

Lost Theaters of African American Internationalism: Diplomacy and Henry Francis Downing in Luanda and London

Recent critical approaches to the global travels and connections made by African American writers and texts have revealed much regarding black internationalism's relation to artistic innovation, U. S. imperialism, and the formation of black transnational consciousnesses. At the forefront of such studies, of course, have been projects underscoring black travel and cultural work within the matrices of the Black Atlantic and the diasporan world more generally.¹ Meanwhile, complementing and entering into dialogue with diasporan studies has been the field of American Studies, which in recent years has sought to place American cultural forms into greater international and transnational perspectives.² Amy Kaplan's commentary on this point has been both useful and provocative, as she has called for an increased focus upon the reciprocities between the U. S.'s "domestic" cultures and "foreign" policies ("Left" 17), and, more specifically, has also called for "the subject of race and ethnicity" to be considered *vis-à-vis* the U. S.'s normally staid diplomatic history ("Domesticating" 104). Such suggestions, working in tandem with diasporan studies, have promoted a critical milieu whose conjoined anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and anti-elitism have led to a productive emphasis upon the popular, resistant, and oppositional that operate within critical territory which too frequently in the past has been occupied by what Kaplan calls the international world's "policy makers" ("Domesticating" 104) and "diplomatic elites" ("Left" 14).

Yet in focusing upon African American internationalism "from below," critics have tended to overlook a category of black internationalist engagement that has been more closely affiliated with the "diplomatic elites" referenced by Kaplan. In fact, though dozens of black U. S. citizens worked as U. S. diplomats during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, in her extensive overview of the "Transnational Turn in American Studies," was unable to cite any substantial work on the U. S.'s black international representatives.³ Instead, in a footnote, she observes that "the experiences of black U. S. . . . diplomats . . . provide a promising avenue of research" (49). The promise of this avenue has been recently reemphasized by Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, who has insightfully treated Frederick Douglass's diplomatic work in Haiti as underscoring an African American "twice-doubled consciousness" within the diasporan world (140). Similar critical promise is evinced by Jacqueline Goldsby's important explorations of the interchange between James Weldon Johnson's overlapping work as a U. S. consul and novelist in Venezuela and Nicaragua.⁴ Yet an assessment of the cultural and critical legacy of African American participation in international diplomacy must involve more than a recovery of the diplomatic dossiers of famed African American writers and cultural figures. Such an assessment, if it is to offer access to black U. S. diplomats' complex range of engagements, also requires that we recover the dossiers of lesser known figures whose writings and diplomatic experiences have tended to go unremarked.⁵

Ranked among this second group, black diplomat and playwright Henry Francis Downing provides an illuminating window into the interplay among what Nwankwo

and Goldsby have hinted at as the mutually reflecting spheres of aesthetic, racial, and international representation. Though largely forgotten today, Downing worked as a U. S. consul in Luanda, Angola in 1887 and 1888, after which time he took the phrase "Late U. S. Consul" as part of his entitlements. During the 1910s, furthermore, Downing's literary work shared space with the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Carter G. Woodson in the *Crisis's* monthly "Selected List of Books."⁶ By the 1920s, however, Downing's earlier work as a diplomat and writer was largely unknown. His consulship had faded within the U. S. State Department's institutional memory, and one Harlem Renaissance-era critic framed Downing's literary work as part of the early "stream of literary and artistic products . . . from Negro writers" that had been obscured by the then-current vogue surrounding black U. S. culture and writing (Harrison 352).⁷ Seeking to recover Downing from the amnesia evinced by U. S. literary and diplomatic history, this article hopes to lay the groundwork for future studies of Downing while further exploring the importance of permitting black involvement in U. S. diplomacy to assume an increased prominence in the study of African American travel and internationalism. Drawing upon Downing's complementary diplomatic and literary dossiers, this essay provides the first substantial treatment of Downing's work as a prolific London-based playwright during the 1910s. While focusing upon his play *A New Coon in Town: A Farical Comedy Made in England* (1914), I argue that Downing's work in diplomacy positioned him within a system of international representation whose semiotic disjunctions and tensions contributed to his literary work's later self-conscious theorization of black racial and aesthetic representation within an international world.

