

CHAPTER TWO

'T'SE STILL CLIMBING': AFRICAN AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING AND THE CLAIMS OF COLOR

Prejudiced I certainly am by my twisted life; by the way in which I have been treated by my fellows. (W.E.B. DuBois)

Color-bias has been a basic phenomenon in human nature and has cut across space and time as a social practice. Over time a distinctive color consciousness builds within social circles and eventually shapes the gaze of a 'black' person. The above quote by DuBois aptly sums up this phenomenon. The African Americans have a life which is a mass of memories with painful omissions. These omissions generate gaps and silences that turn into a veil through which they look at the world. The result is what could be called the colored gaze. The line "I'se still climbing" is taken from Langston Hughes and in a way, captures the status and aspiration of the African American travel writer and, by implication, of the African American subject in general.

I

In a racially sensitive world, color plays an important role in defining sensibilities and color coding one's consciousness of oneself and the other. When African American writers travel across the globe, their color determines what they see and how they are seen. This chapter makes an attempt to examine the impact and imprint of color and color consciousness on the African American travel writer's gaze as seen in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845), Richard Wright's *'black' Power* (1954), and *Pagan Spain* (1957), and W.E.B. DuBois's *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (1968). They gaze at the world as the world gazes at them, in the process providing and creating a complex interplay of color consciousness and its ideological imperatives. Here the African American writer becomes a 'black' American subject and object, creates contexts for/of viewing the world of white men and women, and examines the contexts created by the others to view the 'black' American as a person and as part of race.

This chapter assumes (i) that the gaze of the African-American traveler is as much acquired by birth, color and the formative experiences as is reshaped, reinforced and thereby layered by the encounters and insights gathered during travel; (ii) that 'blackness' is an essence that encompasses the entire lifespan of an African American,

in spite of any amount of advancement or emancipation achieved; (iii) that when ‘blacks’ engage in the meaning-making process while looking around at the world and producing multiple layers of gazes, that knowledge renders the racist operations of white bodies on the one hand, and engages the ‘black’ person in a series of polemics and eventually portrays “black” viewpoints, aesthetics and cultural and individual archetypes; and (iv) that the colored or “black” gaze of the African American traveler can look at and narrate the world around it in as much credible a way as a white gaze does and thereby ceasing to remain invisible as it has been over the years from the world forum.

This chapter takes into consideration the fact that the African American traveler’s gaze bears a consciousness rooted specifically in the ‘color of their body’ which led to them being negatively placed in a racialized power relation for long. Moreover, they were persistently deprived of the right to look back, which developed a strong longing to look back, a noncompliant want of an ‘oppositional gaze’. Thus, the peripheral beings look at the central powers and their own roots through a colored perspective, which calls for a significant study.

This chapter seeks to argue that the gaze of a travel writer, African-American in this case, is analogous to the ideology/ies or consciousness/ess that might have been acquired/formed over the years of racial injustice and colored favoritisms practiced against them. Moreover, having acquired a hold over the master’s tools, traveling, seeing and narrating, they narrate the world which was once described by the masters in as much credible ways as the latter. However, wider horizons of communications, as the traveler moves out of ‘home’ to the abroad, establish gaps and ambiguities in her/his gaze. This leads the traveler to engage in the analysis, reflection and substantiation of the understanding or point of view/s carried so far. The ensuing narrative offers opportunities to the readers also to review their perceptions as well.

The review of literature for this chapter covers the diverse sequential dealings with the concept of gaze being a mechanism of power management and control over the subordinates or peripheral elements.

DuBois says, “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of looking at one’s self through the eyes of the others...One ever feels his twoness,- An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two unreconciled thriving; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (*Souls* 3). In this book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W. E. B. DuBois suggests that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line” (1). His conceptions of life behind the mask of race and the resulting in “double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others”, act as an accommodating catalyst in understanding the African American consciousness. DuBois examines the African-American life in the States as it is created through a white gaze. The African American, in DuBois’s words, has been turned into “an outcast and a stranger” (2) in her/his own house (America) thus a “mocking distrust of everything white” (2) that has taken a stronghold. Growing up and surviving in such a socio-political milieu, the African American tends to look at the world from the other (persecuted) side of the ‘color line’ and attempts to sever it in due course. Like other colored races like the Egyptian, Indian, Greek, Roman, the Teuton and the Mongols, a “Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world” (2). America is a place which affords no true self-consciousness to the ‘negro’, but only lets her/him see the self through the proclamation of the ‘other’ world.

Thus, in the case of African American external forces produce a unique sense of self, of having two consciousnesses that are in constant conflict. The African American traveler, thus, is seasoned enough to look at the world not only from a colored/‘black’ consciousness but also through the white eyes or are forced to view themselves from, and as, the recurring negative perspectives of the outside society. Harnessing one’s own sense of the self and carrying a levied disdain for a credited self, having ‘twoness’, is what DuBois calls double consciousness. Thus, there is a persistent ‘second-sight’ that all ‘black’ Americans have and DuBois facetiously calls it a ‘gift’, however, such an ability has been initiated by the estrangement of the ‘black’ community from white America. Nevertheless, instead of garnering an antipathy between one’s own sense of self and forced disdain, DuBois suggests an assimilation of the constructive meanings of ‘blackness’ and American.

In a similar vein, Bell Hooks in her seminal essay, “The Oppositional Gaze” (1992) talks about how “black” slaves were punished heavily for looking and she wonders how “this traumatic relationship to the gaze...had informed “black” spectatorship” (115). The slaves were completely “denied their right to gaze” (115), an experience which manifested itself into the “oppositional gaze”. Subordinates in relations of power acquire knowledge through experience which says that there is a critical gaze that ‘looks’ to document, one that is oppositional” (116). On the other hand, in resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to “assert agency by claiming and cultivating “awareness” politicizes ‘looking’ relations” (116). One, thus, learns to see in a certain way to resist and then register new perspectives of knowledge and understanding from their viewpoint.

Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), argues that there is a phenomenology of ‘blackness’, which is precisely experiencing the skin difference and gaining the consciousness of being the dark other. This, he says, can only be understood in an encounter with whiteness or the white imagination. Fanon narrates a personal incident when he was fixed by the gaze of a white person who is a mere child, but has already ingrained the white imagination. He narrows down, “I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics....My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day” (84-86). He realizes that he has suddenly become the white-defined-‘black’-other, and he feels the all-encompassing power of the white gaze/imagination. He further writes, “There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to ‘black’ men...There is another fact: ‘black’ men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect” (12). The ‘black’ man, says Fanon, aspires to be white, to gaze as a white. The significance of the gaze is that it permits a dominant group to control and govern the social spaces and interaction amidst groups. ‘Black’ or colored people are made visible and invisible at the same time under the controlling gaze. They are watched and controlled by a gaze that is offered to regulate physical and social movements. The purpose of the gaze is that it should confine those who receive it and make them almost invisible. Fanon presents a two-fold plan, the historico-racial and epidermal-racial plans in the chapter “The Fact of Blackness”. Briefly, the historico-racial

schema emphasizes on the historical exigencies and mythological chronicles levied upon 'blacks' and the racial-epidermal plan voices out the sublimation of what is understood as the 'black essence'. When the shift to racial-epidermal plan takes place, the omnipresence of the white gaze functions like a panopticon keeping the 'black' man under persistent supervision, restricting his movements, voice, and the very act of seeing, etc. Therefore, the 'black' self-attempts to 'gaze' back at the world that had so far kept it under strict supervision. She/he gazes and writes and takes up every defining criterion of being a white/civilized: "Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white" (63). The black zebra striping can be seen as the colored/'black' consciousness that forms the ideological veil that a 'black' looks through. Thus, in interracial encounters, white people take active participation in schematizing the world, while 'black' people are silent bodies, for their skin variance terminates potentials of free agency. Thus, "wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro" (133). The 'negro' not just experiences color bias at the unconscious level, but at the conscious level too.

In a similar vein, the term Panopticon is also used by Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and aligns it with the discourse of seeing. For centuries, the 'blacks' have been under the surveillance of this panopticon gaze where "inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere" (195). Consequently, the primary effect of the panopticon is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (197). It is interesting to see how power could be exercised upon the viewed through the gaze. Foucault's panoptical prison is the best correlation where the prisoners are taken into control through a mechanism of looking/watching while they know that someone is keeping a steady eye over them. The colored people who were being watched for so long a time, thus, intend not to receive this gaze, but to forge up instead and assert power, as Foucault associates knowledge with power and relates the gaze to discourse of power. This being stated, it is acknowledged that seeing is knowing and knowing is power. Thus the black person attempts to look back thereby produce "a return of knowledge" ("Power/Knowledge" 81). However, Foucault makes use of the word 'gaze' to refer to the fact that it is not just the object of knowledge which is produced/created but also the knower. Thus, we see a two-way traffic of gaze at work. This variation of station between object and subject, on the other hand, helps fragment

and/or reformulate the stereotypical patterns of images approved by the mainstream discourse.

Being at an elevated position, whether literally or metaphorically, gives one an edge over those at the lower strata. This aspect of the gaze can be found predominantly in the travels of the colonial era when the white-male-colonizer/explorer/tourists went to a colonized/oriental country. The former was predominantly armored with a powerful gaze, a gaze of racial superiority, a gaze that was 'all-knowing'. African-Americans, because they are 'black', are already the racially marked body that is not expected to be able to say something knowledgeable, meaningful, and important about race. As Frederick Douglass says in his *Narrative*, "for they had much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings" (113). On the other hand, when 'blacks' render knowledge and look around at the world and produce multiple layers of gazes, that knowledge renders the racist operations of white bodies on the one hand, and engages the 'black' person in a series of polemics and eventually portrays 'black' viewpoints, aesthetics and cultural and individual archetypes.

As travelers, African Americans were bound by distinctive observations, experiences and reflections which not only prescribed the initiation and course of their travel, but also the gaze or perception that they carried along. Carrying the cultural, racial and political overtones of two entirely distant places, two different continents, African Americans have been aesthetically and philosophically uniquely coded not just because of their racial metamorphoses, but also due to the appalling, unjust history of almost 600 years. Thrown into a foreign land through the slave trade and then left to perish in an equally pathetic political and social milieu molded the African-Americans in a way which made them gaze at the world as they do (consciously or unconsciously), through a 'black' shield, and which is inevitable.

Relating the theories discussed so far to the primary materials selected for this chapter, it becomes apparent that African American travel writers, consciously or unconsciously, convey their color into their eyes resulting in the colored or 'black' gaze that manifests itself in their travels and subsequent writings. Temporally, this colored consciousness seems to permeate the entire range of African American travel writing, ranging right from the days of slavery to the present times. Due to the

continual denial of the right to see and express, the writers during the era of slavery, for instance, Frederick Douglass, are more assertive of their right to ‘gaze’, speak and write, and their individual writings seem to hold a mirror to and strongly voice the opinions of the ‘black’ society at large. Meanwhile, writers of the post slavery era/twentieth century, while carrying the African American consciousness and history at large, tend to individualize their travel experiences to a large extent. However, travel is always about a subject and the objects, and gaze, and unlike the white-colonial gaze/s, is never unilateral or imposing. Thus, the ‘black’ gaze coincides with other gazes, defines and redefines meanings and proliferates.

This chapter aims at exploring (i) the gaze of the African-American travel writer which, in this case, is analogous to the ideology/ies or consciousness/ess that has been acquired over the years of racial injustice and colored favoritisms practiced against them; (ii) how the color politics practiced by the whites on the ‘blacks’ have been usurped by the latter thereby producing an “oppositional gaze”; (iii) how the colored gaze can locate and recognize crisis and incongruities in societies ‘black’/white just as a white gaze does; (iv) how wider horizons of communications, as the traveler moves out of *home* to the *away*, establish gaps and ambiguities in her/his gaze; (v) the fact that the African American gaze carries a consciousness that is a blend of innate and acquired at the same time, thereby looking at the world with a “double consciousness”; and (vi) how the so far “defined” and “registered” race can look at, define or narrate the world in as much credible way/s as a white traveler.

