Article

Beyond the Psychological Wage: Du Bois on White Dominion

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Abstract

W.E.B. Du Bois's reading of whiteness as a "public and psychological wage" is enormously influential. This essay examines another, lesser known facet of Du Bois's account of racialized identity: his conceptualization of whiteness as dominion. In his 1920–1940 writings, "modern" whiteness appears as a proprietary orientation toward the planet in general and toward "darker peoples" in particular. This "title to the universe" is part of chattel slavery's uneven afterlife, in which the historical fact of "propertized human life" endures as a racialized ethos of ownership. The essay examines how this "title" is expressed and reinforced in the twentieth century by the Jim Crow system of racial signs in the United States and by violent "colonial aggrandizement" worldwide. The analytic of white dominion, I argue, allows Du Bois to productively link phenomena often regarded as discrete, namely, domestic and global forms of white supremacy and practices of exploitation and dispossession. Ultimately, the entitlement Du Bois associates with whiteness is best understood as a pervasive, taken-for-granted horizon of perception, which facilitates the transaction of the "wage" but is not reducible to it.

Keywords

Du Bois, racism, whiteness, slavery, property

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W.E.B. Du Bois's account of compensatory whiteness within the US regime of racial capitalism is one of his most important contributions to contemporary political theory.[1] *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) famously argues that whiteness served as a "public and psychological wage," providing poor whites in the nineteenth and early twentieth century a valuable social status bound to their categorization as "not-black." Several elements of this thesis have proven significant: whiteness offers meaningful "compensation" (Du Bois's term) to citizens otherwise exploited by the workings of capitalism; the value of whiteness depends on the devaluation of black existence; and the rewards enjoyed by whites are not only monetary. These insights have shaped efforts to theorize white identity and to understand the (non) formation of political coalitions ever since.

Yet this is only one of the ways Du Bois thinks about the gratifications of whiteness. Alongside his well-known idea of a metaphorical payment—which assigns to anti-black racism a legible role in capitalist social control—he also probes what he calls the "irrational" dimensions of "race hate."[2] Beginning around 1920, his writings approach whiteness as a polyvalent formation that delivers multiple benefits to those who bear its "sign"—benefits that consistently depend on the "badge of inferiority" attached to blackness, but not all of which are readily reducible to buy-offs that secure allegiance to capitalism.

This essay addresses one neglected dimension of Du Bois's thought on this subject: his astute reading of what I call *whiteness as dominion*.[3] In addition to the idea of a "public and psychological wage," Du Bois locates in the souls of white people a deep, unquestioned belief that the world—nay, the universe—*belongs to* those with "pale white faces."[4] To be white in the early twentieth century, according to Du Bois, is to inhabit a possessive, proprietary orientation—toward the planet in general and toward "darker peoples" in particular. If whiteness is in part constituted by a beneficial and not exclusively monetary transaction (bearing special significance for those lacking material resources), Du Bois also suggests that whiteness operates on a different, less transactional, and less class-specific register—as something closer to an embodied faith with racialized proprietorship at its center.

Du Bois provides a compelling analysis of a white ethos of ownership that deserves attention, both for the way it productively complicates received interpretations of Du Bois and for the way it speaks to enduring problems of racism. His account of whiteness-as-dominion is valuable for several reasons. First, it reveals that whiteness is often lived as a comprehensive worldview or "religion" that casts the "darker world" as the default property of those marked "white," and therefore as both usable and expendable. Second, Du Bois's work traces this proprietary imaginary to the material practices and

ideology of chattel slavery, while also suggesting that there is something distinctively "modern" about it. This both/and analysis allows for recognition of continuity and discontinuity within the afterlife of slavery. Third, the racialized "title to the universe" is an analytic that links domestic and global forms of oppression and connects practices of exploitation and dispossession, the "theft" of labor to the "theft" of land. Du Bois's incisive theory of white dominion, I suggest, remains relevant here and now.

This essay focuses on writings from 1920 to 1940, a particularly fecund period even for the prolific Du Bois. This two-decade span documents the radicalization of his thinking (leading to his break with the NAACP in 1934) in response to political events of his time: colonial expansion and anti-colonial resistance, the World War, new (legal and extralegal) tools for the enforcement of white supremacy in the US, and the Great Depression. His work from this period includes many topical publications in the NAACP's *The Crisis*, but is most importantly bookended by *Darkwater* in 1920 and *Dusk of Dawn* in 1940, with the magisterial *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) between them.[5]

My argument proceeds in four steps. The first section introduces Du Bois's conceptualization of whiteness-as-dominion and shows that this formulation tethers twentieth century racial dynamics to the institution of slavery, even as Du Bois posits a specifically "modern" form of whiteness. Parts two and three examine how such dominion is enacted on the US and international stages of the twentieth century, via practices that are at once vestiges of slavery and instantiations of something "new." More specifically, part two contends that Du Bois's account of race in the Jim Crow–era US identifies a system of "signs" inherited from the property regime of chattel slavery. The third section examines how racialized entitlement shapes global imperialist endeavors that treat nonwhite peoples and their lands as the a priori property of whites, available for use and disposal. Finally, part four argues that the white entitlement Du Bois identifies is best understood as a pervasive, taken-for-granted interpretive schema that invites a stance of presumptive ownership toward the "darker world"—its people, land, and resources. This suggests that the "wage" mechanism, though important, is situated within a comprehensive horizon of perception that outstrips it.

"Ownership of the Earth, Forever and Ever, Amen!"

The remarkable essay "The Souls of White Folk" in *Darkwater* opens with Du Bois's declaration that he is "clairvoyant."[6] Of white people he says, "I see in and through them. . . . I see these souls undressed and from the back

and side. I see the workings of their entrails." As he shares what he finds there, he moves from a general description of the belief in white superiority to a more specific and startling formulation.[7]

Describing a conversation with one of the "sweeter souls of the dominant world," Du Bois writes that while this white person engages in small talk with him, "playing above their actual words" is another message:

> My poor un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the curse of God lies heavy upon you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born—white!

Du Bois continues:

> I ask soberly:
>
> "But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?" Then always, somehow, someway, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth, forever and ever, Amen!

This declaration captures Du Bois's distinctive analysis of whiteness as a possessive stance, a mode of relationality that regards the world—and crucially, its nonwhite inhabitants and the places they live—as property, or potentially so. Whiteness entails a "passionate" belief in one's right to everything and anything. To be white is to feel that one holds a "title to the universe," according to Du Bois.[8]

This belief is an utter "phantasy," not merely a "faulty" understanding, according to Du Bois, but a sort of madness. White folks see themselves as "world-mastering demi-gods." They are "imprisoned and enthralled" by a grandiose delusion of totalizing ownership, one that generates pernicious consequences.[9] After identifying "ownership" as the definitive, default presumption of the "white soul," the essay cites practices of anti-black oppression that can be seen to express this possessive outlook, from the "barbarism" of white mobs in US cities to the imperialist projects of white nations that "bleed and exploit the colonies of the world."[10] Thus, while the proprietary disposition Du Bois conceptualizes may be a hubristic hallucination, it generates dire, tangible effects.