More specifically, I argue that Downing weighs in upon the culturally contested site of black racial (mis)representation within the complex of geopolitical, economic, and cultural discourses that has in recent years been described as "colonial modernity," a term acknowledging the global effects of "a capitalism emanating from Euro-America" (Dirlik 20) upon "the contemporaneity and the complicity of the modern and the colonial" (19).⁸ The interrelation of the colonial and the modern—epitomized by transnational circuits of capital, diaspora, aesthetics, and scientific theory—placed Africa (and people of African descent more generally) behind what one early twentieth-century commentator called a "veil of misrepresentation" (Ellis, "Psychology" 314). The early twentieth-century effects of this misrepresentative veil were pervasive. In the United States, W. E. B. Du Bois recognized that white populations fortified a white supremacist regime via a scientific and historical tradition that "unconsciously distorted" the truth about Africa (*Black* vii). In London, meanwhile, a black collective observed that Britain's colonially interested media engaged in "systematic . . . misrepresentation" of the empire's dark populations ("Foreward" iii). Concomitantly, on a transnational artistic front, aesthetic modernism's "primitivist" streak saw modernists (among them Ezra Pound and Picasso) take Africa as a muse while modifying "their style of [realistic] representation and experiment[ing] with a non-representational aesthetic" (Lemke 7).⁹ Entering into dialogue with this trans-discursive deployment of Africa as a trope, occasion, and muse for disjunctive representational practices, Downing's *A New Coon in Town* is preoccupied with the colonial and class-based formations that participated in brokering Africa's representation within the theater of colonial modernity. In exploring these representational concerns, the play theorizes the ethical pitfalls and material benefits associated with African American race representation in a diasporan world.¹⁰

In a 1917 *Crisis* advertisement, Downing's publisher offered the following description:

Mr. Downing perhaps has had a more varied career than any other living Negro from the Civil War to the war between the United States and Germany. He was the first colored man to represent the United States at a city of white government, by appointment of President Cleveland. He introduced Coleridge-Taylor to the London Public. He persuaded Liberia to open its doors to foreign capital. Merely to recount his activities in public life of the past fifty years would take a volume. But his highest renown has been won as a man of letters. ("Books")

The description was more than puffery. In 1917, this endorsement functioned to reintroduce Downing to black Americans who had virtually forgotten he existed. Although Downing was a New York City native, extensive travel had taken him, until his 1917 return to Manhattan, a long way from home and a long way from the attention of black communities in the U. S. Likely born in 1846 or 1851, Downing was the nephew of civil rights leader George T. Downing. By the time he was thirty, Henry Downing had served in the U. S. Navy twice, and his military and personal travels had taken him throughout the Pacific as well as to West Africa. After his second discharge from the Navy, Downing married and became a prominent black New York Democrat during the 1880s. For his support, President Grover Cleveland appointed him consul to Luanda, Angola, which was at that time a Portuguese colony.¹¹

The *Crisis* advertisement would later place this consulship first among the accomplishments leading toward Downing's emergence as "a man of letters." A glance at Downing's preoccupations while consul suggests that the commerce between his early work in international representation and later work in literary representation was ample. Spanning from October 1, 1887 to November 3, 1888, Downing's consulship situated him in a version of West Africa that would trouble representational conventions for him as well as for writers commonly identified as modernists. Arriving in Angola just two years after Leopold II of Belgium and Henry Morton Stanley established the adjacent Congo Free State, Downing saw "European countries emptying [the] fertile land of its products, and their citizens growing wealthy."¹² Learning of Stanley's trespasses against U. S. citizens on the Upper Congo, Downing requested that the State Department commission him to travel up the river once a year.¹³ The Department's evident denial of this request prevented Downing from traveling up the Congo as did Joseph Conrad, but the consul's letters to the State Department occasionally contained passages that would have been better suited to literary work than a consular dispatch. For instance, where Conrad's Marlow would wonder if in Africa he had "stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno" (14), Downing described Africa's "gloom," its "flitting bat, and mournful cry of the owl, with the moon sending her light between the overhanging branches of the trees" as forming "a scene worthy of 'Dante's Inferno.'" ¹⁴

Unlike the modernists for whom Africa's "primitivism" became an aesthetic muse, however, Downing did not take his great lessons in representational distortion from Africa's so-called primeval gloom or its masks and curios; instead, for Downing, these lessons arose from a consulship that asked him to contemplate what could be called (to borrow a phrase from Kenneth Warren) "the problem of constituency," or the fraught question of exactly whom or what he represented.¹⁵ As a consul, of course, Downing ostensibly represented the U. S.'s trade interests in Luanda. Yet upon his arrival he found that the U. S. had no trade with Angola. He observed with some amount of indignation that in spite of the consulate's many years of operation, merchants in Luanda did not even know that U. S. goods existed.¹⁶ It seemed to Downing that the "United States [was] not interested in trade with Angola," and he apparently felt the need to remind the Department of what ought to have been obvious: "The object of the Government in sustaining a Consulate here is, I judge, to advance the commercial interests of its country."¹⁷ That Downing needed to remind the Department of a consul's role, and that he hedged his reminder as he advanced it, points toward an important disconnect between the supposed and actual representational functions of the U. S. consul in Luanda. In the

absence of U. S. trade interests, Downing to a large extent represented only the theoretical potential for U. S. representation in Luanda.

