideal and prosaic reality”—as well as accounts of “an essential disjuncture of Self and world”—which Lukacs actually characterizes in direct opposition to the *bildungsroman* but later scholars identify as being a subgenre of it (239). Boes characterizes his own definition of the *bildungsroman* as the novel of development (as opposed to formation) in order to “highlight the intimate connection between personal and historical change” (241-242). See Tobias Boes, “Modernist Studies and the *Bildungsroman*: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends,” *Literature Compass* 3/2 (2006): 230-243.

<sup>50</sup> This point varies in Zamir’s work. In the earlier essay, he presents the text as formally unified—an argument that Wolfenstein would later seem to reiterate. See Shamoan Zamir, ““The Sorrow Songs”/“Song of Myself”: Du Bois, the Crisis of Leadership, and Prophetic Imagination” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver, 346-364. In *Dark Voices* however, he interprets the formal coherence of the text as a radical adaptation of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*—an adaptation that reflects a fragmented or divided self-consciousness. *Souls* is thus unified by virtue of its fragmentation. See Zamir, *Dark Voices*, 113-117 and 158-160.

<sup>51</sup> Zamir’s suggestion that “the souls” in Du Bois’ work taken together are a single protagonist parallels a trope in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* where the central protagonist is *Geist* (Spirit). In this regard, the various “bewildering” forms in which the protagonist appears—at on point as Du Bois the author, at another moment as a member of the masses, and yet at other times as Du Bois’ son—are the “multiple human personae” whose shape “the soul” takes. See Zamir, *Dark Voices*, 158-160.

<sup>52</sup> It may be objected that Gooding-Williams reading of the sorrow songs echoes Zamir’s. Both understand this chapter as presenting the text (as well as Du Bois’ authorial persona within it) as a hopeful response to

the tragic failures of leadership that precede its writing. Unlike Zamir, however, Gooding-Williams points to a haunting spirit of tragedy within the chapter. Its tragic components remain unresolved precisely because Du Bois cannot, even in this writing, determine the future. See Gooding Williams, *In the Shadow*, 128-129.

<sup>53</sup> Bakhtin presents a number of types when discussing the “novel of emergence.” The “most significant one” presents “man’s individual emergence” as “inseparably linked to historical emergence.” He elaborates as follows: “He [the protagonist] emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself...It is as though the very *foundations* of the world are changing, and man must change along with them.” See M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 23-24.

<sup>54</sup> As I explain above (fn30), Du Bois repeatedly employs the concept of “civilization” as an ideal throughout his study. He suggests that the current state of affairs—on both sides of the color line, albeit for drastically different reasons—fails to live up to that ideal. In this regard, the underlying story in *PN* figures the world in a state of transition. While it may be claimed that the civilized ideal to which Du Bois refers in fact reflects rather than changes the essential foundations of the world around him, a counter-interpretation might read his reference to it as radical for its time. In the 1890s, when Booker T. Washington’s model of leadership presented the only viable path for reform, Du Bois’ attempt to hold American citizens on both sides of the color line accountable to a standard of “civilization” with roots in a foreign continent (i.e. Europe) can be read as a challenge—if not one that we might agree with today—to the surrounding world within which we find his “protagonist.” In either case, my point here is to demonstrate that *PN* can be read as accomplishing some of the more involved characterizations of the *bildungsroman* as genre.

<sup>55</sup> It may be objected that my depiction of the “the masses” as representing one individual protagonist counteracts one of Du Bois’ central aims—and most important political contributions—in *PN*: his effort to respond to and correct prejudiced sensibilities that understand different classes of African Americans as homogenous. In a late chapter entitled “The Environment of the Negro” that draws directly from the model set forth by Charles Booth in his nine-volume study entitled *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Du Bois categorizes the black population in the Seventh Ward into four classes. See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 309-318. He justifies his fairly exhaustive effort to highlight the heterogeneity of the black population as necessitated by the recurrent failings of race prejudice: “...there is no surer way of misunderstanding the Negro or being misunderstood by him than by ignoring the manifest differences of condition and power in the 40,000 black people of Philadelphia.” See *ibid.*, 310. And yet, as Gooding-Williams suggests, Du Bois’ study does not offer a portrait of differentiation *within* these classes. In his view, the theory of leadership in *Souls*—which he identifies as rooted in Du Bois’ earlier writings—is problematic precisely because it limits the possibilities for democratic criticism by African-Americans as diverse and disparate *individuals*. On these terms, Du Bois prescribes a single pattern of development for the masses as distinct from the elite despite their “internal” differences as a mass. In this regard, my characterization of these same masses as one protagonist in *PN*’s “plot” follows Gooding-Williams’ argument that Du Bois characterizes all of the individuals within the group as needing the same kind of development.

<sup>56</sup> DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 19. Reed also discusses this dimension of *PN*. See fn5 above for a fuller description of his argument.