Moreover, as I show in the remainder of this section, the "phantasy" that defines whiteness for Du Bois is far from abstract or otherworldly. Rather, it originates in a specific, identifiable set of material practices. The conviction that white folks own the world is a vestige of the chattel slavery system that helped found racial capitalism.[11] Although Du Bois does not directly trace the

problem of white entitlement to the institution of slavery in "The Souls of White Folk," once his argument there is read alongside his treatment of slavery in *Black Reconstruction*, the lineage of modern whiteness becomes clear. What Du Bois theorizes as whites' belief in their own total, almost ontological, dominion is the unacknowledged inheritance of a system built upon "barter in human flesh."[12]

Black Reconstruction stresses the perverse form of ownership constitutive of American slavery, citing slave codes that described slaves as "devisable like any other chattel" and "purely and absolutely property."[13] While the book famously casts the ex-slaves who helped win the Civil War as workers engaged in "general strike," Du Bois also differentiates those held as slaves from even the most exploited workers. He pinpoints the specific, profound injustice of chattel slavery: "No matter how degraded the factory hand, he is not real estate."[14] He explains:

> In this vital respect, the slave laborer differed from all others of his day: he could be sold; he could, at the will of a single individual, be transferred for life a thousand miles or more. His family, wife, and children could be legally and absolutely taken from him. Free laborers today are compelled to wander in search of work and food; their families are deserted for want of wages; but in all this there is no such direct barter in human flesh.[15]

Du Bois directs attention to what Walter Johnson, drawing on the writings of James W.C. Pennington, a fugitive slave, calls "the chattel principle." [16] This principle, which Pennington also called the "property principle" and the "bill of sale principle," governed the slavery system as a whole, as Du Bois saw. The reduction of human beings to commodities with prices—fungible objects to be bought, sold, and traded—lay at the heart of American slavery. Du Bois finds *property relations* between owner and owned, and not only *exploitation relations* between boss and worker, to be constitutive of slavery in the United States.

The fugitive slave—a figure celebrated in *Black Reconstruction*—was subject to a complex legal construction that illustrates this "property principle."[17] Frederick Douglass (whom Du Bois frequently cites) dramatized this point by declaring to his audience, "I appear before this immense assembly this evening as a thief and a robber. I stole this head, these limbs, this body from my master and ran off with them."[18] The commodification that underwrote slavery perversely rendered Douglass a thief of his own person, guilty of a property crime against his white master. *Black Reconstruction* also presents the actions of fugitive slaves as practical condemnations of the chattel principle. Du Bois suggests that escaped slaves prompted intense vitriol from slaveholders because those who "sought freedom by running away from

slavery" posed a double-threat. First, they were an "important economic item"—every runaway slave was an "actual loss" for the masters. Even more critically, however, when these "black rebels" refused their own commodification and "ran away to freedom," they rejected the very premise of the regime: that persons could be *owned*.[19]

Black Reconstruction also contends that the property relations institutionalized in chattel slavery did not disappear with that regime's formal end. They were perpetuated by overt measures like the Black Codes that attempted to "make Negroes slaves in everything but name."[20] Running still deeper, and animating those efforts at re-enslavement was, in the words of Carl Schurz, the Union general and future Senator who reported on conditions in the South immediately following the Civil War and whom Du Bois quotes at length in *Black Reconstruction*, "an ingrained feeling that the blacks at large belong to the whites at large." Schurz's contention—that "whites esteem the blacks as their property by natural right," regardless of the legality of slavery—is affirmed by Du Bois's analysis of the sense of totalizing ownership lodged in the very "souls" of white people.[21]

Du Bois's reading of whiteness in "The Souls of White Folk" cites without explicitly naming the prior existence of a politico-legal order which "propertized human life."[22] When Du Bois speaks in the idiom of property relations ("ownership," "title") to characterize "modern" whiteness, his language evokes a specific historical precedent: a regime within which humans socially categorized as black—and *only* those so categorized—could be held as "real estate," a fate from which all whites were shielded.

Yet Du Bois also believes there is something "new" about whiteness in the twentieth century: "The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing—a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed."[23] What can this mean? Although this claim is not rendered very precisely, it is possible to identify the historical dynamics that likely inform it. Broadly speaking, Du Bois seems to situate "the white man's title" in relation to revolutionary and emancipatory projects that preceded it. He references, for example, the lost aspirations of Enlightenment humanism. Just after dating the whiteness he analyzes to the "nineteenth and twentieth century," he notes, "even up into the eighteenth century we were hammering our national manikins into one, great, Universal Man, with fine frenzy which ignored color and race even more than birth. Today we have changed all that."[24] This formulation implies that the "religion of whiteness" is partly new because it openly departs from the universalist ideals of the earlier age of the American, French, and Haitian revolutions. The promise to overturn social hierarchies has given way, he implies, to "virulent" racism, remarkable for its ascendance in the wake of political struggles that

bore the mantle of universalism. Additionally, much of Du Bois's work is situated overtly *after* the "great age of emancipations," running from Britain in 1833 to Brazil in 1888.[25] Most obviously, *Black Reconstruction* tracks and laments the re-institutionalization of white supremacy in the wake of the radical, broken promise of Reconstruction. Similarly, in "The Souls of White Folk," when Du Bois explains that a "the new religion of whiteness" is ascendant world-wide, he describes this shift as a "dampening" of the enthusiasm once felt for the pursuit of human freedom, and for the emancipation of slaves in particular.[26] Part of what makes "whiteness" modern for Du Bois, then, is that it is constructed and asserted in contexts that once seemed headed in a very different, egalitarian direction.

Ultimately, Du Bois's analysis of modern whiteness depicts it as a powerful force, both continuous and discontinuous with previous forms of racial oppression. The presumptive ownership Du Bois locates in white souls, as I argued above, is best understood as a revision of slavery's chattel principle. Yet Du Bois's argument is not simply that old ways of enforcing racial caste have been revived. Rather, Du Bois also observes that inventive strategies re-draw the color line in the twentieth century, both domestically and globally. White dominion is enacted in ways that are at once familiar and novel.

Du Bois's account of a racialized ethos of ownership resembles later work in critical race theory that conceptualizes whiteness-as-property. Derrick Bell and Cheryl Harris, for example, argue in their influential scholarship that there is a "property right in whiteness." While there is no question that the idiom Du Bois deploys to characterize "modern whiteness"—ownership, title—resonates with these subsequent analyses, the approaches are not identical. While the later work foregrounds the way in which whiteness is held by persons as a form of valuable property, in the texts I examine here, Du Bois emphasizes the tendency of white subjects to look upon the world—and specifically those darker peoples and lands within it—as their property. In other words, the entity that is propertized in these accounts differs. In the CRT tradition, presented most rigorously in Harris's landmark essay, whiteness is property, according to US law and custom.[27] Du Bois's insights into white dominion target something else: a worldview that casts that-which-is-not-white (persons, lands, resources) as personal possessions that rightfully belong to those marked "white."