Yet Downing felt that even this theoretical capacity to represent U. S. trade interests was troubled by the meager salary he received from the State Department. In Angola, he found his salary "sufficient to pay only 50% of the expense incidental to the place," and he explained to the Department that this level of compensation was "such as will force any one, not enjoying an income independent of his salary, into a position which will launch him into a vortex of embarrassment."¹⁸ The Department

**Dennis's two schemes—requiring Terminus first
to impersonate an African political representative
and later an Africa-inspired sculpture—create a dramatic
work that brings Africa's international representation
and aesthetic representation into dialogue.**

expected Downing to supplement his consular income by cultivating private trading relationships, but Downing resented this expectation because it would seem to impinge upon his ability to play the role of U. S. representative. He explained to the Department that a "trading Consul not only is at times prejudiced in judgment . . . , but he also often finds occasion to make the performance of public duty give way to private interests."¹⁹ In Downing's mind, cultivating personal trade would have an effect similar to Marx's *camera obscura* (47), turning the consul's role upside-down, converting him from (U. S.) *representative* to (self-) *represented*. The threat inherent in this reversal lay in its reflection of the Department's willingness to maintain Downing as a diplomatic sign divorced from what ought to have been his national referent. Such a disjunction was undoubtedly unsettling because it undercut the gesture toward full African American citizenship that was implicit in African American performance within the theater of the U. S.'s international diplomacy.²⁰ Or, to put it in terms of the interrelation between performance and identity, the tensions between Downing's consular script and performance in Luanda underscored (to the disappointment of someone attempting to express his identity as a U. S. citizen) that he could not internalize U. S. citizenship, that citizenship was "finally . . . impossible to embody" (Butler 179).

By its conclusion, work in Africa had indeed launched Downing into a vortex of difficulties, including a destabilization of representational and performative conventions that would later surface in his literary writing. Under great financial stress, he resigned his consulship and returned to New York, where he managed a Brooklyn-based weekly newspaper and became a leader in the National Colored People's Protective Association.²¹ In 1895, Downing and his second wife relocated to London, where they would reside for some twenty-two years. Finding himself at what was becoming a hub of the emerging black internationalist consciousness and community, Downing in 1897 managed Paul Laurence Dunbar's first recital with Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and lodged Dunbar while the famed poet wrote his first novel. In the early twentieth century, Downing's residence in London also permitted him to speak at the Pan-African Conference of 1900, write lyrics for black composer Amanda Ira Aldridge, and befriend Nina Du Bois while her daughter Yolande attended an English boarding school.²² By the early 1910s Downing had taken a strong literary turn. He wrote serial fiction for Duse Mohamed Ali's London-based (moderately) anti-colonial journal, the *African Times and Orient Review*.²³ Also, in 1913 and 1914 he published at least eight plays and oversaw the Players and Playwrights Association, a society apparently dedicated to helping amateur playwrights place

their work with London stage managers.²⁴ Francis Griffiths, who published six plays by Downing, told the *Citizen* that in "Mr. Downing" he had found a dramatist "of unusual originality and power" (qtd. in "Unacted Plays"). Downing's published plays also drew praise from the *African Times* and noteworthy contemporary actors and dramatists including Matheson Lang, John Drinkwater, and Herbert Tree.²⁵ Apparently, with these endorsements in hand, Downing "arranged for the production of a number of his plays" at the Royal Court Theatre in 1914. The productions were canceled, however, when the Royal Court shut its doors from June 1914 to October 1915 during World War I. As a result, Downing "lost [the] considerable amount of money which he had already expended" on souvenir medallions for his plays, which led to "arrears with his rent" and subsequent legal trouble.²⁶

Although Downing by 1914 had become one of the most prolific African American playwrights to that point, his dramatic work has gone almost completely unexamined. This is partially attributable to the fact that Downing's situation outside of the U. S. was not conducive to writing drama that can be classified as operating according to the conventions of either the "race play" or the "folk play," which were the predominant and insistently localist modes of African American drama during the early twentieth century.²⁷ Rather than working within dramatic territory circumscribed by U. S. borders and racial tensions, Downing tended toward writing cosmopolitan (if sometimes formulaic) drama with a distinct internationalist bent. Also detracting from the playwright's critical reputation, Downing's most thorough biographer has suggested that his dramatic oeuvre does not deal with race questions (Contee 189), a statement which, in conjunction with the general unavailability of Downing's published plays, has undoubtedly curtailed interest in further research.²⁸ Yet even his apparently "raceless" plays display preoccupations with race, and a few of his plays include prominent characters of African descent while addressing questions of racial inequality and injustice. For example, *Human Nature* (1913) rewrites the story of Othello, setting it in contemporary England and casting the protagonist as racially unmarked and hence presumably white. Another work largely preoccupied with the lives of Europeans, *The Shuttlecock* (1913) is set in Russia in 1900 amid a nihilist conspiracy but nonetheless features an African American woman who has been "fotched . . . from America" (40) by a master who may not have acknowledged the end of slavery. *Voodoo* (1914), meanwhile, deals quite extensively with issues of race and is a historical drama depicting a failed Maroon revolt in Barbados running parallel with England's Glorious Revolution.²⁹