II

2.2.1 Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845); *My Bondage My Freedom* (1855)

The monstrous history of the American slavery has been accounted countless times before the world to read and know. However, the attempts of the thousands who were trying to establish an egalitarian society beginning around the 1820s, have left a dramatic impact on the literature of the period. In this regard, travel is a fundamental precondition to the publication of a ‘slave narrative’. Thus, in order to generate a slave narrative and create a textual identity, a slave had to travel.

It is undeniably interesting to read about the slaves, their heinous masters and the flights by the slaves themselves in a bid to escape the slave world, right from the horse's mouth, i.e., the slaves themselves. In the search for this "Utopia" (see Foster 329), Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* traces his journey from the shackles of slavery to that of a free traveler and, at the same time, representing America, in the color 'black'. His travels, however, may not be broad spatially, i.e., on a global level, but nevertheless, he makes diligent use of whatever escape routes come his way, and helps create the American space, especially the south, in the Antebellum America, and becomes a celebrated name amongst the "moving slaves" (see Cox 65). Movement or travel remains the most important factor in a slave's life, as, for instance, Douglass says he sees his mother only at night who lived on another plantation. He explains, "She made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work" (25). His mother must travel to see her son and let her son see his mother. Travel or movement thus, has a role to play here.

2.2.1.2 People

Douglass' *Narrative* commences with the scant facts he knows about his birth and parentage; his father is a slave owner and his mother, a slave, Harriet Bailey. As a person, he is not sure of who his father is. He says, "My father was a white man.... The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father" (24). He belongs to the class of Mulatto slaves who are not accepted by their fathers publicly and left to perish thus, with their mothers when very young, and eventually gets separated from them too. To a child's mind, this separation is meaningless, besides painful, and Douglass wonders if this is done "to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child" (24), for this is the inevitable result.

The first difference Douglass marks about the 'blacks' and whites is that the slaves know as little of their age as horses know of theirs" (23) and in his knowledge "it is the wish of most masters...to keep their slaves thus ignorant" (23). Whereas, the "white children could tell their ages" (23) and he could not understand as to why the 'black' people are "deprived of the same privilege" (23). It is deliberated "improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit" (23) if a slave makes inquiries.

While in Tuckahoe, Maryland, he meets his first master, Captain Anthony. He has two-three farms and keeps about thirty slaves, thus not a rich master in comparison to others who keep hundreds of slaves under them. For instance, Colonel Lloyd, another of his master, keeps three to four hundred slaves at his home plantation, and “owned a large number more on the neighboring farms” (32). He owns so many slaves that “he did not know them when he saw them” (41-42). The slaves are just like a lot of chattel to him.

The Masters “could not brook any contradiction from a slave” (41). For instance, when Colonel Lloyd speaks, “a slave must stand, listen, and tremble; and such was the literal case.... a man between fifty and sixty years of age, uncover his bald head, kneel down upon the cold, damp ground, and receive upon his naked and toil-worn shoulders more than thirty lashes at the time” (41). His three sons “enjoyed the luxury of whipping the servants when they pleased” (41). None of the masters could tolerate someone else’s slaves on their farm, even by an error. One slave of Llyod, while he is fishing for oysters to make up for his scanty allowance, mistakenly enters Mr. Beal Bondly’s farm and is shot down without a moment of hesitation by the latter. In the white community, little white boys know that “It was worth a half-cent to kill a ‘nigger’, and a half-cent to bury one” (50). Mr. Freeland is the slave owner, who Douglass says, is the “best master” (115) he ever had for he didn’t wear a religious cloak and torture the slaves, or keep a watchful eye and lash the slaves on every other movement.

Every farm and the slaves are overlooked by an overseer, and Captain Anthony has Mr. Plummer. Overseers are generally, the personification of devil himself, as the narrative suggests throughout, and Plummer is a “miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster” (27) who is always “armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel” (27-28). Colonel Lloyd has Mr. Severe for his overseer and, Douglass observes, is “rightly named: he was a cruel man” (34). He is always seen with “a large hickory stick and heavy cowskin” (34). His inhuman ways know no bounds, says Douglass:

I have seen him whip a woman, causing the blood to run half an hour at the time; and this too, in the midst of her crying children, pleading for their mother’s release...was a profane swearer...scarce a sentence escaped him but

that was commenced or concluded by some horrid oath.... From the rising till the going down of the sun, he was cursing, raving, cutting, and slashing among the slaves of the field. (34)

The severity of Mr. Severe must have reached the peak and he is replaced by Mr. Hopkins on his death; the slaves regards his death as “the result of a merciful providence” (34). Hopkins is a different man in that he is “less cruel, less profane, and made less noise, than Mr. Severe” (35). It is a pitiable irony that the slaves call him a “good overseer” (35) because he whipped, all right, but seem not to take pleasure in it. Due to his supposed lack in the “necessary severity” (45) to suit colonel Lloyd, Hopkins is supplanted by Mr. Austin Gore, “a man possessing, in an eminent degree, all those traits of character indispensable to what is called a first-rate overseer” (45). He is “proud, ambitious, and persevering...artful, cruel, and obdurate” (45); “He tortures with the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of the slave” (45). He acts fully to live up to the aphorism laid down by slaveholders: “It is better that a dozen slaves suffer under the lash, than the overseer should be convicted, in the presence of the slaves, of having been at fault” (45). It is the ‘rule of the white’ that governs the lives of the slaves.

For people who argued in favor of slavery, it is customary to say that slaves were happy, aiming at the fact that slaves would sing while they worked. However, it is very interesting to note about the “slaves sing most when they are most unhappy” (38). Douglass writes, “dense old woods, revealing at once the highest joy and deepest sadness...sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone” (36). Through his writing, Douglass paints the most wounding sentiments of the slaves in the slave songs come alive, whose deep meaning, however, he could not understand when he is in their circle. Although in the later years, when he becomes free and is out of the circle, the songs follow him and deepen his hatred for slavery. In his words, the songs:

Told a tale of woe.... Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains.... I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them.... To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery.... If anyone wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd’s plantation. (37)

The slaves are “relieved” after singing their pain out as “an aching heart is relieved by tears” (38). Thus, the pain is vented out through the songs which echo in Douglass’s heart throughout his life.

There is, however, a peculiar trait about the slaves. Human that they are, they “imbibe prejudices” (43) no doubt, but with those they are on a race as to whose master is better. Douglass says, “Many, under the influence of this prejudice, think their own masters are better than the masters of other slaves.... Indeed, it is uncommon for slaves even to fall out and quarrel among themselves about the relative goodness of his own over that of the others” (43). While, the truth remains that none of the masters are even human. Nevertheless, the slaves consider that “the greatness of their masters was transferable to themselves. It was considered as being bad enough to be a slave; but to be a poor man’s slave was deemed a disgrace indeed!” (44). Nevertheless, these slaves are “noble souls; they not only possessed loving hearts, but brave ones” (115). Their simplicity makes them get easily manipulated too.

As regards Douglass, when he is around five to eight years old, and not old enough to work on the field, he has ample leisure time for himself, and get “seldom whipped” (51) by his master, but suffers, from hunger and cold, more from the former. He remembers, “In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked-no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing but a coarse linen shirt...no bed...used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to mill...crawl into the bag, and there sleep” (51). The food that he and the fellow slaves receives is a “coarse corn meal boiled...called *mush*...put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground” (52). Slaves are fed just like animals; sometimes even worse.

Then comes the “three of the happiest days” (52) in his life when he hears that he would travel to Baltimore to work for Captain Anthony’s son-in-law, Captain Thomas Auld’s brother. Immediately, as directed by Mrs. Lucretia, he starts washing himself. He writes, “I must get all the dead skin off my feet and knees...for people in Baltimore were very cleanly, and would laugh at me if I looked dirty” (53). He is also promised a pair of trousers if he gets himself clean, and he is delighted.

To his utter surprise, Mrs. Auld, his new mistress in Baltimore, and whose little son he had to take care of, has “a white face beaming with the most kindly emotions”

(55). It is an unusual experience to him for a white face to have softer emotions displayed for a 'black', "It is a new and strange sight to me, brightening up my pathway with the light of happiness" (55). He considers himself as being divinely favored for having come to such bliss, though he is still a slave. His mistress, Douglass claims is:

A woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings...had never had a slave under her control previously.... I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her.... The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in slave, did not answer when manifested toward her.... The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence. (57)

In such a person, Douglass finds a face having a heavenly smile and voice soothing like melody.

However, this is, but a fleeting phenomenon, "the fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work" (57). Mrs. Auld starts teaching him the English letters and just as he progresses, Mr. Auld finds it out and reprimands her for this. To the masters, it meant that learning would defile the best nigger in the world. Mr. Auld instructs to his wife, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing" (58). Thus, Douglass learns, and grows as a person. He learns what is white man's power and that "it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country" (65). An abolitionist that he is known as, from that moment, he says, he "understood the pathway from slavery to freedom" (59).

The mistress however, starts unbecoming of herself, and slowly becomes the typical image of a white that Douglass had known before coming there. He says, "Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman.... Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities.... She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself" (64). Douglass, on the other hand, prepares to shed his slave-self and become a different person, that is, by receiving the *inch*, he now prepares to take the *ell*.

However, the incapacity to look at the situation of the 'black' people when amidst them, becomes clear to him now. As he reads more and more he understands the whites and 'blacks' more. He says, "The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers" (67). His gaze now falls clearly at the wretched condition in which his fellow 'blacks' are living.

While at Baltimore, he discovers another cunning aspect of the whites. He sees white men "encourage slaves to escape" (69), and then, to get reward, catch them and return them to their masters. He thus, remains alert and adopts a policy of not believing anyone, even though running away to the north remains his main concern.

With a fight that takes place between Master Thomas and Master Hugh, Douglass is called back to Maryland. His master, Thomas, finds him quite "unsuitable for his purpose" (86) which he says is the result of the city life and its pernicious effects. To his master, Douglass writes, "It had almost ruined me for every good purpose, and fitted me for everything which was bad" (86-87). At this moment, Douglass is put out "to be broken" (87), and he comes across another lot of people who *break* the slaves just like a horse, the "negro-breaker and slave driver" (109). He is handed over to one Mr. Covey who has "acquired a very high reputation for breaking young slaves" (87). He is one of the rare slaveholders who "could not and did not work with his hands" (91). Slave breakers work like a spy. Douglass writes of Covey:

His comings were like a thief in the night.... He was under every tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the plantation. He would sometimes mount his horse, as if bound to St. Michael's, a distance of seven miles, and in half an hour afterwards you would see him coiled up in the corner of the wood-fence, watching every motion. He would, for this purpose, leave his horse tied up in the woods. (92)

As Douglass sets out on his journey to freedom, the most striking image of people that he comes across is in New Bedford. He says that he notices, "no half-naked children and barefooted women, such as I had been accustomed to see in Hillsborough, Easton, St. Michael's, and Baltimore. The people looked more able, stronger, healthier, and happier, than those of Maryland" (150). But the most interesting aspect he notices is regarding state of the colored people, "a great many of whom had escaped thither as a refuge from the hunters of men" (150). He finds many "who had not been seven years

out of their chains, living in finer houses, and evidently enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average slaveholders in Maryland” (150). Douglass also finds them much more spirited than he expected them to be and protect each other from the “blood-thirsty kidnapper” (151), a much appreciated brotherhood amongst the ‘black’ brethren.