Harris, building on Bell's formulation of whiteness as a "vested property interest" that delivers benefits to those who possess it, characterizes whiteness as "treasured property" and "a valuable asset."[28] While the precise meaning of whiteness-as-property has shifted in the twentieth century, from a state-sanctioned legal status to a source of de facto privilege, Harris argues that "holders of whiteness" in the United States have for centuries enjoyed a form of "usable

property" that serves as a "predicate for attaining a host of societal privileges."[29] Harris provides a crucial analysis of the means by which "possessors of whiteness" accrue advantages.[30] Du Bois's declaration that "whiteness is ownership of the earth, forever and ever, Amen!" aims to capture something else, however. His account of white dominion concerns less the unequal distribution of tangible and intangible goods along the color line (a topic Du Bois addressed in detail in much of his work) than the way in which "white souls" think and act in accordance with the conviction that racialized others are their property.

The understanding of proprietary whiteness advanced by Bell and Harris, then, is distinct from, though not incompatible with, Du Bois's depiction of an ethos of white entitlement. Indeed, that whiteness serves as "a highly valued and exclusive form of property" (Harris) in no way conflicts with Du Bois's claim that a "religion of whiteness" positions its faithful as the presumptive owners of the entire planet.[31] Moreover, the CRT tradition that conceives of whiteness-as-property is indebted to Du Bois's own formulation of whiteness as a "wage." For example, in an early formulation of proprietary whiteness, Bell states that slavery "provided mainly propertyless whites with a property in their whiteness," echoing Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* argument that racial solidarity was achieved in the United States by way of a "public and psychological wage" paid to even the poorest whites.[32] Harris's essay makes this link explicit by citing Du Bois on the wage to explain "whiteness as racialized privilege."[33] Du Bois's insights into the wages of whiteness clearly inform CRT's examinations of proprietary whiteness. Yet there is another, lesser-known dimension of Du Bois's thinking about white racial identity that warrants attention. This line of thinking asks: how does whiteness endure, not only as something akin to a valuable possession, but as a comprehensive outlook that thingifies whatever it sees?

To further examine Du Bois's distinctive reflections on this question, the next sections consider two primary and interconnected sites for the enactment of white dominion, drawn from his writings. Part two consider how the system of racial "signs" operative in the Jim Crow United States updated yet largely sustained the owner/owned division definitive of slavery. In the third section, I probe Du Bois's treatment of the "new imperialism" of his age, which exposes a pattern of avarice expressive of white nations' intent to "own the world."

Dominion in America: Badges of Slavery in the Post-emancipation United States

Du Bois's understanding of race transformed over the course of his long career, but by the 1930s he had arrived at his "mature concept," which prefigured later analyses of race as a social construction.[34] Several of the essays in

Dusk of Dawn (1940) offer powerful refutations of biologistic accounts and provide a counter-theory of race as an invented classification meant to enforce social hierarchies. Du Bois announces that a "scientific definition of race is impossible" and that the classification of humans by race is spurious. But while racial categorization has no basis in nature, the designations "white" and "black," Du Bois tells us, remain indispensable for the "caste" system he finds in United States in 1940. He captures this paradox in an autobiographical description of his own life: "the difference in skin color was vastly overemphasized and intrinsically trivial."[35] How is this baseless yet all-important distinction made and remade, according to Du Bois? He presents three crucial claims: (1) Race is a "badge" or a "sign." (2) The sign "black" functions to designate inferiority because it is associated with slavery. (3) The marks of race are enforced by both law and custom in the Jim Crow era.

To counter pseudo-scientific claims about race, Du Bois persistently refers to race as a kind of mark—he calls it a "badge" and a "sign." In "The Concept of Race," for example, he declares that the "badge of color [is] relatively unimportant save as a badge."[36] Skin color has little meaning in and of itself; it is one of many physical variations to be found among the species; however, it *is* important because it operates as a sign. And what does this sign communicate? *Black Reconstruction* makes the point plainly: "the Negro . . . was compelled almost continuously to submit to various badges of inferiority."[37]

Du Bois traces the hierarchy-enforcing "badges" of his day to the institution of slavery.[38] The statement that skin color is "unimportant, save as a badge," is followed immediately by a reference to the "social heritage of slavery."[39] Here Du Bois suggests obliquely that racial divisions persist because they signify *in accordance with* the foundational race-making institution in the US. Du Bois makes this claim explicit in "The White World," after acknowledging that division by race is both "absurd" and highly consequential:

> If, as happened to a friend of mine, a lady in a pullman car ordered me to bring her a glass of water, mistaking me for a porter, the incident in its essence was a joke to be chuckled over but in its hard, cruel significance and its *unending inescapable sign of slavery*, it was something to drive a man mad.[40]

Du Bois's interpretation of this encounter clarifies how the badges of race function in the post-emancipation United States. The designations "white" and "black" reference a historically specific hierarchy dividing owner and owned. The classification "black" attached to the otherwise "unimportant" fact of skin color still signifies slavery, seventy-five years after emancipation.

Du Bois's analysis indicates that if race is a mark, it should be understood less as a noun than as a verb. In "The White World," Du Bois's "white friend,

Roger Van Dieman" is deeply confused when confronted with Du Bois's claim that racial classification lacks scientific basis. He inquires whether Du Bois really means to say "there are no races" and asks, in disbelief, how then Du Bois can see himself as part of a black community at all:

> [Van Dieman]: But what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it "black" when you admit it is not black?
>
> [Du Bois]: I recognize it quite easily and with full legal sanction; the black man is a person who must ride "Jim Crow" in Georgia.[41]

This exchange clarifies that race is (re)made by discriminatory conduct, and nothing else. "Black" is an invented category sustained by repetitive practices (such as the segregation of public transportation Du Bois cites) that effectively reinscribe the divisions of slavery. (Du Bois also notes that the mark "black" is uniquely durable: America has begrudgingly allowed "'new' white people" to acquire "place and power," while "against Negroes she can and does take an unflinching and immoveable stand. . . . She trains her immigrants to the despising of 'niggers' from the day of their landing."[42])

Du Bois maintains that discriminatory laws affix a degrading badge of slavery onto some citizens, yet he does not think that caste is maintained by legal authority alone. Recall the white woman in the train car who ordered a black male passenger to bring her a drink. Here the problem lies not with a discriminatory law or policy but rather with a racialized schema that immediately and reflexively associates dark skin with servitude. (Du Bois captures this ready-to-hand association in an earlier *Darkwater* essay when he writes that the US labor movement abandoned blacks because, like the rest of the "white world," they believe "Negroes are servants; servants are Negroes."[43]) In the train example, the "inescapable sign of slavery" is enforced by default patterns of thought and everyday action, more so than by official "legal sanction." The ethos of dominion that Du Bois identified with whiteness in 1920's "The Souls of White Folk" is evident in this interaction too. Mistaking the black passenger for a servant indicates that blackness remains, in the words of Saidiya Hartman, "the mark of object status" in slavery's afterlife.[44] Such marks, Du Bois shows, are manufactured and sustained by habit no less than law.