Also addressing the legacies of slavery and colonialism, *A New Coon in Town* evinces anti-colonial themes and preoccupies itself with the uses and limits of an African heritage preserved during the Middle Passage. Furthermore, and relevant to the project of coming to a greater understanding of the role of international diplomacy in African American writing, the play self-consciously treats the performance of identity as it relates to interlocking modes of aesthetic, racial, and international representation. *Coon* depicts the London-based misadventures of African American antihero Terminus Quoddy, whose dialect alludes to a tradition of blackface minstrelsy but whom Downing instructs "should act with restraint, and thus avoid debasing the character to the level of the music-hall, minstrel type of Negro" (5). Similar to Cato of William Wells Brown's *The Escape*, Terminus operates within and against minstrel stereotypes—at some moments emerging as tractable but at others as shrewd and intransigent. Susan Stewart has written of "distressed genres" in which the literary stands "in imitation of" older oral and folk forms (68). Such literary reproductions, she explains, create for themselves an "artifactual nature" through "a process of appropriation, manipulation, and ultimately transformation for oral and literary forms alike" (67, 68). Similarly, we might think of Terminus as a "distressed character," one offering an allusion to minstrelsy's heyday while attempting to assert the

superannuation of "the music-hall, minstrel type of Negro." Such a representation of white supremacist stereotypes seeks to disrupt their transparent operation by situating them as artifacts from days gone by. This type of artifactualization is also showcased in Downing's treatment of Terminus's main antagonist, Dennis Flynn, who throughout the play refers to Terminus as "Mr. 'Nigger,'" an epithet Downing never permits to be spoken except when enclosed by quotation marks. It is also Dennis who calls Terminus the "NEW COON IN TOWN" (13), a phrase redeployed by the play's title, which promises a minstrel-like spectacle while functioning in the tradition of Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* by ironizing racially oppressive language.³⁰

Terminus arrives in London on a cattle boat that has sailed from the United States. Acting upon a tradition passed down from his great-grandfather, the traveler is en route to Liberia, where he intends to claim a ruby farm to which he is ostensibly heir. In London, however, Terminus finds himself in trouble with the law and is rescued by—and hence indebted to—a man named Dennis Flynn. Having incurred Terminus's obligation, Dennis enlists the traveler as a reluctant participant in two schemes aimed at deceiving the Hebb family, a household of affluent Londoners who draw their income from the African gem trade. Dennis's two schemes—requiring Terminus first to impersonate an African political representative and later an Africa-inspired sculpture—create a dramatic work that brings Africa's international representation and aesthetic representation into dialogue. In so doing, *Coon* cautions that African Americans themselves may become performers within a pervasive system of misrepresentation as they assume the role of transnational race representative. Under some conditions, the play warns, African American representation of Africa may be as moot in relation to Africa as Downing was, as a U. S. consul, in relation to the United States.

The play begins on a London street as Dennis greets Serena Hebb, the class-conscious Hebb family matriarch. Looking askance at Dennis's attempt at conversation, Serena spurns him as "just a common plebian" and continues on her way (8). Dennis is angered by Serena's snub and enlists Terminus in a class-driven plot aimed at using her aristocratic bent to put her to shame: Terminus, concealing his identity as an indigent African American traveler, is to visit the Hebbes while posing as the representative of an imaginary African dominion Dennis calls "Phoo Phoo." That afternoon, announced as "His Magnificent Highness, Palaver Sauce, Prince of Phoo Phoo" (30), Terminus enters the Hebbes' parlor, where the disguised cattle boat passenger turns to Serena and says, "Missus, my father, de King o' Phoo Phoo, 'structed me ter come an' smile at yo'." Seeing Serena's pleasure at entertaining an aristocrat, Terminus continues, "Yes, missus, I represents de King." To this assertion of representational capacity, Serena's husband Septimus replies, "Ah, his Majesty's ambassador?" and Terminus answers "O' co'se." In hopes of alleviating the strain produced by his "very laborious" and tiring "duty as Ambassador" (33), Serena offers Terminus food and drink. Terminus replies, "Missus, hasn't I said as how I is de King o' Phoo Phoo's 'bassador? . . . Isn't de mos' 'portant part 'o a 'bassador's duty eatin' an' drinkin', and talkin' erbout nuffin?" (34). Just as Terminus begins to perform these ambassadorial duties, however, Dennis blusters into the room disguised as a detective. The "detective" scandalizes the Hebbes by calling the "Ambassador" a thief and chasing him out of the home (35).