2.2.1.3 Places

The first place that the child Douglass comes to be familiar with is a plantation farm of some slaveholder where his mother is a slave worker. He is supposed to be a white master’s child, but the infernal plantations have the rule that says, “The children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers” (26). A wicked place of lust and torture, Douglass is born as a mulatto child on a plantation. Here, the masters sell off such mulattos for the utter hatred and cruelty of the white mistress towards such an offspring crosses all barriers of tolerance. And unless the master sells the mulatto off, “he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother...and ply gory lash to his naked back” (26). The state of the mulatto kids thus, is worse than the ‘black’ ones.

The plantations are vast areas where tobacco, wheat and corn are raised in great abundance. Colonel Lloyd, for instance, has many such huge farms, whose production is sold in Baltimore. Plantations as such, are seats of great business and governance amongst many plantations taken together, where “disputes among overseers were settled” (32). Mechanical works such as, black smiting, shoemaking and mending, grain-grinding, cart wrighting, coopering, weaving, etc., are all carried out here. This wears “a business-like aspect” (35). Such places are seats of power and grandeur. Lloyd’s plantation, is called the Great House Farm. Douglass observes that “a representative could not be prouder of his election to a seat in the American Congress, than a slave on one of the out-farms would be of his election to do errands at the Great Farm House” (35). A slave sent to work in this house must earn great confidence in him by the master, thus a matter of pride for the slaves. Moreover, this place is also a cover from the constant lash of the overseers and masters out in the field. However, Douglass could not point out “anything great in the Great House, no matter how

beautiful or powerful” (54). It is a house which, despite every show of majesty or shield to the slave, breeds slavery.

Such rich plantations provide miserable working and living conditions to the workers. They are not given any beds at all, but sometimes “a coarse blanket” (33) is provided instead, which is, however, “not considered a very great deprivation. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep” (33). Most of those plantations did not even have the basic facilities of washing, mending or cooking.

Most of the slaves dreamt to be at Baltimore. In the words of Douglass, the feeling for Baltimore that the slaves have is like, “being hanged in England is preferable to dying a natural death in Ireland” (54). At Baltimore, he sees something “far exceeding, both in beauty and strength” (54) than the Great House. It is in fact a far more inferior building than many buildings in Baltimore. He thus, leaves for Baltimore “without a regret, and with the highest hopes of future happiness” (54). The first big city that he sees is Annapolis, the capital of the State, which he says, “is a wonderful place for its size—more imposing even than the Great House!” (55). Baltimore thus, offers many surprises to Douglass.

Nevertheless, “going to Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway” (56) to all his ensuing opulence and he considers it as a plain manifestation of the kind providence. He says, “There were a number of slave children that might have been sent from the plantation to Baltimore.... I was chosen from among them all, and was the first, last, and only choice” (56). He is indeed blessed, and he finds Baltimore a place which serves a “marked difference, in the treatment of slaves” (60) from which he has observed in the country. It has people who are “better fed and clothed, and enjoy privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation” (60). In fact, “every city slaveholder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat” (60). It is a peculiar kind of double-standard being followed by the city slave-owners.

Douglass has often been asked about his feelings on being in a free state and a slave state. He uses a few brilliant images to generate his feelings about being on a free land

like New York and Baltimore. He writes, “It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate”; “immediately after my arrival at New York...I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions” (143). These expressions paint clear the distinctive atmospheres of a free state as against the slave state.

However, such places also make him feel lonesome as “he is in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger” (143). He is with his own brethren, same in the color, but is skeptical to unfold his sadness in front of them “for the fear of speaking to the wrong one” (143) as “the ferocious beasts of the forest lie in wait for their prey” (143). The dictum which he adopts while he starts his journey from slavery to freedom is, “Trust no man!” (144). Moreover, he is amid plenty, yet is hungry and in a place full of lovely houses, yet is homeless.

He constantly keeps changing his name as he starts off from slavery. As he arrives in New Bedford, a place which gives him his final name, Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, because he finds so many Johnsons in New Bedford. He is however, quite disappointed at the general appearance of the New Bedford, for a northern place. He says:

I found to be singularly erroneous.... I had very strangely supposed, while in slavery, that few of the comforts, and scarcely any of the luxuries, of life were enjoyed at the north, compared with what were enjoyed by the slaveholders of the south...came to this conclusion that...northern people owned no slaves...in the absence of slaves, there could be no wealth, and very little refinement. And upon coming to the north, I expected to meet with a rough, hard-handed, and cultivated population, living in the most Spartan-like simplicity, knowing nothing of ease, luxury, pomp...how palpable I must have seen my mistake. (148-49)

He finds everything “clean, new and beautiful” (150). There are no dilapidated houses with poverty-stricken inmates. It’s a livable, happy place.

2.2.1.4 Twenty-One Months in Great Britain

In Spring 1845, Douglass writes his pamphlet considering his story, impels danger for him and he seeks refuge from the “republican slavery” in “monarchical England” (*My Bondage* 242). He describes England to be a country where “young gentlemen go to increase their stock of knowledge, to seek pleasure, to have their rough, democratic manners softened by contact with English aristocratic refinement” (*My Bondage* 242). As he set sails in the ‘Cambria’, the usual “American prejudice against color triumphed over British liberty and civilization, and erected a color test and conditioning for crossing the sea in the cabin of a British vessel” (*My Bondage* 242). However, in due course, in the company of white passengers from Europe, “all color distinctions were flung to the winds” (*My Bondage* 243) on board.

Talking about his stay in England, Douglass writes:

I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country. I seem to have undergone a transformation. I live a new life. The warm and generous cooperation extended to me by the friends of my despised race; the prompt and liberal manner with which the press has rendered me its aid; the glorious enthusiasm with which thousands have flocked to hear the cruel wrongs of my down-trodden and long-enslaved fellow-countrymen portrayed; the deep sympathy for the slave, and the strong abhorrence of the slaveholder...the kind of hospitality constantly proffered to me...and the entire absence of everything that looked like prejudice against me, on account of the color of my skin. (*My Bondage* 245)

He compares this situation with America, where, in the South, he is a “slave” (*My Bondage* 245), dealt with like a chattel. In the North, he is a “fugitive slave, liable to be hunted at any moment...hurled into the terrible jaws of slavery” (*My Bondage* 245). In the light of this, he sees America as a place of “mourning” (*My Bondage* 244). He says that America as a place, “will not allow her children to love her. She seems bent on compelling those who would be her warmest friends, to be her worst enemies” (*My Bondage* 244). While, in England, he claims, “I gaze around in vain for one who will question my equal humanity, claim me as his slave, or offer me an insult” (*My Bondage* 246). England thus, is a welcome change to him.

English people allow Douglass to enter any museum, hotel or parlor without the slightest detestation on the grounds of color. However, in America, in places like Boston and New Bedford, he has been received with a menacing ““*We don't allow niggers in here!*”” (*My Bondage* 246) umpteenth number of times. Color prejudice in Americans, says Douglass, “sticks to them wherever they go. They find it almost as hard to get rid of, as to get rid of their skins” (*My Bondage* 247). At one occasion in Liverpool, He is cordially invited inside the Eaton Hall, one of the most impressive buildings of England. Meanwhile, “the Americans looked as sour as vinegar, and as bitter as gall, when they found I was to be admitted on equal terms with themselves” (*My Bondage* 247). The inhuman face of America made its full display in the beautiful Eaton Hall of England.

Douglass is glad to find English people patronizing his anti-slavery meetings, “they are lovers of republicanism for all men, for black men as well as for white...of every color and nation, the world over” (*My Bondage* 250-51). However, Douglass has been very careful in not addressing Englishmen against Americans. He says, “I took my stand on the high ground of human brotherhood, and spoke to Englishmen as men, on behalf of men” (*My Bondage* 251), for he does not believe in whispering about one nation into the ears of another.

English newspapers have been very generous in addressing Douglass with significant warmth and giving him and his cause a wide coverage. To this, the American newspapers (all white, no colored newspaper therein) could all but be shocked. He writes, “Great surprise was expressed by American newspapers, north and south...that a person so illiterate and insignificant as myself could awaken an interest so marked in England” (*My Bondage* 253). The incident proves the frivolity of the American mindset.

England and its people, thus, provide him with a contrasting canvas and to realize the stark reality the America and its people, both ‘black’ and white, live in. In America, “because of his assumed natural inferiority” (*My Bondage* 258), even his wish for writing is curbed down mercilessly, considering that ‘negroes’ are not fit for higher considerations. However, friends in England purchase him press and printing materials. He finds it “rather hard” (*My Bondage* 260) to return to the racially charged

America after almost two years of bliss in England. Nevertheless, he returns, for he must champion the cause of his colored brethren in America, “to labor and suffer with the oppressed” (*My Bondage* 250) in his native land.

Thus, Douglass’s gaze is riveting in its subtle accounts of persons and places; even an unfeeling reader must be enthused by its vividness if he/she is unmoved by its passion. Douglass scorns pity, but his pages are evocative of sympathy, as he meant them to be, in the colored world that he lived in and died for. It is not easy to make real people come to life in one’s writings, and Douglass’s writing is too brief and episodic to develop any character in the round. Nevertheless, he prolifically generates a picture of America, and Britain, places which either pulls him down or resurrects him, and people therein who paint him all ‘black’ to scorn at him or find beauty in that very color.

2.2.2.1 Richard Wright: *Pagan Spain* (1957)

Richard Wright (1908-1960) went to emerging nations not as a tourist but as a student of their cultures, learning the politics and the progressions of social transformation. One such place of his reflection was Spain. During Wright’s visit, Spain was under the absolutist regime of Franco. At the start of *Pagan Spain*, Wright remembers Gertrude Stein encouraging him to visit Spain: “You’ll see what the western world is made of. Spain is primitive, but lovely” (1). Wright meditated on his fascination with that country, an obsession rooted in the civil war’s political upheaval: “The fate of Spain hurt me, haunted me; I was never able to stifle a hunger to understand what had happened there and why” (10). With an equally, perhaps even worse, background of suffering by the ‘black’ race, Wright as a traveler is almost stifled in Spain, “For that exquisite suffering and emotional torture, I have a spontaneous and profound sympathy” (138). Thus, he seems to visit Spain with a purpose of understanding the country’s after war scenario, which might have mirrored to him the scenario of America after the civil war that the ‘blacks’ had fought for their rights in America. The Franco regime could have been gazed at by Wright as the atrocious slavery establishment under the whites in America. However, an analysis of the ensuing travel can only reveal his motives, designs and learning.

2.2.2.2 People

Richard Wright looks at the Spanish people through the eyes of Gertrude Stein even before coming to Spain. However, Wright had a long pending desire to meet those people, people who are, it seems, pawned by the Franco regime, an absolutist rule. Deep down, the Spanish people in this condition, mirrors to him the state of the 'black' in America as when he says, "God knows, totalitarian governments and ways of life were no mysteries to me. I had been born under an absolutistic regime in Mississippi" (1). So, he desires to see the "reality of life under Franco" (1) and towards the end he finds, "And the people! There are no such people such as Spanish anywhere" (2).

In the very beginning of his Spanish expedition, Wright meets two youths, Andre and Miguel, who remain his friends throughout. They voluntarily help him find a good, cheap pension and display naïve plainness. They were not siblings, but their "fathers had been childhood friends, and the boys were proud to celebrate their father's friendship by being friends themselves" (11). Coming from the racist American setting, it is difficult for Wright to come across such simplicity and un-called for help, so he is skeptical and on his guard, however, he studies them and in a short while he realizes that they are "simple, honest, forthright" (8). This is the first direct and close experience that Wright has with Spanish people, and the image remains largely unaltered till the end. At a restaurant in Barcelona, he reaches starved during the lunch time only to find that there is nothing left to be served. The only customer sitting happily offered half of his plate to Wright. On another occasion, while on the way to Granada by train, Wright sits in a second-class compartment with five women, a baby and two men. These were poor people, who carried limited food, had a child who vomited on Wright himself, sang Spanish songs unmindfully. However, at the end of his journey, he says, "I felt that I had known them all of my life" (161). These people are simple and emanate warmth.