"The Color Line Belts the World": Dominion as Colonial Aggrandizement

Du Bois's deft analyses of the US polity consistently place American racial dynamics within a global frame. As Lawrie Balfour points out, even the

famous sentence that opens "Of the Dawn of Freedom" in the relatively early *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) presents the "color-line" as a transnational phenomenon by connecting race-based hierarchies in the US to those in "Asia and Africa."[45] Indeed, a "global orientation" is evident throughout Du Bois's long life and varied oeuvre—an orientation that grows into a more explicit set of politico-theoretical commitments beginning around 1919–1920, in the wake of World War I, when Du Bois creates the Pan-African Congress (1919–1945) and publishes *Darkwater*.[46]

The essays in *Darkwater* address what Charles Mills has called "the idea of race as a global system."[47] More specifically, these writings depict the Jim Crow regime in the United States and aggressive Anglo-European imperialism as mutually reinforcing programs of racial oppression. Connecting white nations' bloody quest for the "dark world's wealth and toil" to the subjugation of black people within the United States, as Du Bois does repeatedly, signals that the project of colonization is not simply "external" and that freedom struggles must traverse national boundaries.[48]

Du Bois's efforts to expose Euro-American domination of the "darker races" as a global problem and to encourage the internationalization of resistance to racial capitalism are well-recognized by most interpreters of his middle- and late-period work.[49] Here I want to demonstrate that the concept of white dominion in particular helps Du Bois forge the connection between domestic and global forms of injustice in the early twentieth century. The conviction that "whiteness is ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!" underwrites both America's violently enforced system of racial marks and brutal forms of "empire-building" carried out around the globe.

This section shows how the concept of white dominion—particularly by reference to racialized enslavement—works in Du Bois's writings to tether domestic and global forms of oppression together and to map relations between past and present. I also explain how "white title" connects the abuse and destruction of "darker peoples" to the theft of "dark land."[50] Thus, white dominion entails a racialized, proprietary relationship to both persons and territories. Finally, the "title" implicated in practices of exploitation and expropriation is best understood as a comprehensive orientation to existence—a "religion"—and is not simply synonymous with racial-colonial capitalism's signature methods of accumulation.

Du Bois's analysis of World War I in *Darkwater* treats it not as exceptional but as consistent with prevailing patterns of colonization—patterns shaped by the belief in "the white man's title."[51] His account of public reactions to the war among Allied countries implies the workings of a proprietary worldview among white nations and white citizens. He writes, "Behold little Belgium and her pitiable plight, but has the world forgotten Congo? What Belgium now suffers

is not half, not even a tenth, of what she has done to Black Congo." He continues, noting that as mass murder took place under King Leopold's regime, "Belgium laughed, the cities were gay, art and science flourished" and other colonialist powers, committing their own violent conquests elsewhere, did not object to the slaughter.[52] Within the context of this essay, which opens with a well-meaning white person's declaration, "Whiteness is ownership of the earth, forever and ever, Amen!," the fact that Belgium has received widespread sympathy while the far greater death and destruction that Belgium wrought in "inmost Africa" remains unacknowledged and ungrieved can be seen as a manifestation of whites' presumptive title. The violence that shook Europe during the World War registered as remarkable and tragic precisely because white people suffered—those who believed that the world belonged to them and expected to be the agents, not the targets, of violence inflicted in the name of a presumptive "title to the universe."

Public responses to the war are also notable, because the divergent interpretations held by the "white world" and "dark world" reflect these populations' differential exposure to a racialized ethos of ownership. Du Bois writes, "War is horrible! This the dark world knows to its awful cost. But has it just become horrible?" That Germany is condemned by the United States for its invasion of Belgium, that war as such is now lamented throughout Europe reveals to Du Bois only that whites were alarmed to discover they were not shielded from harm as they had been in many recent colonial wars that devastated "darker peoples" ("in German Africa, in British Nigeria, in French and Spanish Morocco"). The war was a cataclysm for "the white world," Du Bois avers, but others had longstanding, intimate knowledge of Europe's cruelty: "We darker men said: This is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration nor insanity; this *is* Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture—."[53] Much as Du Bois is able to see through white folk (announced in the essay's first lines), so too do darker people share a collective understanding of the "real soul of white culture." What resides there is nothing but "rage for one's own nation to own the earth."[54]

This proprietary rage is not unique to the war, of course. The *Darkwater* essays present WWI as the latest episode of the "new imperialism" dating to the late nineteenth century. And Du Bois sees the violent enactment of "white title" both in imperialist assaults on non-white nations worldwide and in the cruelty inflicted on African Americans in the United States. He writes:

> Such is the silent revolution that has gripped modern European culture in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its zenith came in Boxer times: White supremacy was all but world-wide, Africa was dead, India conquered, Japan isolated, and China prostrate, while white America whetted her sword for

> mongrel Mexico and mulatto South America, lynching her own Negroes the while.[55]

This remarkable passage makes several important points. First, by dating this "silent revolution" as he does, Du Bois connects it to the phenomenon of "modern whiteness," which he also locates in the "nineteenth and twentieth" centuries six pages prior. Thus, "the title to the universe claimed by White Folk" is coeval with the material practices of new imperialism. Next, by associating colonialist violence carried out in Africa, Asia, and the Americas with the lynching of blacks in the United States, he depicts these international and domestic phenomena as mutually reinforcing forms of white entitlement. Additionally, key terms and points of reference amplify Du Bois's anti-colonial critique. When he references "mongrel Mexico" and "mulatto South America" he mockingly echoes the views of apologists for the Mexican–American War and proponents of US control of the Southern Hemisphere.[56] By identifying the "zenith" of the formation of new imperialism with "Boxer times," Du Bois does more than pinpoint the turn of the century (the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1901) as a key historical juncture; he defines the epoch in relation to anticolonial *resistance* that rejects the delusion that whites (ought to) own the world.[57]

As argued previously, the concept of whiteness-as-dominion cannot be understood apart from the precedent of slavery and its defining property relations. The genealogy conveyed by Du Bois's account is complex, however, because he recognizes that racial orders of the early twentieth century simultaneously reproduce the entrenched hierarchies of the past and innovate upon them. Thus, the racial signs operative in the Jim Crow South, we saw, were both an extension of slavery's "property principle" and an adaptation suited to the post-emancipation era. Likewise, slavery figures prominently in Du Bois's critique of "new imperialism." These references indicate that contemporary colonization repeats and updates features of the legalized slave trade, an institution that was thoroughly global all along.

When Du Bois analogizes the colonization of Africa, Asia, and South America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to the prior legal slave trade, he posits historical repetition-with-a-difference. In "The Hands of Ethiopia" in *Darkwater*, for example, he connects the "barbarous scramble" over Africa beginning in the late 1800s to the Atlantic slave trade that preceded it:

> For four hundred years white Europe was the chief support of that trade in human beings which first and last robbed black Africa of a hundred million human beings . . . Today instead of removing laborers from Africa to distant

> slavery, industry built on a new slavery approaches Africa to deprive the natives of their land, to force them to toil and to reap all the profit for the white world.[58]

Here white "ownership" is both sustained and revised for a new context. Quite simply: "If the slave cannot be taken from Africa, slavery can be taken to Africa."[59] This invocation of slavery highlights the global geography of "white title," both past and present, and the historical adaptations by which dominion endures.