Light though it may be, this scene explores the power motives and legitimacy of African American involvement in speaking on behalf of diasporan populations generally and African populations specifically. In portraying Terminus's coerced representation of Africa at the Hebb residence, the play seems to warn that African Americans, when supposedly speaking for Africa, must also be wary of serving the interests of a white society in which certain factions have class-based and other interests in seeing African Americans assume the role of "Ambassador" for other populations of African descent. Yet this scene does more than position certain

African American representations of Africa as imbricated in white design; it also allegorizes a sharp break between African American representations of Africa and the "real" Africa. This break is especially evident in Downing's creation of Terminus as an ambassador with only tenuous connections to an African referent. On this point, Terminus's assertion that an ambassador's primary responsibility is to talk about *nothing* is telling, for it is clear that Terminus the Ambassador represents a double portion of nothing: Terminus is no "real" ambassador but is instead a coerced impersonator of the representative of an ersatz African dominion (i.e., Phoo Phoo) whose imaginary geography situates it far from any physical continent. In other words, similar to Downing's earlier status as a consul in Luanda, Terminus is divorced from his putative object of representation, with his performance conspicuously failing to frame his African ancestry as a credential legitimizing speech on behalf of Africa.

Terminus's faux representative role within Act One is suggestive of representational concerns that resonate with—and trouble—the contemporaneous declarations of modernists such as Ezra Pound. Writing in London during the year of *Coon's* publication, Pound dismissed the conventions that had traditionally linked art to a seemingly objective world. Declaring that "[r]ealism in literature [had] had its run," Pound was weary of the realist's "analyses of the fatty degeneration of life." Instead, as Pound expressed it, the "modern artist" produced "new wild" art and was the heir "of the witch-doctor and the voodoo" ("New" 68). If Pound's statements were avant-garde in their disdain for the conventions that valorized a correspondence between aesthetic representation and "life," his statements (deploying images of the witch doctor and voodoo) nonetheless embraced the status quo during an era of colonial modernity that took Africa as an occasion and muse for disjunctive representational practices within the arenas of history, politics, economics, and science. As an imitation African ambassador, Downing's character Terminus functions to interrogate the effects—upon Africa itself—of acquiescing to the use of Africa as a rationale for disregarding the conventions that insist upon a correspondence between the world of representation and the world of things. In Act One, Terminus makes no treaty on behalf of the imagined dominion of Phoo Phoo. Of course, knowing of Terminus's status as an impostor, disinterested onlookers would recognize any such treaty as void—as a misfired attempt to do things with words (Austin 16). But the Hebbs, as self-interested dealers in the African gem trade, might well insist that a treaty made on behalf of the imaginary dominion of Phoo Phoo ought to be honored by a "real" Africa that is susceptible to material exploitation. *Coon* saves such an eventuality for Acts Two and Three, allowing this early scene's fake diplomatic encounter merely to hint at the danger that Terminus may use his "ambassadorship" to treat on behalf of a "real" Africa.

Act Two finds Dennis in an art studio maintained by his friend Saxon Langston, who is both a starving artist and the suitor of the Hebbs' daughter, Mary. Saxon and Mary's romance has previously been stifled because Serena believes Saxon is a "fortune hunter" (21), but Saxon has recently come to an agreement with the Hebbs. He will be permitted to marry their daughter if, when the Hebbs visit Saxon's studio, they are convinced of his talent as a sculptor. In preparation for the Hebbs' visit, Saxon presently shows Dennis the sculpture with which he hopes to win Mary's hand. He pulls back a curtain to reveal, poised upon a platform, a semi-nude statue of an African chief named Lodango. Saxon's statue takes its mimetic responsibility seriously, as is evident from Dennis's exclamation, "Why, it seems so natural-like. . . . Don't allow any cold wind to blow against [the statue] . . . for if you do . . . you'll be hearing him sneeze" (45). Shortly before the Hebbs visit, however, the statue is shattered, and Saxon panics until Dennis presents a solution: "The effigy represented a 'nigger' and it could be imitated." He continues: "Why not hire a live 'nigger' . . . and stand him on the platform for Mr. Hebb to gaze at him" (48).