<sup>57</sup> It is not coincidental that the subject of this climactic moment (i.e. the “problem” of crime) also constitutes the impetus behind the study’s sponsorship by Philadelphia’s white philanthropists. Du Bois can be read as referring directly to the condition of his sponsorship when he writes: “There is a widespread feeling that something is wrong with a race that is responsible for so much crime, and that strong remedies are called for... Indeed, *to the minds of many*, this is the real Negro problem.” See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 241, *emphasis mine*. Du Bois’ chapter and the ensuing arguments that follow it are dedicated to a redefinition of the problem as a matter of assimilation. He writes: “Crime is a *phenomenon of organized social life*, and is the open rebellion of an individual against his social environment.” See DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 235, *emphasis mine*.

<sup>58</sup> Bakhtin demonstrates this point through an analysis of Goethe—who he presents as having the “startling ability to see time in space.” What might otherwise be taken as a stable element of a plot is literally “seen” by Goethe as “saturated through and through with time” and therefore, according to Bakhtin, mutable. See Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 30. Notably, Bakhtin develops his analysis by pointing to the importance of sight and visibility in Goethe’s work. He writes: “Anything essential can and should be visible; anything

invisible is inessential ... For him visibility was not only the first, but also the last authority, when the visible was already enriched and saturated with all the complexity of thought and cognition." See Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, 27. In light of Balfour's comments on the centrality of sight in Du Bois' thought, the presence of these parallels in *PN* re-iterates the need to consider this text as a nuanced and integral—rather than deductive or instrumental—part of the early Du Bois' political theory. While broader the influence of Goethe on the young Du Bois has already been noted (see Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 10-11, 38, 78), my analysis is meant to bring to fore the previously unnoticed relationship between these influences and the narrative in *PN*.

<sup>59</sup> See Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 259-268.

<sup>60</sup> See Du Bois, *Souls*, 10, 46, 74-88, 96, 100.

<sup>61</sup> See Du Bois, *Souls*, 139-140. My interpretation of this chapter closely follows Gooding-Williams' "Du Bois's Counter-Sublime." Gooding-Williams argues that the younger Crummell (who embodies an attitude of sympathy for black slaves) represents a sublime figure in Du Bois' eyes where the older Crummell fails to do so. Du Bois, according to this reading, presents his own work as a more "durable" extension of Crummell's project or, as Gooding-Williams puts it, the "counter-sublime." See Robert Gooding-Williams, "Du Bois's Counter-Sublime," *The Massachusetts Review* 35, no. 2 (1994): 202-224. See also Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 96-115. The later chapter adds to the earlier essay by arguing that Du Bois' notion of the counter-sublime allows his "authorial persona" to step into the void of charismatic and authoritative leadership that the younger Crummell abandoned. I take issue with this reading below.

<sup>62</sup> Du Bois writes of Jones that he knew what it was that he was meant to do. We might interpret Jones as first hearing the call in the opera house in New York when he hears "*Lohengrin's* swan." He is moved by a sea of men to enter the opera house almost against his will, he is then moved emotionally by the music, and finally we see Jones moving back down South with a plan for his "life-work." As if forces greater than his individual will are at play, these three movements show Jones stepping into what appears to be a pre-determined plan. See Du Bois, *Souls*, 146-148.

<sup>63</sup> Du Bois, *Souls*, 135, *emphasis mine*.

<sup>64</sup> Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 235. Balfour's interpretation of Du Bois on John Brown suggests that this dynamic was a central feature of his political theory. Du Bois argues against "a single-minded focus on the violence of some—Brown, terrorists, criminals—and demands that we also regard the largely invisible, unrecalled violence that the state undertakes on our behalf." See Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Du Bois writes of John: "...and yet, somehow he found it so hard and strange to fit his old surroundings again, to find his place in the world about him." See Du Bois, *Souls*, 150.

<sup>66</sup> In the process of focusing on the affective dimensions of Du Bois' response to mis-recognition, Wolfenstein characterizes Jones' story as expressing a "temptation" or impulse toward "revolt and revenge" that Du Bois identifies with but which he does not wish to act on. Jones is Du Bois' shadow self insofar as he does act on this impulse where Du Bois does not; Wolfenstein accordingly characterizes him as the man Du Bois "was determined not to become." See Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 128.

<sup>67</sup> My attention to elite and mass social class positions presents Jones is the man Du Bois *was* determined to become but could not. I make this argument in light of Jones' fictional rendering, his ability to represent multiple "protagonists," and the consistent presence of doubling as a theme throughout *Souls*. As Wolfenstein points out, "this duality of light and shadow [between Du Bois' stoicism and Jones' revolt and revenge] is precisely the aesthetic/affective dimension of double-consciousness, the complement and complication of a soul split between Africa and America." See Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 130. The very notion that Du Bois would be determined to avoid realizing the "core self" that ties him to Jones suggests the presence of a basic self-identification. My reading is concerned with this "core self," thereby taking Wolfenstein's interpretation in a direction (elite/mass relations) that he did not consider in-depth.