Du Bois also cites the precedent of slavery to characterize the condition of colonized subjects beyond Africa. In *Black Reconstruction*, even as he argues for the distinctiveness of chattel slavery (the enslaved person was "real estate"), he observes that the "analogue today" to the American slave is the "yellow, brown and black laborer in China and India, in Africa, in the forests of the Amazon."[60] This formulation positions the slave within the US regime not as anomalous but as precedent-setting, modeling what would become a feature of global racial capitalism.[61]

Yet even though new imperialism entails practices resembling slavery, it is not a copy of anything that came before. Colonial powers operate with a "heaven-defying audacity" and on an unprecedented scale.[62] Du Bois also understands the colonial expansion undertaken in this period as a historically specific strategy that aimed to "solve" a particular problem—namely, the growing power of white organized labor. In 1920 Du Bois describes colonization as the "scheme of Europe," meant to provide "a way out of long-pressing difficulties." He notes that capitalist control of the white working classes has weakened and that greater economic equality is on the horizon in Europe. Colonization, then, is the "loophole" that allows for further capitalist accumulation—"no labor unions or votes or questioning onlookers or inconvenient consciences."[63] Europe's effort to "levy endless tribute on the darker world" is at least partially new, on Du Bois's rendering, because it is a historically specific attempt to stabilize capitalist rule against the gains of white labor.

Du Bois's treatment of new imperialism likens the exploitation and degradation of the "darker peoples" it targets to slavery, yet also specifies that the proprietary "religion of whiteness" is manifested in the taking of "dark land" as well. The concept of "white dominion" I draw from Du Bois's work refers to a possessive orientation toward both people *and* land, then. It names a racialized ethos of ownership that simultaneously facilitates, and is facilitated by, practices of exploitation and dispossession.

The double-valence of the "title to the universe" is most evident when Du Bois pairs the violent extraction of labor with the "stealing" of land. He does so often. In one of many indictments of twentieth-century empire-building,

he refers to "colonies, we call them, these places where 'niggers' are cheap and the earth is rich," bringing together the appropriation of both human labor and land. Likewise, what motivated the World War, he says, was competition for "the labor of yellow, brown, and black folks" *and* "the possession of land overseas."[64] "The Hands of Ethiopia" similarly condemns the "exploitation of both land and labor" in Africa.[65] Dispossession and exploitation are presented as complementary strategies of the new imperialism—strategies united by the worldview of white dominion.

This approach foreshadows recent scholarship that draws on and reworks Marx's account of "primitive accumulation" to show that the dispossession of land is a constitutive and continuous feature of capitalism. Rather than understanding what Marx called the "theft of land" as a temporal precursor to proletarianization, theorists such as Robert Nichols and Onur Ulas Ince, inspired in part by Rosa Luxemberg, argue that "land grabs" are not a historical stage of capitalist development but "a distinct modality of its ongoing operation."[66] Likewise, Du Bois's persistent focus on "land and labor" places dispossession at the center of the twentieth century's global quest for profit.[67]

Du Bois's emphasis on territoriality also implies that the processes of capitalist "development" are historically inseparable from colonization.[68] As Glenn Coulthard points out, Marx's emphasis on the violent appropriation of land is important because it "links the totalizing power of *capital* to that of *colonialism.*"[69] Du Bois's attention to taking "possession of land" as a recurring feature of "industrial development" signals a similar recognition. (He stresses this point by noting that the "horror of the industrial history of Europe"—which famously included, in Marx's account, the "usurpation of the common lands" in England around the turn of the sixteenth century—is "repeat[ed] in exaggerated form" in the "dark lands" of the twentieth century.[70]) If Du Bois is now widely recognized as a theorist of what Cedric Robinson dubbed "racial capitalism," one might specify further that he is an analyst of racial-colonial capitalism.

Du Bois's attention to territorial dispossession as a key expression of white dominion is crucially important. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues, many analyses of whiteness that emerge out of African American studies focus exclusively on the constitutive role played by slavery and pay little or no attention to the theft of indigenous lands. (Cheryl Harris's canonical essay is an exception, because she traces the rights and privileges that accrue to the "holders of whiteness" in the United States to the appropriation of native lands *and* the enslavement of Africans).[71] Yet Du Bois's treatment of settler colonialism is strikingly incomplete. Du Bois emphasizes violent territorial

dispossession and displacement in the cases of South Africa and Rhodesia, for example, yet pays no attention to settler colonialism in the United States.[72]

The question of land is central to *Black Reconstruction*'s historical narrative, but it appears only in relation to freed slaves' desire for land and the US government's refusal to provide it. Following the Civil War, Negroes "wanted land to work." Referencing the infamous promised forty acres, Du Bois states that former slaves who actually received a small amount of land were ultimately "dispossessed" of it. The planter South succeeded, via intimidation and violence, in their quest to "keep the bulk of Negroes as landless laborers." The lengthy book makes no mention, however, of the dispossession of native land that founded the country. There is no recognition of the fact that "slaves were brought to America as the property of white people to work the land that was appropriated from Native American tribes."[73] Du Bois's account doesn't simply neglect this reality; it feeds into settler colonial ideology by describing America's European settlers as the beneficiaries of "free land" and "endless land of the richest fertility." He similarly refers to the "tremendous significance of free land in abundance" when describing the Western Migration of the 1800s.[74] Although Du Bois's powerful analytic of white dominion identifies a proprietary conceit at the heart of slavery and colonialism (and their historical reverberations), he never acknowledges or investigates the colonizing acts of dominion that founded the United States. To address native dispossession in that context, contra Du Bois, would require investigating how the racialized ethos of ownership in the United States is an inheritance of conquest and settlement no less than slavery.

Finally, although it is worth asking whether the imperialist expression of white dominion conceptualized by Du Bois is distinguishable from the capitalist quest for surplus value, I argue that the problem of white entitlement is not simply another name for racialized exploitation and dispossession.[75]

Du Bois affirms Marx and Engels's famous observation that the hunt for profits sends the bourgeoisie scurrying "over the entire surface of the globe," yet critically alters it by specifying that planetary capitalism targets "the exploitation of darker peoples." "The Souls of White Folk" repeatedly describes the white world's relationship to "black and brown men" in terms of the former's use of the latter.[76] Such use involves many horrors—"slavery and rape," "disease and maiming"—all in the service of an identifiable end: "dividends."[77] And those dividends are not only enjoyed by capitalists, Du Bois says, but by white workers in Europe and the United States as well.[78]

The sense of dominion that defines whiteness for Du Bois is on full display in the imperialist quest for profit, yet the presumption of ownership that Du Bois uncovers is not identical with the drive to exploit or dispossess racialized others for monetary gain. The "title to the universe" that resides within white

souls surely informs the economic subordination of nonwhite people, but this "title" refers to something still vaster: an all-encompassing, lived faith.