The next day, responding to a vague request from Dennis, Terminus arrives at Saxon's studio unaware of Dennis's plan. Dennis and Saxon immediately lock Terminus in the room and threaten to beat him if he will not "enter into . . . [a] treaty" (57) to pose as a semi-nude statue of an African chieftain. Terminus resists, but the two conspirators begin stripping him by force until he agrees to remove his own clothes (61). As Terminus strips, Dennis and Saxon notice a red stone that their captive removes from his pants pocket. Terminus explains that the stone, according to family tradition, had been brought from Africa to America by his great-grandfather. Terminus further explains that before becoming entangled with Dennis, he was on his way to reclaim his progenitor's ruby farm. Covetously, Saxon convinces Terminus to sell him the stone and the ruby farm. And upon making this treaty, Saxon exclaims, "Dennis, we'll form a company! . . . We'll name it 'The Negrobian Grab, Chartered and Limited.'" Dennis, in turn, adds that they will appoint one Sir Habisham Jobsdon to manage the company. Hearing the name *Habisham Jobsdon*, Terminus protests that Jobsdon is prejudiced against Africans, and Dennis subsequently attempts to pacify Terminus by telling him that Jobsdon has "changed his mind about the 'niggers'" (64). Though Terminus remains unconvinced, the party drops the topic in preparation for the Hebbs' visit.

Upon the Hebbs' arrival during Act Three, Saxon draws the curtain to reveal Terminus "wearing leopard skins and armed with native weapons . . . on the platform." Mary and her father praise Saxon's "statue" as "Admirable" and "Excellent," but Serena does not share their enthusiasm. She contends, "It is very much out of drawing! It has any number of faults! [Saxon], your knowledge of the anatomy of the human form is anything but correct!" Then, conspicuously failing to recognize the "Ambassador" she entertained a day earlier, Serena explains that Palaver Sauce of Phoo Phoo has visited her only yesterday and his "form had none of the eccentric curves and—and—botches this thing has" (70). While Saxon apologizes for the apparent mimetic failures of his "sculpture," a wasp flies through the open window and stings Terminus on the nose (72). Terminus suddenly runs screaming through the studio, and in the commotion the ruby flies into the air, falling into Septimus's possession. As a gem dealer, Septimus cries, "Good Heavens! What a ruby!" (73), and Saxon, thinking quickly, transfers his contract for the ruby and mine to Septimus, who in turn consents to Saxon and Mary's marriage.

Acts Two and Three are meant to provoke a certain amount of laughter. Yet we would do well to approach Downing's farcical comedy via the remarks of his dramatic contemporary in London, George Bernard Shaw, who explained that through farcical comedy "we are permitted to discuss in jest what we may not discuss in earnest" (34). *Coon* couches within its levity several incisive critiques that repay further attention. Even superficially, the play's anti-colonial stance is evident. Terminus critiques Europe's exploitation of Africa when he disparages the colonial practice of trading "a string o' glass beads, or a ol' hat" for a diamond mine (62). Furthermore, he strongly objects to the name *Sir Habisham Jobsdon*. When told Jobsdon will be made the managing director of the Negrobian Grab, Terminus exclaims,

I doesn't know [Sir Habisham Jobsdon] . . . but I'se hyead a heap o' talk erbout him. He's dat pussun dat said as how de swamps an' jungles, in Africa, was de proper places fur cullud folks ter lib in, while de hills, an' odder healthy spots, should be 'propriated by de white folks. I doesn't cotton ter de idea o' havin' dat Sir Habisham Jobsdon. Deed I doesn't!" (64)

Even when Dennis tries to pacify Terminus by telling him that Jobsdon would now "let [Africans] have everything a white man has," Terminus doubts that Jobsdon's prejudice could "melt out o' a pussun sudden-like" (64). Sir Habisham Jobsdon bears a striking resemblance to British colonialist and African explorer Sir Harry Johnston, who not only shared an honorific and initials with Terminus's object of opprobrium but also shared a policy that "reserved the [African] Highlands as being

suitable for European settlers," a policy that gave rise to Africa's so-called White Highlands (MacPhee 49). Terminus's protests recast Johnston's famous colonial *negotiations* for the Highlands as *appropriations* of the Highlands, thereby undercutting Europe's supposed right to participate in the procurement of African lands. The sense of colonialists as interlopers in African affairs would likely be heightened during a performance of the comedy, as the actor playing Terminus could (with the introduction of an adroitly placed pause) transform the name *Habisham Jobsdon* into the phrase *Have a sham, job's done*. Downing's sardonic rechristening of Johnston and Terminus's skepticism regarding the colonialist's reformation reflect the suspicions that Downing and his circle harbored regarding Johnston's enduring race prejudice (in spite of the apparent *rapprochement* constituted by Johnson's affiliation with the 1911 Universal Races Conference).³¹ Yet Jobsdon's negative portrayal within the play is more than a critique of Johnston, as Terminus's disdain also functions to criticize those of African descent who had begun warming to the former colonial administrator. Where some highly visible African American figures had begun conducting fairly cordial relations with Johnston by this time, *Coon* suggests that even an African American who "doesn't measure knee-high" alongside the "advanced" members of his race (13) should know better than to trust the likes of Johnston.³²