<sup>68</sup> The doubling is represented by the presence of two Johns—a black John and a white John. Insofar as one is greater than the other, the separation between the two is not yet a hyphen that expresses equality. For a description of Hegelian resonances along these lines, see Wolfenstein, *A Gift*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> Gooding-Williams rightly points out that Jones, upon returning from the North, is alienated from the people in his hometown in a manner that signals his illegitimacy. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 118-120. What Gooding-Williams fails to adequately consider is the role of time in these three chapters—a relationship that a reading of *Souls* as *bildungsroman* explicitly draws out. Insofar as Jones' story represents "the gray To-come," he represents an unrealized promise of leadership. Within such an open-ended temporal framing, to judge a character who changes as much as Jones does based on one

instantiation of his persona (specifically, the church scene where Jones' secular speech falls flat) is to impose too rigid of a reading onto the chapter. In this regard, Gooding-Williams fails to appreciate the mutability that Bakhtin so praises in Goethe and which I argue exists in *Souls* as *bildungsroman*.

<sup>70</sup> Du Bois, *Souls*, 115.

<sup>71</sup> According to my reading, Du Bois' argument in the chapter on the sorrow songs—specifically, his references to *Souls* as a written text—actually signals an effort to deal with circumstances as they exist. Writing is not Du Bois' ideal form of leadership, as Zamir would suggest. Rather, writing is the best that Du Bois has to offer in order to remove the obstacles that prevent what *is* his ideal form of leadership from being realized: the figure of John Jones. This reading is consistent with my comparison between *PN* and *Souls*. In *PN* the narrative reaches a climax that remains unresolved within the body of the text. Du Bois accordingly offers his thoughts on self-assertion afterwards as a way to clear the path for what he takes to be the essence of his argument i.e. self-development.

<sup>72</sup> Gooding-Williams is ambivalent on this point. On the one hand, he presents Jones in a state of double-consciousness that mirrors the condition of the older Crummell: both are unable to connect with a slave past that Du Bois, via the sorrow songs, identifies with folk identity. The primary textual evidence used to support this claim comes from the scene in the church after Jones' return to Altamaha. His secular and lofty speech contrasts sharply with what Du Bois takes to be the “religion of the slave.” See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 118-119 and Du Bois, *Souls*, 149-150. At the same time, Gooding-Williams states that the sorrow songs do not offer a definitively hopeful resolution for Du Bois. See *ibid.*, 125. My argument elaborates on this point of ambivalence. If Chapter XIII were to end as Gooding-Williams sees it, his reading would be entirely correct. However, after his failure in the church, Jones does not return North or suffer a “deeper death” like Crummell. In this sense, where Crummell is the picture of the living dead objectified, Jones may be understood to be the living dead as subject. He walks this earth having suffered double-consciousness and yet he continues to strive until actual death prevents him from striving further. He in fact sets up a school *after* this incident and begins to “see at last some glimmering of dawn” before the injustices of Jim Crow physically prevent him from going further. See Du Bois, *Souls*, 152. This reading only becomes possible if and when we take the role of death and the corresponding significance of time in the later chapters into consideration.

<sup>73</sup> My aversion to what I identify to be a romantic argument in Gooding-Williams stems from Balfour's *Democracy's Reconstruction*. Balfour, following David Scott, interprets Du Bois' references to the slave past as a democratic form of politics that expands our ability to see the unseen. As I argue above, the relationship between Du Bois' authorial persona (as representative of the elite) and black folk (as representative of the masses) in both *PN* and *Souls* affirms this interpretation. He does not only learn from and attempt to report their experiences; his theory of political leadership also requires their active participation. This stands in contrast to Gooding-Williams' reading of Du Bois' references to the slave past as purely instrumental. See Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, 7-17 and Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, especially 101-111 for his definition of sympathy in Du Bois.

<sup>74</sup> Gooding-Williams derives this model from Douglass' recounted experience as a slave and the affiliation-based political ties that he established on the plantation. Douglass is portrayed as the instigator who “spurs his fellows to meet, to deliberate, and to join him in planning the plot to run away.” He is, in short, “the leader-as-initiative-taker rather than the leader-as-ruler.” See Gooding Williams, *In the Shadow*, 185-187.

<sup>75</sup> A pertinent instantiation of the same debate can be found in the exchange between Judith Butler and Gooding-Williams around the latter's “Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy.” Here, Gooding-Williams presents a model of deliberative democracy that takes race to be constitutive while Butler presents a post-structuralist rejoinder on similar terms. See *Constellations*, Volume 5, No. 1, 1998, 18-47 for both essays.

<sup>76</sup> I do not understand “elite” and “mass” to be rigidly aristocratic categories. As my argument about John Jones demonstrates, the movement from mass to elite in *Souls* presents the notion that anybody can fill either position depending on their “training.” The central argumentative point that remains concerns the normative dimensions of the “training” process. Insofar as it re-affirms an “oppressive social order,” Du Bois' early political theory must be criticized—a point that Gooding-Williams forcefully makes and with which I entirely agree. See Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow*, 255.