Du Bois repeatedly likens whiteness-as-dominion to a religion, indicating that the possessive orientation he conceptualizes is both comprehensive in scope and secured by deep conviction. Just after the white interlocutor announces that whiteness is "ownership of the world, forever and ever, Amen!" (a formulation laying bare the religious dimensions of this "title"), Du Bois characterizes this "passionate" belief as the contemporary "religion of whiteness." Later, we learn of a "gospel" preached world-wide, consistent with the doctrine of white ownership which affirms that "a White Man is always right" and that nonwhite persons are "dogs of men."[79] And Du Bois twice describes the theft committed by colonizing white nations as "divine," a jarring juxtaposition implying that whites believe their imperialist projects to be authorized by God. Finally, in a passage reiterating that anti-black racism in the United States models practices of domination carried out by white nations worldwide, Du Bois writes: "For two or more centuries America has marched proudly in the van of human hatred, —making bonfires of human flesh and laughing at them hideously and making the insulting of millions more than a matter of dislike—rather a great religion, a world war-cry: Up white, down black."[80] Whiteness, understood as a "title to the universe" which authorizes the use, abuse, and destruction of those not marked as white, is a global religion that bonds the United States to its imperialist partners throughout the world.

Conclusion: An Enduring Horizon of Perception

Du Bois theorizes whiteness as an acquisitive, proprietary stance toward the planet, and toward its darker people and places in particular. This sense of dominion, as we have seen, is powerful and far-reaching; in his writings, "white title" is the article of faith that unites anti-black terrorism in US cities with the "desperate competition for possession of colonies of darker people" in the early twentieth century.[81]

The reading of whiteness-as-dominion offered here carries implications both for understanding Du Bois and for understanding the conditions of racial capitalism he sought to diagnose and resist. First, the felt sense of entitlement Du Bois associates with whiteness—which he labels a phantasy and a religion—is perhaps best understood as a "horizon of perception" that helps shape everything from foreign policy to routine social interactions.[82] With this formulation, Du Bois anticipates later critical race theory that focuses on how racial hierarchies are reproduced in part by a hegemonic interpretive schema. This scholarship considers the power of a "white imaginary" or

"racial imaginary" (Toni Morrison, George Yancy, Claudia Rankine); a "white racial frame" (Joe Feagin); and a white "optic" or "prism of perception and interpretation" (Charles Mills).[83] Though far from identical to one another, these works converge on the idea that whiteness functions as a dominant, mostly unrecognized meaning-making apparatus, with far-reaching effects on thought, feeling, and action. This approach is influenced most directly by Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*'s signature analysis of the "white gaze," yet Du Bois's account of whiteness as a comprehensive outlook on the world foreshadows these later efforts as well.[84]

Du Bois not only investigates whiteness as a horizon of perception but ascribes to it a specific, consequential rubric: the presumption of totalizing ownership. That is, the perspectival regime Du Bois aligns with whiteness does not just ascribe inferiority to non-whites; more precisely and more devastatingly, it is a vantage point that regards nonwhite persons, their lands, and their resources as properly *belonging to* whites, available for use and disposal.[85] Overt in the practices of slavery and colonization, the owning of darker persons and the taking of darker land, this powerful sense of "title" is not restricted to those manifestations, Du Bois suggests. It also operates subtly and insidiously, as a lived faith and a general orientation to existence, well into the twentieth century.

Thus, whiteness-as-dominion is distinguishable from the "public and psychological wage" that Du Bois also identifies with whiteness. The metaphorical wage supplies status benefits, Du Bois argues, through a transaction that helps secure exploited whites' loyalty to capitalism. Yet the racialized ethos of ownership that is the focus of this essay operates on a different register. It is not only that Du Bois understands white entitlement as a thoroughly global phenomenon in contrast to the wage, primarily presented as a mechanism of the US social order. Nor is it simply that whites' "title to the universe" appears less class-specific (and therefore less obviously "compensatory") than the wage. Rather, what makes racialized dominion most distinctive is its expansive, religious quality—the way in which it serves as broad and unquestioned schema for being-in-world. The sweeping, proprietary gospel of whiteness outstrips the "wages of whiteness."

Perhaps we should think of the Du Boisean wage, then, as situated within this horizon of perception. In other words, the status rewards collected by working whites may be enabled by an overarching interpretive framework that casts those with "pale" skin as title-bearers. I suggest that the horizon of perception sanctioning white dominion is not separate and apart from the compensatory dynamic Du Bois analyzed. Rather, the efficacy of the wage might depend and draw on the prior presumption that the world belongs to white folk.

Du Bois alludes to this possibility. He writes in "The Souls of White Folk" disappointingly of the international labor movement which did little

to oppose the colonialist World War. However, he observes that this acquiescence to the war was unsurprising: it was "foreshadowed when in Germany and America 'international' Socialists had all but read yellow and black men out of the kingdom of industrial justice." He explains, "Subtly had they been bribed, but effectively: Were they not lordly whites and should they not share in the spoils of rape?"[86] This formulation suggests that the invocation of racialized entitlement—"Were they not lordly whites?"—primed white workers to accept what Du Bois regards as a bribe. The transaction Du Bois recounts seems to be conditioned by an expansive sense of dominion.

Finally, a racialized ethos of ownership may live on in our present, even under conditions of racial capitalism—post–civil rights and post-industrial—quite different from Du Bois's own. Consider, for example, how increased mortality among middle-aged white Americans—so-called "white despair deaths"—has become the object of a highly publicized mass media lament.[87] The widely circulated story of racialized suffering and loss depends for its force, I would argue, on the conviction that whites hold a "title" to the goods of the world, which they have wrongly been denied.[88] Much of the reporting and commentary on these findings reinscribe, without contesting, a belief in white dominion.[89] Or, take the NFL protests of 2016 and 2017 and the racial divide in opinion concerning them.[90] Public criticism of the protesters suggests that a similar interpretive schema is at work here—one that positions whites as title-bearing subjects in relation to objectified blacks. This is most evident in critics' repeated demand that players entertain and perform for owners and audiences, and cease acting as dissenting citizens.[91] Consider also the Bundy stand-offs in 2014 and 2016, involving the armed occupation of federal lands by white ranchers and their supporters who vowed to "make war" on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US government itself.[92] That these actions were carried out with impunity may indicate an enduring belief in "white title." The violent takeover of public land was fed by anti-blackness (Cliven Bundy publicly stated that he wondered whether "Negros" were "better off as slaves")[93] and by anti-indigeneity (the willful erasure of natives' claim to the lands in dispute).[94] The simultaneous, mutually reinforcing propertization of persons and of territories is a defining feature of white dominion—the worldview seemingly shared not just by the Bundys and their militant supporters but also by the judge and juries who repeatedly sanctioned their actions.[95] Lastly, there is no shortage of recent examples suggesting that the belief in "white title" finds expression globally, in acts of what Du Bois would surely describe as (neo) "colonial aggrandizement." Among the most obvious is the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2013, aiming to "open up areas of their energy sectors to foreign investment"

and resulting in a half-million Iraqi deaths.[96] This twenty-first-century war, in which white nations destroyed "darker peoples" to deliver oil to capitalist conglomerates, recalls Du Bois's 1920 critique of the white world's attempt to seize the resources of the world as their own property. As he puts it, "this golden stream may be had, not always for the asking, but surely for the whipping and shooting."[97]

For Du Bois, the gratifications of whiteness are plural. The compensatory dynamic he famously identified with the "public and psychological wage" remains important for interrogating the workings of racial capitalism today. Yet Du Bois's writings also caution against treating the "wages of whiteness" framework as an exhaustive account of how racial hierarchy persists over time. His arresting analysis of whiteness-as-dominion directs attention to a default, intuitive orientation of possessive entitlement, which outstrips the functionalist and class-specific conception of whiteness-as-payment. By theorizing a racialized "title to the universe," bound to slavery and colonization, Du Bois exposes whiteness as a comprehensive faith that propertizes the world.