In spite of his objections to Europe's colonization of Africa, Terminus ultimately consents to the colonially driven coercion that asks him, as an African American, to pose as someone capable of treating on behalf of an Africa he has never seen. It is in this connection that the play resumes and further explores its earlier warning regarding white society's uses for African Americans as transnational race representatives. Act One has earlier positioned Terminus as the specious political representative of an African king, and now Acts Two and Three depict him as a specious aesthetic representation of an African chief. In considering the significance of Terminus's imitation chieftainship, we may usefully turn toward Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown's explanation that the colonial class's "creation of African chiefs" was a major strategy by which Europeans appropriated African lands (125). Especially in Kenya, Miles and Brown observe, few "populations had individual chiefs but it did not prove difficult to find individuals willing to fulfill this role when it enabled them to accumulate land and livestock" (125). The created chiefs, in turn, produced a façade of consolidated African power and thereby provided the conditions necessary for colonialists to negotiate for African land ownership (125-26). When Terminus stands in for a sculpted African chief that has been created by Saxon (whose name itself is allegorically suggestive), we see a reflection of the strategy discussed above—especially inasmuch as Saxon negotiates with this imitation chief for the possession of a ruby mine. Yet the scene emphasizes that Saxon's coercion does not operate in the absence of Terminus's consent. Indeed, when presented with the opportunity to sell rights to the mine for fifty pounds sterling (63), Terminus is quite pleased that Saxon interprets his African descent as constituting the authority to speak on behalf of Africa. This facet of the scene communicates the play's suggestion that African Americans, like African "chiefs," may become pawns in Europe's colonial designs, facilitating Africa's material exploitation in exchange for the acquisition of personal wealth, power, or prestige.

I do not want to suggest that Downing looked askance at all representations of Africa by African Americans (or that he was consistently a saint toward Africa), but the play undoubtedly offers a warning regarding the economic and power formations that may compromise the accuracy and disinterestedness of African American representations of Africa.³³ *Coon*, like Antonio Gramsci's later hypothesis, warns of "American negroes" [*sic*] as "agents in the conquest of the African market." Unlike Gramsci, however, who hypothesized that African Americans would be specifically useful to "the extension of American civilization" in Africa (21), Downing's play emphasizes that African Americans must be wary of serving as ersatz African

representatives to any political or economic entity in need of a transnational "chief" willing to speak illegitimately on behalf of African interests. Less directly, *Coon* may also allude to the type of (mis)representation of Africa showcased in Jesse Shipp, Will Marion Cook, and Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1902 musical *In Dahomey*. Discussing a 1903 London performance of this comedy, a reviewer for the London *Times* described the production's depiction of Africa as having "a kind of ethnological purpose," but he also observed that the comedy evoked a world in which "coon songs . . . are made to seem like the obvious expression of genuine, if somewhat elementary, emotions" ("Shaftesbury"). Certainly, as Downing's play portrays Africa's facetious representation as having consequences for the material Africa, *Coon* speaks in cautionary ways to what the *Times* review suggests as *In Dahomey's* presentation of the "coon song" as a stand-in for objective science on the subject of Africa.