Nevertheless, Wright's friendship with Andre and Miguel deepens and they talk about each other and the Spanish life. Wright tells them that he writes books, "but they could not quite grasp it" (11). His butane gas lighter astonished them and like curious

children they “fondled it, repeatedly igniting the gas, asking questions for half an hour” (11). Wright’s eyes denounce this into the fact that “Spanish youth was cut off from the multitude of tiny daily influences of the modern Western world” (11).

Modernity as a phenomenon is almost alien to them.

Wright finds the agitated, disgruntled and angry youth of Spain in the image of Carlos whom he meets in the most modern city of Spain, Barcelona. Wright observes, “Carlos was bitter” (26). Carlos has a driving intensity and a sheer dismissive attitude towards the social and political order, he says, “Laws are not *passed* here. The government issues decrees” (27). His orange plantations, his only source of income, was caught under one such decreed law. He wanted to protest, but says, “no effective protest is permitted here” (27) and then “they just tell me one morning: ‘You have nothing’!” (29). After the devastating Civil War, the political scenario, thus, degenerated into a dismal dungeon. The civil war has left scars which, like the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan after the bombardment, the people could hardly recover from even after the war ended almost five years before the arrival Wright. The war, fought between Franco and the communists, has divided the Spanish society into two trenches. Both the trenches suffered heavy loss of material and lives during the war, but in the post war scenario, with the coming of the absolutist regime of Franco, supporters of the communists have been segregated and relegated to a position of confinement and suffering, much like the ‘blacks’ in America. Wright sees deep scars in the mind and soul of people in Spain left by the civil War. People like Carlos, “tight, bitter, baffled” (29) are left alienated from their “dark rich earth...sea of green, prolific plants...deep blue sky, yet silhouetted against the darkness and the greenness and blueness” (29) that they so love. Carlos has no friends or contacts, and “he knew what was wrong in Spain and he had not been afraid to speak out. He was, therefore, shunned, regarded as a dangerous man” (30). For him the phrase Civil Service “describes the opposite of Spanish character. Our corruption is the only really human quality we have left” (33). People are expected to just one thing, “believe” (30), to which Wright replies, “I think I understand” (30). Being an African American, deciphering what Carlos tells comes naturally to Wright. Like the Jim Crow ethics for the ‘blacks’ in America, here was the ethics of Franco for the communists. Wright, also establishes a correspondence between Spanish Protestants and African

Americans. The after-war life has made Carlos bitter. Another moving anecdote given by Wright was that of Lola. A war victim, but a sufferer on Franco's front. Her father was supposedly a Franco supporter. He was taken away by the supporters of the communists during the war and didn't return. And now, after five years Wright lodges at his home. His elder daughter, Lola underwent a shock due to his sudden disappearance and the effect of which could be felt by Wright even now. "I'm waiting for father" (53). Lola could not recover from the trauma and she is waiting for her father to return even now. Physically she has grown to be a woman, but mentally she regressed. Wright views Lola as a mirror of the traumatized 'blacks' under the white domination and their unjust laws in America, "the Spanish Civil War had been over for eighteen years, yet its 'black' shadow still lay upon the minds and feelings of the people" (55). Whether a man or a woman, the oppressive and vicious atmosphere has turned the masses in Spain helpless, and thus a bitter attitude towards life. Thus, his gaze seems to mirror the plight of African-Americans in these suffering Spanish people.

The most striking, but pitiable aspect that Wright finds about the Spanish people is regarding their women. He comes across a young girl of twenty-five, Carmen, who brings to his notice that, "You don't know what it means to be a girl in Spain.... I'm supposed to stay home and have babies" (16). She desperately wishes to have been a boy because, "a woman alone is lost in Spain" (16). As a result, she becomes "rebellious" (26). The state of 'black' women is not any better in America, even towards the end of the twentieth century. They have strength only when they are with other 'black' females or in a relationship with a 'black' male. They cannot mingle with any white male, and if they do they are denounced even by their own community (see Vines 263). Carmen cannot go alone to any public recreation place for, "Every Spaniard who saw me would insult me, publicly" (16). Similar reaction is also gathered by Wright from a Native born American woman, "self-possessed, intelligent, she was dressed in a stylishly Continental manner and wore some jewelry" (70). She stays in a pension whose owner is a Spanish male. She wants to move out of her pension, but requires some male presence in doing so, thus requests Wright. Taken aback, Wright asks for the reason, and she echoes Carmen, "you don't know what it means to be a woman alone in Spain" (72). She is American, but "it doesn't matter.

I'm a woman and I'm alone" (72). Wright, to his utter surprise, finds out that in Spain it is considered that "all women alone are whores" (72), something similar to situation of the 'blacks' which says anything dark is related to evil, and all the 'blacks' are thus personification of the devil. Later when a tiff occurs between her and the landlord regarding the bill, she goes almost hysteric and Wright tells her, "you are acting like a Negro" (76). This shocks and silences her.

In spite of such a state, Wright also notices "how strong and self-possessed the women of Spain" (172) could be in comparison to their men and that how easily they "baptized" (172) him in their sorrow through the Flamencos that they sang, he says, "I stood before the singing women, conquered by their sorrow" (174). Wright perceives Spanish women as undoubtedly the "most electrically beautiful of all women in all the world" (187) who are a solid bunch of beings, power which can be equaled, perhaps, only by the "negro" women. They fasten up their men's wounds and cater day and night to their childish passions and needs. The dutiful Spanish woman makes the shelter a home. The final salute that Wright bestows on these pitiful but strong characters declares, "the women of Spain make her a nation" (188) while the "man babbles abstract nonsense in the countless coffee houses" (188) who "have built a State, but they have never built a society, and the only society that there is in Spain is in the hearts and minds and love and devotion of its women" (189).

However, Spain also has another facet to present to the yarn of Women. Andre and Miguel, takes Wright to show some "bad" (19) women. Wright finds "well-functioning system of prostitution of women on almost all levels of Spanish life" (150) and to his eyes "Spain seems one vast brothel" (187). These women wear "the golden medallion of the Virgin between her enormous breasts" (20), which, though ironical, imply that they were Catholics. Wright comes across another such "bad" woman, who however, is not a Catholic, and Andre and Miguel "were furious; their faces darkened with displeasure" (21). Wright discovers that in Spain, "to be a prostitute was bad, but to be a prostitute who was not Catholic was worse" (21). On a similar note, the most Christian of the Christians, the avid Catholic could be the most heinous master to the slaves. As Nancy Prince remarks in her narrative that how those pious masters of hers would religiously attend the Church and its ceremonies but keep

the slaves back home in utter drudgery (see Prince 18). However, Wright observes that poverty, regression and undernourishment are the prime factors for the rise of prostitution in Spain. There was undernourishment, there was poverty, and the women had to find out a way to keep their and the child's belly filled, "Spaniards simply do not get enough to eat...Undernourishment is universal" (151). He writes, "In Spain sex had been converted into a medium of exchange for almost all kinds of commodities" (150). Nevertheless, hypocrisy knows no boundaries, and "the sailors, the men who were married to 'good' women and the young sons in 'good' families became the clientele of 'bad' girls" (22). However, when Wright meets Andre's girlfriend, the 'good' woman, at his home over a lunch, he finds that "the girl was the living personification of sexual consciousness; one could have scraped sex off her with knife" (86) and on seeing Wright, "unconsciously her left hand rose slowly and tenderly cupped her left breast as she backed away from me", says Wright (86). Catholicism has laid so much emphasis on being a virgin that it has almost turned into a profession. When Wright enquires about her profession, Andre replies, "She's a virgin" (86). The living role of virgin turns young girls into a person with "an aura of sex" (87) and Andre's girlfriend's entire outlook is "one of waiting to be despoiled" (87) for she is under her "burdensome and useless role" (87). Andre, on the other hand, "had to worship her from afar and wait until he had money enough to marry her" (87). Till then he frequents those "bad" women. A "dubious value" (87) that Spanish men carry.

Being a woman in Spain means "being the mistress of all the tricks of sexual seduction and almost nothing else" (153). And if the Spanish woman stares at some man, he "converts the streets and café's of Spanish cities and towns into bedrooms" (153). This sensuality, which later turns into sexuality, is also seen by Wright amongst Spanish children, for "at an extremely early age Spanish children learn to preen, to strut, to feel that they deserve attention, caresses, and admiration" (153). Wright observes that there is a crisis of aesthetic embellishment and psychological food amongst these people, "they had the Church.... If the Church were taken away from them, the displacement would plunge them mentally and emotionally into a void" (88). However, it is the Church that, on the other hand, legitimizes prostitution, for validating the concept of sin. And poverty/hunger is the other factor that justifies women to sell their body in order to feed their babies. Wright finds it to be a vicious

circle, a problem that will need serious attention by people, government and the Church at the same time.

Yet another remarkable quality about Spanish women is their “hardy, daring” (176) nature. Wright finds women engaged in illegal activities of almost every kind, prostitution being one of them. Wright’s visit to Gibraltar made him witness a heavy blow to the ethical world of the white civilized. These women attract his attention as they are engaged in a “frantic activity” (176) which he could not understand at first. However, eventually he understands:

The picture before me now became quite clear. These women were working against time to secrete these items about their persons. Right before my eyes I saw a consumptive looking woman grow into a fat Spanish matron as she lifted her skirt shamelessly and stored merchandise into the nooks and crannies of her body....Yet “another woman was pulling a pair of rubber boots onto her naked feet and legs; she opened a bag of coffee and poured the contents into the top of the boot. I counted ten pounds of coffee sliding into each boot. (I wondered just how much of the coffee drunk in Spain was flavored with rubber and sweaty foot odors). (177)

The lower level police officials, however, cover these activities. Spain, thus, runs on.

One thing, however, which Wright finds absent among the Spaniards, unlike in America is the race consciousness. In America, generally the first thing noticed about a person is the color, the white looks down at a ‘black’ and conversely, ‘black’ looks away and tries to evaporate. On meeting Andre and Miguel he finds that “they had no racial consciousness whatsoever” (11). On another occasion, Wright is hesitant to enter a barber shop for a long time “for testing the racial reactions of Spaniards in terms of their giving or withholding tonsorial services” (78). However, when Wright bares his reservations to the barber, he exclaims, “But that’s insane!...you are a man, a human being. Why should I refuse to cut your hair?... Look, sir, the sun made your hair crinky; the cold made mine straight. All right. Why should that make such a difference.... Spanish blood is all over the world. We don’t shrink from the dark skins?” (79-80). In fact, they then go on to discuss wide topics together, and when Wright says that Spain is suffering, the Barber is delighted, “Ah, you have *eyes!* You can see” (79). Yet on another occasion, a middle-aged Spanish citizen tells him, “We

had no color bar, really. We married colored peoples. We gave them our culture in a way that no other European nation ever did, and we meant it” (213). Spain, thus, knew no racial lines and it is true about their religion too when Andre and Miguel happily taking him to be Catholicized even before knowing him properly, “I was a stranger and they were taking me into their Christian faith even before they knew my name, their solitude cutting across class and racial line” (8). It is this naivety that seeps through the Spanish culture throughout Wright’s stay.