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Notes

1. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1983] 2000) introduced the term "racial capitalism" to denote that the historical development of capitalism and racism were inseparable. Robinson credits Du Bois with helping to develop this concept and notes that Du Bois's account of capitalism as inextricably bound to slavery and imperialism influenced Eric Williams and Oliver Cox (*Black*

Marxism, ch. 9). The idea of "racial capitalism" articulated by these thinkers has re-emerged in critical-theoretical scholarship on contemporary political economy. See Michael C. Dawson and Megan Ming Francis, "Black Politics and the Neoliberal Racial Order," *Public Culture* 28, no. 1 (2016); Robin D. G. Kelley, "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?" *Boston Review*, January 12, 2017; Jodi Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015).

2. The essays in *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of the Race Concept* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1940] 2007) are preoccupied with what Du Bois calls the "subconscious," "unconscious," "irrational," and "habitual" forces that perpetuate racism.
3. An exception is Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of White Privilege* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), ch. 5.
4. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press [1920] 2007), 16.
5. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1935] 2007).
6. "The Souls of White Folk" in *Darkwater* draws on two prior essays: "The Souls of White Folk," *The Independent*, August 18, 1910; and "Of the Culture of White Folk," *The Journal of Race Development* 7, no. 4 (April 1917).
7. Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," 15. Hereafter "SOWF."
8. Ibid., 16.
9. Ibid., 16-18.
10. Ibid., 22.
11. On the centrality of slavery to the development of modern capitalism, see Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, ch. 1.
12. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 8. On Du Bois's understanding of the "present-past" as the condition of politics, see Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction: Thinking Politically with W.E.B. Du Bois* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 1.
13. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 7.
14. Ibid., 6.
15. Ibid., 8.
16. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
17. The fugitive slave, like all slaves, was paradoxically positioned in law as both property and person. Saidiya Hartman explains that slaves were legally recognized as "absolutely subject to the will of another" *and* as "actional subjects" in the restricted sense of bearing criminal culpability. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in 19th Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 80.
18. Frederick Douglass, January 1842 address to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.
19. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 8–9.

20. Ibid., 136.
21. Ibid., 111.
22. Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993), 1720.
23. Du Bois, "SOWF," 15.
24. Ibid.
25. C. Vann Woodward, "The Price of Freedom," *What Was Freedom's Price?*, ed. David Sansing (Columbia, MO: University Press of Missouri, 1978).
26. Du Bois, "SOWF," 16.
27. Harris, "Whiteness as Property."
28. Ibid., 1713.
29. Ibid., 1731, 1734, 1745.
30. Ibid., 1736.
31. Ibid., 1724.
32. Derrick Bell, "White Superiority in America: Its Legal Legacy, Its Economic Costs," *Villanova Law Review* 33 (1988), 773.
33. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1741.
34. Joel Olson, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Race Concept," *Souls* 7, no. 3/4 (2005).
35. Du Bois, "The White World," *Dusk of Dawn*, 69.
36. Du Bois, "The Concept of Race," *Dusk of Dawn*, 59.
37. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 574. Du Bois's references to "badges" of race and the "sign of slavery" challenge the 1883 Civil Rights cases and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which denied that segregation functioned as a "badge of slavery" and "badge of inferiority," respectively.
38. Although my reading here emphasizes Du Bois's account of how the sign "black" is deployed to enforce white supremacy, any reader of Du Bois knows that his work also offers a powerful celebration of black existence. His characterization of blackness, then, is not simply negative. His writings consistently affirm and even revere black people and their distinctive "gifts." See especially *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1903] 2007); *The Gift of Black Folk: The Negroes in the Making of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1924] 2014); *Black Reconstruction.* On the idea of black people's "gifts," see Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, ch. 2; John Shuford, "Four Du Boisean Contributions to Critical Race Theory," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 37, no. 3 (2001); Sullivan, *Whiteness Revealed*, ch. 5.
39. Du Bois, "The Concept of Race," 59.
40. Du Bois, "The White World," 69. Italics mine.
41. Ibid., 77.
42. Du Bois, "SOWF," 25. Addressing how the "national 'we'" has been reshaped over time, Nikhil Singh writes, "The question remains, how does this process work—or does it—for groups who have remained more durably caught within the world-system of racial marks, particularly people of African descent?" Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 21.
43. Du Bois, "'The Servant in the House,'" *Darkwater*, 56.

44. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 119. Du Bois's attention to "signs" and "badges" resonates with Anthony Paul Farley's theorization of race as an enduring "system of marks" in "The Apogee of the Commodity," *DePaul Law Review* 53 (2003–2004).
45. Lawrie Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, 115; Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 8. "The Color Line Belts the World" is the title of an essay by Du Bois published in *Collier's* (October 20, 1906).
46. "Global orientation" is from Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, 117. See Nikhil Singh, *Black Is a Country*, ch. 3, on Du Bois's role in the growth of black internationalism during and after World War II.
47. Charles Mills, "The Racial Polity," *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 126. Mills says that the commitment to analyzing race "at the global level" is a hallmark of the "oppositional black tradition."
48. Du Bois, "SOWF," 22. In a 1944 paper, Du Bois wrote that "Negroes in the United States" were living in a "semicolonial" situation. "Colonialism, Democracy, and Peace after the War," *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 229.
49. Balfour, *Democracy's Reconstruction*, ch. 6; Juliet Hooker, *Theorizing Race in the Americas: Douglass, Sarmiento, Du Bois and Vasconcelos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch. 3; Reiland Rabaka, "The Souls of White Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois's Critique of White Supremacy and Contributions to Critical White Studies," *Journal of African American Studies* 11 (2007); Robinson, *Black Marxism*, ch. 9; Singh, *Black Is a Country.*
50. Du Bois, "SOWF," 21.
51. Ibid., 16. Du Bois's earlier assessments of the war were ambivalent. Although he was a longtime anti-war activist who worried from the start that "colonial aggrandizement" motivated the conflict ("Of the Culture of White People"), he supported US entry into the war and in *The Crisis* in July 1918 famously called on black Americans "to close ranks" in support of the US military effort. His hope that black Americans' participation in the conflict would secure them an undeniable claim to full inclusion in the United States was dashed, however, by continued segregation of the US armed forces and white racist violence in US cities. By 1920's *Darkwater*, Du Bois's condemnation of the war as a racist-colonialist "nightmare" was unwavering.
52. Du Bois, "SOWF," 19.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 23.
55. Ibid., 21. This statement is echoed in the penultimate paragraph of *Black Reconstruction* (596).
56. John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to WWII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203-4.
57. David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 70.