However, it is very startling to notice that such people harvest differences for each other within their close-knit society. The barber is a Catalonian and preaching Catalonian nationalism he says, “We are an occupied people, didn’t colonize much.... They oppressed us by keeping us out” (80). Wright tries to understand as to why they are oppressed to which he says, “because we are better men and they know it.... The men in Madrid forbid our language. They won’t let us hold high offices. They ram their orders down our throats....We Catalans have a language, a literature, a culture. But, now, we are buried” (80). They claim their difference to Spanish people also on the grounds of hardworking, “we Catalans work hard.... We are not like the Spanish, who are lazy, arrogant, and always wanting someone to work for them while they rule” (81-82). It is like the days of slavery in America when the ‘blacks’ worked like chattels for the whites while the latter ruled. Wright could clearly perceive that the Catalonians feel that to live in Spain under the so-called “men in Madrid” is an insult to their humanity and they carve for “independent national existence” (81). This barber however, is “the most anti-Spanish Spaniard...for he had denounced Spain in terms that were so emotionally Spanish!” (82-83). Wright calls him the “emperor of a bleak empire” (82) when he announces “I AM THE MASTER OF MY HUNGER” (81). This man is proud, sensitive, and knowing no practical way out of the morass of his shame and degradation, “he had made a monument out of his ‘black’ defeat” (83).

Another lot of people widely seen on Spanish streets are the beggars and the deprived. With poverty being so widely spread a ‘disease’ here, beggars rule. Wright observes that “beggars were universal, eagerly exhibiting the stumps of arms and legs, their outstretched palms beseeching centavos; they would follow you for minutes, jabbering plaintively, their eyes humble and desperate” (93). Women with eyes full of

emotion and arms carrying bony babies walked the streets. Wright senses some “suppressed emotion filled the air” (93) and sees that “in a quiet shaded nook of the stadium wall one young woman was giving the swollen, veined teat of her breast to her infant and crumbly milk drooled from the tiny mouth as it suckled, and the mother, her eyes dreamy and vacant, stood oblivious of passer-by” (93). This is a moving spectacle for Wright and to him this lady “was a spectacle far more moving and beautiful than the ancient, wooden ‘black’ Virgin seated among the rearing stones of Montserrat” (93) that he has visited sometime back, for this is the reality of Spain when he visits, and he came to see how the ‘real’ people lived. This woman is least attentive to who are passing-by, perhaps, “poverty, loneliness, and despair had forged this compulsion to be mindful of others” (159). It is a moving picture of Spain that gets framed before Wright’s eyes.

Besides poverty, the obsession with the Virgin and Flamenco, Wright comes across another important aspect of the Spanish life, the talk of bulls and bullfighters and the bullfighting act itself. “Spain being a man’s world” (90) bullfighting occupies a special place in their hearts and it is a game which is witnessed by men, women and children alike, bloody though it is. The “men who authored the bloody drama were cruel” (102) but as the animal lay dying in his own pool of blood, he says, people “rose, screaming , shouting” (105) and the thousands “stood, applauding, marveling, waving handkerchiefs. An avalanche of gifts-ladies’ handbags, men’ hats, flowers, cigars, and packages of cigarettes-rained down into the ring” (112-13). This white world celebrates the cruel killing of the bull and the ‘black’ Wright feels that it “ought to have been forbidden, for there had been something undoubtedly criminal about it” (109) and sits dumbfounded wondering thus.

On the whole, in Spain Wright spends time with people who are “intelligent and perceptive” (200) giving him “explanations and justifications of their plight” (200). In the words of a well-known Journalist, with whom Wright has an elaborate talk, “what makes a Spaniard a Spaniard....starts at birth and it starts all wrong.... We Spaniards pamper ourselves.... Our children do not know what real hard work in the schoolroom is. Our teachers are idiots.... The Spaniard is an animal that is spoiled from the

cradle” (201). Yet in another man’s words, “We Spaniards are a strange people; we are problems to ourselves” (213).

To Wright’s eyes, they are not simply a degenerated or strayed lot of people, but a race that has been heaped with the burden of finding their lost souls and selves and construct a new world out of what the destructive regime of Franco had done to them. Wright feels that it is about time that they break the dream world that they live in, and get hold of the reality that beckons them in its last route. To the Spanish, Wright is the representation of the world beyond who look at him with “naked, pleading eyes” (175). He says, “they were gone...but they were in my heart, standing there, pleading” (175). The people mysteriously belong to a quaint time frame that is far removed from Wright’s world and understanding.

2.2.2.3 Place

A remarkable visual imagery that a native gives to Wright about Spain goes, “Well, we don’t need ghosts...We’ve got ’em visibly everywhere” (206). However, the first image of Spain that Wright gathers on his own is of the border town Le Perthus, which he describes as a “too quiet, dreary conglomeration of squat, pastel-tinted houses” (2). He finds it very soothing after the “rush of life in Nice, Cannes, and Paris” (2). However, immediately after this, he rents a hotel room for the night and comes to learn about another aspect of Spain, the somber one:

My shower had no curtain; when I used it, water flooded the floor. There were no ashtrays; one dropped ashes upon the beautiful Moorish tiles and smothered burning butts with one’s heel. The furnishings were shiny, rickety; the table sagged threateningly.... Several times an hour the electric bulb dimmed momentarily. (3)

He thus sees, “Poverty in Spain was self-effacing, ashamed of itself” (173) and “It was a melancholy world with a sadness haunting it” (118). This twin image of Spain continues to transpire across Wright’s gaze throughout his siesta there. At another pension where Wright stays, he could not eat his meals as his “stomach was in rebellion against the food” (40). Yet in another hotel, he sees “twelve baby chicks were on the top of the dining-room table pecking away at pallet of meal-like

grain...about the table were grouped four women of the house, lisping endearments, doting, smiling” (180). Poverty shouts out loud from every nook and corner of Spain.

A remarkable thing that Wright observes about the Spanish landscape is the forever presence of civil guards with their menacing machine guns. The Franco regime “was not at all shy in its dictatorship; it made no bones of the fact that its rule was based on naked force” (118). While on his way to Barcelona, he is surprised to find the road almost wrapped with guards. As his car passes one lot of guards, he thinks, “I was not accustomed to armed strangers of unknown motives standing in my rear and I waited to hear *raatataatata* and feel hot slugs of steel crashing into my car and into my flesh” (5). However, Wright finds that “if Spain is a police state, then it’s a sloppy one” (12), for after having had his passport examined and stamped at the border, it was forgotten for the rest of his Spanish sojourn. Yet on another occasion, in a port at Algeciras, Wright finds the smuggler women being covered by lower police officials which was “undoubtedly efficiently organized and sponsored and protected from somewhere high above” (177). Wright even finds the soldiers to be the caricature of a modern/western army, “Most of them were unshaven, their uniforms baggy and crinkled and of a sleazy material resembling mattress ticking, their shoes unshined, their posture slouched and bent, and their gait loose and uncontrolled, like that of a peasant lumbering over a plowed field. Were there ever worse troops?” (15). Being an American he finds that it was an army which was a complete mismatch to the 20th century, but instead of laughing the whole thing out his colored consciousness looks deep into the scenario and realizes that the Franco regime had covered every street with its troops. He has as turned the state forcefully into a “police state”, but leaving the police itself and the people in utter despondency. However, one thing that Wright finds in place is there system of spying, which, he says, is “good and complete” (144). Administration was a naught on the public forum too. There was chaos even in the middle of the most sophisticated cities of Spain. Barcelona, one of the foremost cities of the world has “vast flocks of sheep ambling down the broad, modern avenue...mincing along slowly in the center of the city” (25) where Wright holds for a night. He also finds Barcelona “bathed in darkness and cluttered with a never ending procession of rickety. Wooden carts drawn by donkeys” (117). Madrid, another modern city, is “arrogantly restrained bourgeois” (126), he writes, “as in Barcelona, I

had to exercise caution to keep from running down chickens, goats, and sheep in the center of the city just a few blocks from some of the world's most luxurious hotels" (126). Rather, Madrid seems to Wright's eyes as "not really a city at all, but an enforced conglomeration of bureaus of the Army, the Church, the State, and the Falange" (127). Yet at another place, Wright finds people sitting on chairs brought out of their homes everywhere on road after dinner at night "to escape the heat of their concrete houses and the narrow streets were cluttered with chairs" (180). Thus, Wright finds these whites behaving in a complete unmindful manner as those in the most unsophisticated, interior places in the "African jungle" (181).

Spanish villages are "grim and sorry" (196). Poverty made an uncooked presence here. No matter how lushly green the valleys are, there is a "sharp drop in the material and psychological quality of living" (196). Peasants are "bent under heavy burdens: sacks of rice, loads of hay, boxes...open trucks rattled along filled with men and women standing packed like cattle..." (196). Besides women with their "dresses clung to their misshapen bodies" (196) and the men with those "ragged shirts bagged about their shoulders and hips" (196), Wright also comes across the "immemorial symbol of Spain: an old woman whose head was covered with a dirty cloth hobbled alongside her heaped and donkey-drawn car" (196). In such "rural areas, there is a kind of traditional democracy" (205), where one establishes equality by "taking something away from somebody" (205).

Talking to people and witnessing their lifestyle, Wright comes to know that Spain is a place of "*lack, lack, and lack*" (31). Carlos tells him about his disgust towards "all this poverty, this cheating, this prostitution, this ignorance---" (30). The country which once ruled the world of colonialism has been reduced to rags. Wright does not hover over the surface like a tourist, rather, the "double consciousness" that he has, he sees the "sloppy" state, no doubt, but also goes on to find the problems behind it. Water and irrigation are one of the biggest problems of the state. Wright is told, "Officially it is known that there are large areas in Spain where crops are perishing and there is plenty of water at a depth of three meters" (31). Yet another lack that the government is unable to meet is that of food. Someone tells him, "Our population is slowly increasing, but production lags. Our people do not have enough to eat" (31).

Andalusia, a city rich in oranges, sugar beets, olives, wheat, rice, bears the “impression of poverty...all-pervading, touching so many levels of life” (178) that after an hour of visit there, to Wright “poverty seemed to be the normal lot of man” (178) and he makes an effort to even “remember that people lived better lives elsewhere” (178). Talking to a young Spaniard, he gets the probable reason for such a state, “We are one hundred years behind the other European nations. While they were working and building, we were dreaming of a Golden age” (208). In an anecdote that this boy relates, the reality of what he has said clearly comes out. He says, “Listen, in 1920, my father...drove the first Ford into Extremadura, the peasants saw that throbbing, moving mass of steel and became terrified, thinking that the Devil had come. They stoned that car as long as they could see it” (208). Thus, Spain is not just a place of “lack” but of people who restrain the advancement of modernity.

Spain is also a place where corruption knows no bounds. Wright relates, an interesting but funny anecdote, “While drinking my *café con leche*, a dirty, frightened-looking urchin with blinking eyes entered the pension dining room and scuffled my table with downcast eyes...began a long, low, complaining mumbling that I could not make head or tail of” (34). Finally, he comes to know that “the boy merely wished to wash my car” (34). Wright tells him to go ahead. Sometime later, Police knocks his room and takes him out to his car for he has “committed a public nuisance” (38) for having “bathed” the car in public. They accuse, “You are bathing your car in public” (38) to which Wright says that its washing and not bathing since car is not a human, but they charge him nonetheless. He is fined fifty pesetas. He comes to know eventually that the poor urchin and the police are working together. He realizes that “the laws here are tricky...every law can be used for four or five different things. An accusation here for any one thing can serve as a cloak for something else” (125). It is a vicious world that Wright experiences.

Wright seems to uncover even slavery in Spain, however, of a different kind, the “white slavery” (184). He finds out that slavery was a practice which is not only in operation between the whites as masters and Negroes as slaves. At Seville, the capital of Andalusia, Wright, with his S., visited a tiny night club. He says, “I’ve never in my

life seen so many young and pretty girls on the sexual market at such cheap prices” (183). It seemed more like a brothel to Wright.

S. in reality was a white slaver. He is arranging for the girls to be taken to Africa next week, “This was white slavery, and how simple and open and jolly it was!” (185). The ‘blacks’ in Africa wanted white women. Wright felt it to be a “racial revenge in bed” (185). Spain seemed one vast brothel to Wright. This is a direct contrast with an unusual *white slave market*.

Along the treks of Barcelona, Madrid, Granada, and Seville, Wright probes, looks, and listens, but he says that it had not been a voyage which could be described by any means as having taken him “through the precincts of the Western world. Though Spain was geographically a part of Europe” (191-92). He admits that he is a “part, intimate and inseparable, of the Western world” (192) and thus, even in Asia and Africa, the hardcore third world nations, he has always known as to where the West ends and the other world begins. Spain, however, is “baffling” (192) to him, which “looked and seemed Western, but it did not act or feel Western” (192). It is a strange, undecipherable world to Wright’s sensibilities.

He finally comes to the conclusion that “in Spain there was no lay, no secular life. Spain was a holy nation, a scared state - a state as sacred and irrational as the sacred state of the Akan in the African jungle” (192). Spain has somehow “missed, slept through a whole period of historical development- a period in which science, art, politics, and human personality had established their own autonomy and justification” (193). While understanding these, Wright also fears for the future of Spain. He says, “If Spain wanted to be great again, what I had read so far was the best guarantee that it would never happen” (50). Wright senses that Spain has relegated itself far out of the margins of progress.

2.2.2.4 Sex and Prostitution

Intermittently, in the chapter so far, sex and prostitution in Spain have been discussed, however, it needs a further dialogue in that Wright finds it a major discernible

presence in the Spanish life and invests one entire chapter on it. Two marked observations Wright puts forth are: “These trapped and unfortunate women...a ‘wall of flesh’” (150); “Spain seemed one vast brothel” (187). Wright is dismayed and shocked at this open display of active women in the sex market.

The Spanish men, as Wright could make sense of, “learns early to divide all women into two general categories: one group of women those with husbands, children, and a home; or they are young women of good families...whose hymen rings are technically intact” (153). These are the women to whom a Spanish man bows low, tenderly kisses their hands while murmuring compliments. The other group of women however, “has been placed on earth by God, just as he placed rabbits, foxes, lions, etc., to be hunted and had” (154). These are the women to whom ‘good boys/men’ like Andre and Miguel go till they can have their ‘good’ woman. Thus, says Wright, “if the Spanish woman stares at you, the Spanish man all but converts the streets and cafes of Spanish cities and towns into bed-rooms” (153). There is a deep aura of sexuality lurking out in the open.

However, as already seen in the chapter, the Church rigorously preaches to abstain from sex, and the Spanish, as we have seen are a ‘religious’ lot of people. Nonetheless, there is the blatant presence of sex and prostitution. To this, Wright finds an interesting answer. He says that the Church itself “legitimizes prostitution: the Spanish Catholic concept of sin. Sin exists, so declares this concept. Prostitution is sin, and proof of sin. So prostitution exists” (151-52). Thus, there is this universal prostitution, a presence which is not a “blight to be eradicated; it is simply an indication that the work of salvation is not yet complete” (152). Thus, a prostitute can at any time “enter a church and gain absolution” (152). Wright could sense a vicious circle accommodating Church and prostitution.

On another note, Wright finds that foremost reason for this circumstance to thrive “is that painful and muscular contraction in the empty belly known as hunger that is chronic throughout the nation. Spaniards simply do not get enough to eat” (151). “Undernourishment is universal” (151) in Spain and Wright sees emaciated children with empty eyes who can easily remind one of those poor, sunken, “black” children of Africa. Thus, prostitution turns out to be a big business, for those mothers to feed

themselves as well as their children; “*Para los niños* (for the children) is a slogan among Spanish prostitutes” (152). However, Wright also sees many young girls in a night club at Seville who dance and engage in prostitution for a meager amount thrown to them. Wright says, “never in my life seen so many young and pretty girls on the sexual market at such cheap price” (183). Poverty and hunger could produce disastrous results.

Still another buttressing aspect of this sexual atmosphere is the “sexual projection of the common populace upon the priesthood” (154). He hears “whispers of priests keeping mistresses” (154) and in many clubs and bars he is shown the wood carvings of priests that display their genitals “indicating that there existed a tremendous sexual jealousy and tension on the part of the laymen for the rumored sexual prerogatives of the men of Church” (154). Nobody seem to bother about the truth, but everyone is simply preoccupied with the idea. It is, as if, the laymen reason, “if they can do it and get away with it, so can I” (154). It is like sanction being granted from the above.

The sexual projection went into their dances as well. At a gypsy town, he witnesses a dance which “was a wild sexuality lifted to the plane of orgiastic intensity” (167). Even “a child who looked to be about eight years old...twisted her tiny hips and rolled her eyes sensually...induced on her lips that expression of savage sexuality” (167). Wright observes, “The German, Swiss, Americans, Englishmen gazed openmouthed at an exhibition of sexual animality their world had taught them to repress” (167). The white world/western sensuality gets a jolt here, and the “pale white faces that looked on were shocked, but entranced” (168). Wright, on the other hand, is acquainted with a similar essence of dance which he sees in Africa, in the land of his forefathers.

To all these, Wright opines that “given the conditions, the moral attitude of the Church toward sex, the poverty, the ignorance, this was bound to be” (186). The Church could call it sin, but in Wright’s gaze it is something far more “awful” (186) than that. He understands that “church, inhibit, deny the impulses of man, thwart his instincts, and those instincts would find a devious way out, a way to freedom, and the instincts of the women too would find a way” (186). In these words, Wright mirrors the condition of the ‘black’ slaves in America who were continuously denied the

Wright to see and they end up producing the powerful ‘oppositional gaze’. The oppressed minorities always find a vent out, and in Spain, it seems, it is done through sex and prostitution.

Richard Wright (‘negro’ at his roots), an African-American is dissecting and judging the decadence of a white Christian nation. Here Wright seems to be engaged in asserting power by his gaze, as there is power in looking, a fact iterated in this chapter before. He throws a kind of “oppositional gaze” at the whites, one that documents them, and this gaze is essentially ‘black’. In the words of De Guzman, Wright produces Spain as repelling and fascinating enigma south across the border from a more or less civilized North, namely France; “land of fetish objects and bloody sacrifices...a wasteland and a backwater” (71). Nevertheless, Richard Wright’s narrative contains and articulates the predicaments and experiences of oppression that far surpasses the knowledge about these matters contained in abstract ‘theoretical discourse’ derived from the dominant western philosophy. Despite knowing very little of the Spanish language and spending less than six of his time there, Wright as a travel writer claims to possess an insight denied to more experienced travelers. This might also be attributed to his cultural insiderness being a person belonging to a subjugated race besides other reasons.

Understanding Spain or at least defining it in any particular way was baffling. It was a pathetic mixture of political, social and religious contradictions. Spain was a part of the western world, but it was nowhere near to even the precincts of the western world. Spain was irrational at core, it had a reality, but which was irrational. In Spain, there was no lay, no secular life. Spain was a holy nation, a sacred state—a state as sacred and irrational as the sacred state of the Akan in the African Jungle. At the same time, the maw of paganism was buried deep in the hearts of the people. Thus, through his ‘black’/racial/colored gaze, Wright has painted Spain as a white nation which is still gripped in its past, far from the rings of modernism; as a state which has an absolutist regime; and as a divided society, and a part of which suffers, as communists, as women, and Protestants at the hands of the other. “Beleagued by modern ideas, stormed by the forces of social and political progress,” Wright reports Spain is the kind of place that “had to withdraw, had to go back and find some acceptable form of

endurable life that could knit its poetic-minded people together again” (78). The established myth of white superiority and the fact of being ‘civilized’ get a shudder at the report of this ‘black’ traveler, Richard Wright.

The collective space is inundated in accounts of people and the world that pulls down ‘blacks’ and whites into opposing magnitudes which finally lead to existential reinforcements. The white people become incapable of seeing a ‘black’ point of view because white identity is dependent not only on the irrelevance of a ‘black’ perspective but also its impossibility. Moreover, a white does not undergo a typical ‘double consciousness’ that the ‘blacks’ carry all along. A ‘black’ man thus, has this ability of looking at the world through the eyes of a ‘black’ man and white man at the same time. Thus, the *invisible man* with a ‘black’ gaze paints the world around, a systematic vision of the world giving one the sense of being immersed in all the concrete materiality of ‘black’ experience.

2.2.3.1 W.E.B. DuBois: *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois* (1968)

Racism is the main bullseye of DuBois's discourses, and he strongly protested against execution, Jim Crow laws, and discrimination in education and employment. For DuBois, the African-American subject station is a psychological expanse arbitrated by a “white supremacist gaze” (Hooks, “Glory” 62), and therefore divided by challenging images of ‘blackness’—DuBois travelled extensively while covering the landscapes of Europe, Africa and Asia. It was but natural of a person with a ‘black cause’ to move around with a gaze that perforates through a sheet of ‘blackness’ or ‘black’ philosophy/ideology, amongst others. The whites looked at the world around them in a way which was way dissimilar to those of ‘blacks’. As says Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* (1952):

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination, indeed, everything and anything except me. (*Prologue*)

This autobiography was written when he turns 91 and he views it as a “soliloquy of an old man on what he dreams his life has been as he sees it slowly drifting away; and what he would like others to believe” (13). This soliloquy can be, thus, regarded as the comprehensive views of places he visits and people he comes across throughout his life’s travels.

2.2.3.2 People

Born and brought up in the free north, DuBois attends Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, as a change of plan before joining Harvard. Staying in the north, and conditioned by the free atmosphere there, his family and colored friends, with their “Northern free Negro prejudice” (105), resented the idea of his going to the south, “South of slavery, rebellion and ‘black’ folk” (105). However, DuBois is proud that he did not agree with them and is, rather, delighted to meet the colored people of his own age and education. He is “thrilled” (107) to be for the first time among so many colored people with “such various and extraordinary colors” (107). For the first time he sees colored people “so self-assured and who gave themselves such airs” (107). Above all, for the first time, he says, “I saw beautiful girls. At my home among my white schoolmates there were a few pretty girls; but either they were not entrancing or because I had known them all my life, I did not notice them” (107). The eyes of the 17 years old DuBois sees “two of the most beautiful beings God ever revealed” (107) and he loses his appetite becoming deliriously happy.

In the university campus he becomes a sensation. Most of his classmates are five to ten years elder to him. Majority of his schoolmates are not rich and handsome, but ‘black’ and coarse-looking. His excellent public school training lands him in the sophomore class. He becomes “a campus curiosity even for the teachers” (108). In a reading, writing and arithmetic test, he comes second to a white, German girl, and feels that “the test was unfair to most of the students who had never had decent elementary school training in the colored public schools of the South” (109). Though he has excels in the school test and gets to seat next to whites, the thought of the community never leave his consciousness.

While in north, DuBois hears a Negro folksong, which, however, didn't have much effect on him as it was sung by a youth who personally did not experienced slavery. In the south, he hears "Negro songs by those who made them and in the land of their American birth" (120) which felt "soft, thrilling, powerful, that welled and died sorrowfully" (120) into the ears. The southern people guided and enlarged his "appreciation of music" (122) which he is very glad about.

As DuBois sets sail on his magnum opus journey, in 1958, he comes across an observation regarding the behavioral pattern of human. He says, "The passengers were rather more courteous than I expected Americans to be" (11). Thus, with pleasant social relationships on the waters, DuBois lands in Europe. He had visited Europe several times before, however, this time it is the after-war setting.

While at Holland, he comes to an unexpected observation that people are least concerned about peace. He says, "I made the mistake of speaking on peace at a Hague cultural club, composed of teachers and professional men- social workers and the white collar class. They did not want to hear about peace, and least of all about peace between America and the Soviet Union" (18). However, the politically alert Wright's gaze could perceive the reason behind this. He says, "It was the Soviet Union that kept Holland from regaining Indonesia, and it was America which was the Soviet Union's great rival for domination of the world" (18). As a result, in a world which has suffered fatally from war and destruction, "a prosperous and intelligent people did not want to hear about peace" (18). These people wanted "comfort and civilization even if that involved the same imperial control of land and labor on which the civilization of the Dutch had long been based" (18). Similarly, DuBois finds that the Swedish people has also avoided war but is "not welcoming world peace" (20). One thing, however, that he notices about the Dutchman is that he is in no hurry to see any "connection between the new and the good...he is ponderously honest, and he is guiltless of anything savoring of personal beauty. His nation may become grasping and greedy, but the individual Dutchman is too honest to know it or believe it when it is told" (158). He finds a strange kind of directness and honesty in the Dutch people.