58. Du Bois, "Hands of Ethiopia," 29.
59. Ibid., 31.
60. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 6.
61. Robinson writes, "For Du Bois, America in the first half of the 19th century, a society in which manufacturing and industrial capitalism had been married to slave production, had been a microcosm of the world system." It was a "forewarning." *Black Marxism*, 239.
62. Du Bois, "SOWF," 21.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 22, 23.
65. Du Bois, "Hands of Ethiopia," 29. Du Bois's treatment of African colonization resembles Robin D.G. Kelley's description of the same phenomenon: "They wanted the land *and* the labor, but not the *people*—that is to say, they sought to eliminate stable communities and their structures of resistance." Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Rest of Us: Rethinking Settler and Native," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (June 2017), 269.
66. Robert Nichols, "Disaggregating Primitive Accumulation," *Radical Philosophy* 194 (November/December 2015), 21. Onur Ulas Ince, "Primitive Accumulation and Global Land Grabs," *Rural Sociology* 79, no. 1 (2014).
67. Du Bois, "Hands of Ethiopia," 29; Du Bois, "SOWF," 22.
68. Du Bois, "SOWF," 23.
69. Glenn Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 7.
70. Du Bois, "SOWF," 21. Marx's account of enclosure as the "usurpation of the common lands" appears in *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 27.
71. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 50-53.
72. Du Bois, "Hands of Ethiopia," 29.
73. Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive*, 51.
74. These claims about land are from Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 4, 6, 19, 67, 273, 301, 601, 603. See Tacuma Peters, "Revisiting *Black Reconstruction*: Chattel Slavery, Native Lands, and the Color Line" (2017 WPSA paper).
75. Du Bois, "SOWF," 23.
76. Ibid., 23, 20, 21.
77. Ibid., 21.
78. Ibid., 23.
79. Ibid., 16, 22.
80. Ibid., 23–25.
81. Ibid., 22.
82. "Horizon of perception" is from Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and Racial Paranoia," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993). In this essay, I use the language of religion and faith alongside that of a schema, horizon, gaze, outlook, and frame to characterize Du Bois's formulation of

whiteness-as-dominion. Although these terms may carry different connotations, as a constellation they are meant to denote a multifaceted worldview, entailing both explicit belief and tacit presupposition, philosophical creed and visceral sensibility, and knowing commitment and default intuition. Within this set of terms, "religion" and "faith" do not refer to a particular theology, then, but instead reflect—as William Connolly maintains—that all humans are inhabited by an "existential faith," whether theistic, nontheistic, or both. My reading of Du Bois suggests that he understood "modern whiteness" as just such an "existential faith."

83. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); Claudia Rankine's https://theracialimaginary.org; Joe Feagin, *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-framing* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009); Charles W. Mills, "White Ignorance," *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, ed. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (Ithaca, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), and "Global White Ignorance," *Routledge International Handbook of Ignorance Studies* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015). Mills's influential writings depict this racialized "optic" or worldview" as a matter of "white ignorance." I cannot adequately address that argument here, but would note that Mills adopts a more epistemological approach than does Du Bois.
84. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, [1952] 2008).
85. In one passage, Fanon presents the "white gaze" as specifically proprietary: "The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself. He discovers he is the predestined master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is one of appropriation" (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 107).
86. Du Bois, "SOWF," 23.
87. Anne Case and Angus Deaton's studies document an increase in mortality among middle-aged white Americans since the turn of the twenty-first century (in contrast to declining mortality rates among middle-aged black and Hispanic Americans). Case and Deaton interpret the increased mortality rates, due primarily to drug and alcohol deaths and suicide, as "deaths of despair" born of a "sense of hopelessness." Case and Deaton, "Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century," *PNAS* 112, no. 49 (November 2015); Case and Deaton, "Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century," *Brookings Papers* (March 2017).
88. Lenny Bernstein and Joel Achenbach, "A Group of Middle-Aged Whites Is Dying at a Startling Rate," *Washington Post*, November 2, 2015; Olga Khazan, "Middle-Aged White Americans Are Dying of Despair," *The Atlantic*, November 4, 2015; Ross Douhat, "The Dying of the Whites," *New York Times*, November 7, 2015; Paul Krugman, "Despair, American Style," *New York Times*, November 9, 2015.
89. Chauncey De Vega, "White America's Death Crisis: The Pain Is Real, but Our Perception Is Warped by the "White Racial Frame," *Salon*, March 29, 2017; Nikhil Pal Singh and Thuy Linh Tu's, "Morbid Capitalism," *N + 1*, issue 30 (Winter 2018) characterizes the public narrative of white morbidity as one of "racial declension."

90. A CBS poll in September 2017, at the peak of protest activity, found that nearly 75 percent of black American respondents approved of players' kneeling during the anthem, while only slightly more than 25 percent of whites approved.
91. A *USA Today* column admonished the protesters to "stop grandstanding" and a CNN op-ed painted them as undisciplined children in need of parenting: the NFL has "every right to demand that its players stand erect and make no fuss while the national anthem is playing."
92. In April 2014, rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed occupation of federal land in Nevada, following the BLM's impoundment of Bundy's herd for the $1.1 million he owed in grazing fees and fines, which he had refused to pay over the previous twenty years. About one hundred heavily armed supporters vowed to "make war" on the BLM and the standoff ended when the BLM announced they would stop seizing cattle. The Bundy saga was not over, however, and in 2016 his son Ammon Bundy led an armed group that seized the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. He declared they would stay until "they can use these lands as free men," perhaps even for "several years," though the occupation ended after forty days (most participants surrendered or left). Four subsequent trials (three of them decided by jury) resulted in no convictions for the Bundys or the militiamen who backed them. On these "mass aquittals," see Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "Why the Bundys and Their Heavily Armed Supporters Keep Getting Away with It," *The New Yorker*, August 25, 2017.
93. Adam Nagourney, "A Defiant Rancher Savors the Audience That Rallied to His Side," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2014. Several commentators noted that whiteness was central to the occupiers' self-understanding and the reception they received. Jamelle Bouie, "What if Bundy Ranch Were Owned by a Bunch of Black People?" *Slate*, April 15, 2014; Ta-Nehesi Coates, "Cliven Bundy and the Tyranny All Around Us," *Atlantic*, April 22, 2014.
94. Cliven Bundy cites his "ancestral rights" to the land in Nevada, yet his claim blatantly ignores a prior act of dispossession: "Western Shoshone Nation's claim to the land predates his own." Jacqueline Keeler, "On Calvin Bundy's 'Ancestral Rights,'" *The Nation*, April 29, 2014.
95. See Jedediah Purdy, "The Bundys and the Irony of American Vigilantism," *The New Yorker*, January 5, 2016, on the twin American ideologies of anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity animating the Bundy case.
96. Quote from 2001 Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, http://www.wtrg.com/EnergyReport/National-Energy-Policy.pdf.
97. Du Bois, *The Souls of White Folk," Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1920] 2007), 16.

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