Amongst all the European nations, France is closest to his heart because his name is French and he has partly French blood. According to him, French people speak the

“the most beautiful language in the world” (18) and he is proud to speak a little of that language. The most remarkable quality about the French people, that DuBois sees, is their being less prejudiced toward colored people. He says, “I had experienced on French soil less prejudice of color and race than anywhere else in the world” (18). Wright says he would have gladly made France his home if he did not have his “duty to the American Negroes” (19). Nevertheless, the French are a pleasant lot of people who “do not get drunk, they stay drunk!” (19). But Wright also senses the crucifixion through which the French people had lived” (18), and suggests that remembering Roland, the king called Louis, Napoleon and Alexander Dumas is the ray of hope for the people who are caught in “eternal struggle and endless contradiction” (19).

He visits the land of whom America calls “The Captive Peoples” (24), which includes the Baltic States, Poland, Bohemia and Slovakia. He finds that in comparison to this earlier visits, the people are “better fed and better dressed, and they look more content” (24). In 1893, his polish classmate in Berlin, Stanislaus Ritter von Estreicher, begged him to visit the Poland and to see “how much more Poles are oppressed than Negroes in the United States” (24-25). In his 1950 visit to Poland, DuBois remembers, Poland “showed the horrible crucifixion which she had suffered under Hitler, but she showed also the beginnings of mighty resurrection” (25). The Polish people are united and hopefully working towards a strong, happy future.

In 1893, Hungary presents the visual of a “great mass of degraded peasants...distinctly below the level of American Negro serfs” (26). And thus, he is not surprised when “pushing businessmen and artisans, calling themselves ‘Commons’ and despising laborers and serfs, rebelled against communism in 1956” (26). The upper circles pushes the lower circles even lower.

In the Balkans, petty Aristocrats “joined with American money, had made their masses endure in the last century” (26), and thus, in 1959, he writes, “the people of the Balkans are worse off today than they were in the 19th century” (26). Vast majority of people “intelligent” (26) who work in the Baltics, Poland and Czechoslovakia today for living, seem quite evidently to want communism.

DuBois remarks that “to call these peoples ‘captive’ is misleading. The great mass of them were the pawns of privilege and exploitation” (27). DuBois, with his ‘black’ consciousness, could feel that these people reel helplessly under the blows and beckoning of their masters. The upper class people are rich and privileged “who called the nation their property, and sought to dominate it for their own personal advantage, assuming what was good for the ruling class was best for all” (27). The lower class remains at the mercy of the rich, and thus, suffer endlessly.

In Russia he comes across a different category of people. These people are seeking “a new way of life through learning the truth, and cooperating with each other and by willing sacrifice” (29). He finds that not every face is happy, but they are optimistic and see a “bitter past being succeeded by a great future” (29). Walking through the streets of Moscow, he sees a few priests, a few beggars, and “the folk were better dressed” (32). He does not even see many police guards walking down the streets or passing out orders. But in spite of this, there is order and harmony. One evening he looks at a procession of half a million people from the window of his hotel. They marched, walked, and danced while eating and singing. The next morning he again looks out of the window and finds that:

There was not a scrap of paper or sign of dirt. That meant work in the night...but it meant much more than this: it meant that most of this half million people dropped no dirt and threw no paper, and they did this not under orders, but because they felt these squares were theirs, and they must not soil it down. These people feel a vested interest in this nation such as few Americans feel for the United States. (35)

DuBois sees the Russian people sit and listen to expositions, long talks, lectures and. Besides, “they read books, magazines and newspapers, not just picture books” (35). Any instance of problem of existence is discussed in villages, factories and the like, and “comments, spoken and written, are welcomed, until every aspect, every opinion has been expressed and listened to, and the matter rises to higher echelons” (35). Gradually and peacefully, people march up to an agreement. They present an inspiring example to people across world. America has “moved from the hysteria of calling all Soviet women prostitutes, all Russian workers slaves and the whole Russian people ready for revolt, of regarding all Soviet rulers as criminals conspiring to conquer the United States” (43). Nevertheless, it is a place where he says, unlike America where,

he says, “I get anything from complete ignoring to curiosity, and often insult. In Moscow, I pass unheeded” (40). Moscow presents a comforting social milieu to him like France.

In his 1936 visit, DuBois notices that “Chinese had some rights in China” (45). Like a ‘black’ thrown out of the main walks of life, a “Chinese who could afford it might even visit the city race track from which they and dogs were long excluded” (45). Kicking a coolie or throwing rickshaw driver on the ground is not seen much, yet he sees “a little English boy of perhaps four years order three Chinese children out of his imperial way on the sidewalk of Bund; and they meekly obeyed and walked in the gutter” (45). To DuBois, “it looked quite like Mississippi” (45).

In 1959 he visits China, the “land of the colored people” (47) because in 1956 China had officially invited him to visit and lecture. He calls Chou En-lai “the tireless Prime Minister of this nation of 680 million souls” (48). Every Chinese man “seem to be at work, and not afraid of unemployment, and welcoming every suggestion that displaces muscle with machinery” (49). DuBois’s birthday is given a national notice in China and “celebrated as never before” (49). He says, “we who all our lives have been liable to insult and discrimination on account of our race and color, in China have met universal goodwill and love” (49). He humbly thanks the Chinese people for teaching the world what communism means.

The Chinese people are always happy, says DuBois. The workers, factory hand, servants, scrubwomen, those sitting at parks or restaurants, rich or poor houses, always seem to wear a happy mask. These people have a faith that “needs no church or priest” (49). Amidst these people he “never felt the touch or breath of insult or even dislike” (49) who “for 90 years in America scarcely ever saw a day without some expression of hate for ‘niggers’” (49). In this regard, DuBois writes, Chinese knows, “as no other people know, to what depths human meanness can go. I used to weep for American Negroes.... I know no depths of slavery in America have plumbed such abysses as the Chinese have seen for 2,000 years and more” (50). These people have experienced starvation, murder, rape, prostitution, sale and/or slavery of children, and religion concealed in opium and gin, for transforming the “heathen” (50).

DuBois is glad to see that the Chinese labor, a class of people “who in most lands are the doormats” (51), walk and boast, and that “these people of the slums and gutters and kitchens are the Chinese nation today” (51). China has no rank or classes amidst people, but she has leaders and geniuses.

The best view is that of Chinese women who are becoming increasingly free. He sees women who “wear pants so that they can walk, climb, dig...not dressed simply for sex indulgence or beauty parades” (52). DuBois finds women who are either ministers of state or locomotive engineers or lawyers or doctors, etc. while at Wuhan, he visits one greatest steelworks of the world where “a crane which moved a hundred tons loomed above” (52). He is utterly shocked to see a girl sitting in the engine room and running the vast engine. Thus, he writes, “the truth is there and I saw it” (53).

During his visit to Germany in 1892, he finds himself on “the outside of the American world, looking in” (157). He stands on the same plane with white folk-students, acquaintances and teachers. He observes, “they did not always pause to regard me as a curiosity, or something sub-human; I was just a man of somewhat privileged student rank, with whom they were glad to meet and talk over the world; particularly, the part of the world whence I came” (157). People are curious about him not because he is a ‘black’, but because he belongs to a part of the world which they wanted to know.

The plain and simple, yet the intellectual and promising “crowd of German students is more picturesque” (166) to him than his Harvard brother who “affects a slouchy stride, jams his hands in his pockets, dresses well, and yet with a certain conscious carelessness” (166). The new young Emperor of Prussia, so influenced him as a person that he trims his beard and mustache in the Emperor’s fashion and followed it his entire life.

Visiting people all around, thus, his emotions swell: “How far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country?” (169).

2.2.3.3 Place

The first place which he visits out of the North and majorly impinges on his consciousness is the American South. He finds out that “no one but a Negro going into the South without previous experience of color caste can have any conception of its barbarism” (121). On one occasion, on a Nashville street, he accidentally jostles a white woman who is “not hurt in the slightest, nor even particularly inconvenienced” (121). Immediately, in concurrence with his New England training, he raises his hat and begs her pardon, however, “the woman was furious” (121) and DuBois could not understand the reason for such a reaction, but nevertheless, he senses that he “transgressed the interracial mores of the South” (121). It is new refinement of cruelty that DuBois comes across.

On his journey to Europe in 1958, he moves to another plane, on the waters, where it is as if life becomes more fluid than on soil, “On this, our floating island, the world is much simpler than usual” (180). With such experience, he arrives in London, where he says, “Our luggage was subjected to more careful examination than we have ever been used to, but finally we were courteously released” (12). British have been always known for their hypocritical nature. Even after the war, they continue to draw the color line, graciously though.

DuBois knows Europe “through a repeated series of visits” (14) covering the years 1892 to 1958. His pre-war impressions of Europe’s have been thus: “Europe seemed very much like America, but older, with a longer history, and with inspiring memories of the past, in buildings and monuments, and in cultural differences” (14). However, in the post-war scenario he gazes at “a group of countries which had been through the terrible experiences...and trying to rebuild itself something new” (14). He looks at this world, “as a member of the darker race, which had suffered from the oppression of the white European world” (14). He undergoes a mixed bag of emotions at this point.

He is disappointed to see England still as a leading nation with London projecting itself as “a clean and comfortable city with parks, trees and flowers” (14). Similarly, Holland is also “clean and respectable” (15). However, both these nations frightens him, as in spite of the apparent poised atmosphere, “there lurked a great fear” (15). The British empire is falling and the “domination which Englishmen had so long exercised over the world was approaching end” (15), while America comes up as a leading nation with nations increasingly dependent on its wealth and technique.

In the center of the colonial empire is Indonesia, but the Indonesians revolted and DuBois visits “Holland just as the time when the full realization of the meaning of this blow was being felt” (18). It becomes a distraught place where the impact of World War is now fully realized, “colored people of mixed Dutch and Indonesian blood had begun to pour into Holland, bringing problems of race and class. Incomes of the well-to-do were being reduced” (18). About Rotterdam he writes, “And I liked it: a nice place in its way. To be sure I must say I never saw a more poorly tailored town in my life” (158). Holland could all but display pathos of the Great War.

France, a place close to his heart, has also changed, mostly not for good in 1958. In 1949, he sees the “greatest demonstration for peace, for total abolition of war.... Now ten years later all this was being overthrown. France again was at war and preparing for war” (19). The streets of Paris rode on “fear, hate and despair” (19) and “there was death in her eyes, in her speech, in her gestures” (19). DuBois witnesses France “quivering under the dark and deathly shadows, poverty and the concentrated power of its great wealth” (19). It is a beautiful city threatened by human despair and hatred.

Sweden is the “middle way between private capitalism and communism” (19) who sees the enhancement of social control of the welfare state over the anarchy of individual profit, “intriguing” (20) housing system which is the “finest popular housing in the world” (20), pension system and schools.

He comes to East Germany in 1958 and visits his University which he attended in

1892. He watches it growing into a socialist state developing in the faith of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. He says, "I could not visit again my old lodging on the SchonebergerUfer. That lay in "West" Berlin, and if I had entered, American soldiers might arrest me on any pretext they invented. I turned back and traversed a city with new buildings and enterprises, along with ghosts of war and destruction" (23). He also notices a remarkable change in the "great hall of the University, with women students now common but in 1892 never admitted" (23). Moreover, he himself, underneath the shadow of Luther's Wartburg, spends "a happy holiday in a home where university training and German home-making left no room for American color prejudice" (160). Moreover, patriotism here is from heart, not like amongst the Negroes who "simply did not speak or think of patriotism for the nation which held their fathers in slavery for 250 years" (168). It remains a place dear to him which treats him "like a prince!" (172).

"Czechoslovakia is a prosperous nation" (25) where people are always busy and "decidedly more hopeful" (25). Similar is the situation in Slovakia where, in 1950, sullenness loomed large over the scenario, which in 1958 turns into one of "new hope and housing" (25). Prague presents a beautiful picture of valleys and is growing, a place that lifts his spirits. Here, Charles University, found 100 years before Columbus discovered America, honors him with the degree of Doctor of the Science of History. He says, "This gesture of a communist nation doubtless prejudiced me in favor of socialism" (25) as it is a welcome change for him for a 'black' man to be honored.

Hungary presents the "age-old strife between the Roman Catholic Church and landholding aristocracy in one group" (25) and the rising bourgeoisie supported by Western enterprise and capital in another group" (25) and he sees "poverty and despair" (175).

He has seen Russia grow as a nation. He says, "In 1926, I saw a Russia just emerging from war with the world" (29). DuBois sees the nation facing foreign and traitors, but in spite of this it looked a "land of hope and hard work" (29) where "schools were multiplying; books were being printed and widely read; workers were being protected with a living wage, nurseries for children, night schools, trade unions and wide

discussion” (29). Besides, there “were no signs of prostitution or unusual crime. There was some drunkenness, but little gambling. Priests were plentiful, and tarnished gold domed churches abounded” (29). Above all, DuBois is impressed by seeing the high spirit of the people and the officials working frantically hard and with proficiency. However, the most amazing thing that DuBois sees is that how Russia daringly faces the problem of eradication of poverty “which most other modern nations did not dare even to admit was real” (30). Then there is the problem of illiteracy, where 90% of illiterate Russians making Russia handicap and maximum of her industrial capital is possessed by foreigners. Ten years later in 1936, DuBois rides “the across Soviet Union on the Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Otpur.... 4000 miles.... went through cities, climbed the Urals and crossed lakes and rivers.... Old buildings remained, but great new buildings were crowding them” (31). Even “food was much more plentiful...no unemployed, and all children were in school; factories, shops and libraries had multiplied...evidence of law and order everywhere” (32). He also sees “the continued growth of Moscow and increased confidence of the Soviet Union” (32). Ten years later, in 1958, he rides into Moscow and “saw above the city the great sickle and star which crowns the University and blesses the city” (32). There is the overwhelming power for the working class, triumph of physics, increased medical facilities, and the presence of “power and faith and not simply hope” (39). However, “all things in the Soviet Union are not perfect” (35). There are “power rivalry and personal jealousy.... Mails miscarry, cables come a day late” (35). Nevertheless, “The Soviet Union is great and growing greater, and, as it seems to believe” (35). He is very happy to write, “From such a nation we can learn” (43) and look with hopeful eyes towards Russia.

“There passed a glory when Imperial China fell” (44), writes DuBois. He sees China first in 1936 and he is stuck by “its myriads of people. This amorphous mass of men, with age-old monuments of human power, beauty and glory; with its helpless, undefended welter of misery and toil...it is eternal life, facing disaster and triumphing imperturbably” (44). He stands on the Great Wall of China, “what has been called the only work of man visible from Mars. It is no mud fence or pile of cobbles. It surpasses that mighty bastion of Constantinople” (44). While there stands Shanghai which is “an

epitome of the racial strife, the economic struggle, the human paradox of modern life” (45).

In 1959 he revisits China. He writes:

It was the most fascinating eight weeks of travel and sight-seeing I have ever experienced....Peking; a city of six million; its hard workers, its building and re-building...workers...wore raincoats beneath the drizzle. We saw the planning of a nation and a system of work rising over the entrails of dead empire. (47)

It is a matter of pride for China when “the colored American prisoner of war who stayed in China rather than return to America and is happy with his wife and baby” (49) or when “She is not ignored by the United States. She ignores the United States and leaps forward” (50). Even then, “China is no utopia. Fifth Avenue has better shops...Detroit has better cars. The best American housing outstrips the Chinese.... But Chinese worker is happy. He has exorcised the Great Fear that haunts the West; the fear of losing his job; the fear of falling sick” (51). He proudly declares, “I have never seen a nation which so amazed and touched me as China in 1959” (47); “so vast and glorious a miracle as China” (53). His visit rejoices him for having given opportunity to know such a wonderful nation.

Back at home, the American South is a place of “shame” (106) for the Northern ‘blacks’, a place that he hears is “the real seat of slavery” (114). DuBois on the other hand, sensed “the call of the black South” (106), it needed teachers, and he is sent to play his part. He comes to Tennessee, “a region where the world was split into white and ‘black’ halves, and where the darker half was held back by race prejudice and legal bonds, as well as by deep ignorance and dire poverty” (108). Nevertheless, into this world he leaps with “enthusiasm” (108), and he says, “Henceforward I was a Negro” (108). He happily partakes the fate of his fellow brethren.

He sees the “race problem at nearly its lowest terms” (117) in the South, “The schoolhouse was a log hut.... Furniture was scarce. My desk was made of three boards reinforced at critical points.... All the appointments of my school were primitive” (116-17). He witnesses the hard, ugly drudgery of the “writing of landless, ignorant peasants” (117). America, as a whole is such a dreaded place for the darker

race that someone tells him, “the best punishment for Hitler would be to paint him black and send him to the United States” (396). This rings loud the degree to which American racism can be perilous.

In contrast to this, he talks of Europe as a place which modifies his “outlook on life” (156), thoughts and feelings profoundly, where “form, color and words took new combinations and meanings” (156). It is a place, he says, where white folks “became, not white folks, but folks. The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not fanatically a Negro, but “Negro” meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship” (157). Here he stands with his back towards American narrowness. Similarly, Soviet Union is a nation where he is welcomed as a human. In this regard, he talks of Paul Robeson. “In America he was a “nigger”; in Britain he was tolerated; in France he was cheered; in Soviet Union he was loved for the great artist he is” (397), and thus, the vast contrast.

Returning to America after his great journey in 1959, he is applauded and received warmly at home, not merely by his friends, but by the government too.

2.2.3.4 Nation and system

America: It has little political discussion which is “discouraged in every way; by stopping meetings, refusing use of halls, closing columns of newspapers, refusing radio time and even by police interference and jail” (36). It is a heavily restrained life.

Britain: It allows freer discussion which “is limited by convention and prestige; by aristocratic influence and money and leisure of the dominant class” (36). Freedom is merged with British snobbery and aristocracy.

France: Here parliamentary debates are directed by the “powerful interests who work the puppets and pull the strings” (36). The masses are in any way guided by the bourgeois interests.

Italy: Here the “church stands always in the shadow, keeping watch above its own” (36) while it epitomizes wealth, and wealth rules. Being the seat of the Papal order, religion is the biggest influencing factor in Italy.

Soviet Union: Conducts a great modern government “without autocratic leadership of the rich” (37). Russians think in terms of the workers, unlike Americans who want to be just millionaires. Soviet Union “is seeking to make a nation believe that work, and work that is hard and in some respects even disagreeable, and to a large extent physical, is a necessity of human life....That workingman is the state” (37). Russia showcases the future of a nation as a whole and not just of a few privileged classes.

2.2.3.5 Religion

He lives two months opposite the inscription on the Second House of the Soviets where Marx is written: ““Religion is the opium of people!”” (41). He says, “Whatever was true of other lands, this was certainly true in Russia in 1926 and before” (41). He witnesses “symbols of religion ruled Moscow, the vast five domes of the Cathedral of Christ and the 350 other churches of the city dominated landscape, as they loomed and glowed. There were gems of beautiful bejeweled churches; hordes of priests intoning litanies, begging alms, forgiving sins. There were thousands of shrines” (41). Lenin, agreeing with Marx, called religion the “opium”, and this can only be understood by those “who has heard the chant of a Russian service, seen its color and genuflections; only those who know the gorgeous litany and the beauty of Russian churches” (41-42).

However, the Russian Orthodox Church has been dethroned and “most educated man no longer believes in religious dogma” (43). Many folk, he says:

Follow religious ceremonies and services and allow their children to learn fairy tales and the so-called religious truth, which in time the children come to recognize as conventional lies told by their parents and teachers for the children’s good. One can hardly exaggerate the moral disaster of this custom.

(43)

DuBois thanks the Soviet Union for having the courage to stop it.

On the morning of his arrival at New York, a French girl on board pointed towards the Statue of Liberty and said with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, “Oh yes the Statue of Liberty! With its back toward America, and its face toward France!” (DuBois, *The Autobiography* 182). In the words of Elaine Lee, “ It’s great to step outside the United States and its pigmentocracy to be treated like a human being and not as a second class citizen” (Abdullah 60). As we can perceive here, the goal of travel and of travel writing often became a larger admiration of one’s own home and country. The antebellum American travel writer is usually more likely to sermonize the gospel of nationalism, says Alfred Bendixen. This, however, holds true for the white travelers than to the ‘blacks’. Given the socio-political-cultural locale of the ‘blacks’ at their ‘home’, the they do not go to foreign countries with a gaze that portrays their nation as superior or better, and even if they do say so, there is almost always an underlying critic of the very dictum. Thus, DuBois’s steps outside or his stray into the South and marking his way out was not only a ‘flight’ or simply a ‘movement’ but a rejection of containment and an opportunity to broaden the horizon of his gaze.

III

It is seen that the white traveler domesticates the ‘Other’ encountered during travel and treats/bargains the ‘Other’ as a mirror in which he/she could build his/her own subjectivity modulated upon the identity of race. In this regard, it is engaging to see as to what form of identity arise for the ‘black’ traveler. The social world is saturated by narratives that stick down ‘blacks’ and whites into antithetical dimensions which finally lead to ‘ontological fortification’. The *white* becomes incapable of seeing a ‘black’ point of view because white identity is dependent not only on the irrelevance of a ‘black’ perspective but also its impossibility. Moreover, a white person does not undergo a typical “double consciousness” that the ‘blacks’ carry all along. A ‘black’ person thus, has this ability of looking at the world through the eyes of a ‘black’ and white person at the same time.

We see that this gaze of the African-American traveler is as much acquired by birth, color and the formative experiences as is redesigned, reinforced and thereby layered

by the encounters and insights gathered during the travel, for we see that Douglass, DuBois and Wright, have their set of preconceived ideas due to their experiences before the travel and have the eventual evolved ideas/concepts due to the experiences met and insights gained during the travel. Thus, the *invisible man* with a 'black' gaze paints the world around, a systematic vision of the world giving one the sense of being immersed in all the concrete materiality of 'black' experience. It is, thus, patent that the colored or 'black' gaze of the African-American traveler can look at and narrate the world around it in as much convincing a way as a white gaze does. The 'black' traveler gets acclimatized to the western (white) traditions of travel writing where the individual observer/traveler fashions a self through the journey. However, the 'black' self-foregrounds his/her agency and individual identity largely emphasizing upon the rhetoric of color. In this, they present themselves as fearless examiners of cultural, people and places, providing intimate life details, presenting new ideas and creating remarkable literature through their travel writing. In the process, they carry their 'black' veil but apply it into an impartial, credible mode of gazing.

It is also noteworthy mentioning here that African-American travel writing is evidently dissimilar from their 'white-authored' equivalents. The white travelers mostly penned down European-type leisure class entertainment travel narratives which are often individualistic in their narrative patterns. But in the case of African American travel writings one could see a relationship between individual and group experiences as Butterfield in *Black Autobiography in America* says, "the self belongs to the people, and the people find a voice in the self" (3). It is a relationship in which the voices of the group or the entire race enable themselves to be heard or echoed through an individual narrator who acts as the representative and this representative could also be a symbolic figure.

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