Interestingly, *Coon* turns to the conventions of aesthetic representation to comment upon the dangers of Africa's political and economic misrepresentation. On the platform, Terminus stands in imitation of an aesthetic representation of an African chief, and Serena's words upon seeing this "statue" permit the play to cast Terminus's political distortions of Africa's interests in terms of mimetic failure. When the curtain is drawn, Serena protests that the "statue" is "very much out of drawing," that its adherence to "the human form is anything but correct," and that it is covered with "eccentric curves" and "botches." Serena's particular phrases invite us to consider Terminus's misrepresentation of Africa in terms of aesthetic modernism's representational experimentation. In describing Terminus as "out of drawing," for instance, Serena's language is homologous with descriptions of Picasso's early work and other "modern paintings" of the era, which were also described as "out of drawing."³⁴ Meanwhile, Serena's dissatisfaction with Saxon's "incorrect" and "eccentric" rendering of "the human form" resonates with the stance of conservative art critic Sir Charles Waldstein, who in 1914 cautioned young artists against the emergent trend of portraying "eccentric forms" that were "in opposition to the broad laws of nature" (47). Quite clearly, Serena does not worry that the "statue" constitutes an avant-garde aesthetic statement (in the mode of Pound, Picasso, Stein, or Hemingway). She merely sees it as bad. As Ernest Hemingway intimated to Gertrude Stein, however, there is a fine distinction between "bad" (as in poorly rendered) and "bad" (as in rendered according to a modernist aesthetic).³⁵ The former indicates a lack of artistic proficiency while the latter performs its mimetic infidelity with self-conscious knowingness. Whether or not Downing meant for Serena's words to equate Terminus's political and economic misrepresentation of Africa with aesthetic modernism's self-conscious representational disruptions, *Coon* is undoubtedly self-conscious in its treatment and equation of the aesthetic and political disruptions surrounding African representations. Downing's knowingness should position him, along with other black diplomats schooled in a disjunctive system of colonially inspired international representation, as part of a truly lost generation of black travelers. Their cultural production constitutes, to borrow from Susan Stanford Friedman, an "expressive dimension of modernity" that "share[s] family resemblances" (if not racial politics) with other aesthetic expressions that also responded to the epoch's tumultuous conditions (432).

One of the many "lost" qualities of Downing's case involves our limited knowledge of his plays' performance histories. And it is interesting to note that the international travels that informed his dramatic work also functioned to disrupt his efforts to maintain a personal archive, one that might have offered information on the question of performance. In 1917 Downing "left England hurriedly,

by order of a physician, because [his] nerves were so shattered by German air raids over London . . . that [his] sanity was threatened."³⁶ He returned to Manhattan with such haste that his "papers . . . [were] packed higgledy piggledy in three parcels" and remained in England, perhaps with friends. Four years later, Downing still had not been able to arrange for his papers' return, explaining that he lacked sufficient funds to pay for their shipment.³⁷ While present access to these papers would likely reveal greater information on the lost performance histories of Downing's plays, his papers' current location—and indeed existence—is uncertain. In the meantime, information is scarce. As previously noted, Downing "arranged for the production of a number of his plays" at the Royal Court Theatre in 1914, but the war that eventually drove him away from London also caused the cancellation of these productions, which in turn resulted in serious financial and legal difficulties. Summarizing the effects of these difficulties in a 1915 letter to the State Department, Downing described himself as "a playwright" who was earlier "generally held in good repute" but "is now scorned and despised, and . . . in a position which renders it exceedingly difficult if not impossible for him to successfully follow his profession."³⁸ In spite of his "good repute" as a playwright, it seems likely that Downing's London plays were never professionally produced. This becomes clear in a 1920 *Chicago Defender* article in which the reporter, apparently after an interview with Downing, observes that Downing's London-based "dramatic writings" won "high praise from . . . well known English actors and managers." These plays were published, the article continues, "by a leading British publisher as the best unacted plays submitted to him, and which he published simply because of their real merit" ("Race"). Given Downing's evident interest in providing the reporter with information on his successes, it would be surprising for the article to neglect mentioning professional performances that may have occurred after the plays' publication.

Yet Downing's apparent failure to acknowledge any professional productions should not detract from the likelihood that some of his plays were performed privately or by amateur actors, including perhaps Downing himself. In the early 1910s, Downing managed what he referred to as the Players and Playwrights Association. Little is known about this particular organization, but in 1908 and 1909 the London's Playwrights' Association (also known as the Unacted Authors' Association) worked to help unacted authors place quality plays with London stage managers ("Unacted Authors"). At the same time, London's Amateur Players' Association held competitions and performances of plays by its members ("Amateur"). By the early 1910s, one or both of these associations may have become Downing's Players and Playwrights Association. Even if this was not the case, however, Downing's club undoubtedly had aims similar to those of the two earlier associations, making it probable that Downing (as organization manager) arranged for informal or amateur performances of some of his own plays.³⁹ We may have a written dramatization of such performances in *Placing Paul's Play*, a one-act that Downing coauthored with his wife Margarita. In this play, the frustrated playwright Paul Massy collaborates with his wife Rita (short for Margarita) to perform a dramatic scene designed to interest a professional actor-manager in producing a play called "Human Nature," written by Paul but sharing a title with Downing's drama of the same name. Thinly veiled stand-ins for Downing and Margarita themselves, Paul and Rita reference a "theatrical fête" planned by "our club" (9), and Rita claims that "as an amateur" she has "often" "appeared in the glare of the footlights" (21). Regarding amateur performances, it is also interesting to note that each of Downing's full-length plays published by Francis Griffiths contains a prefatory note that the "Amateur Fee for each and every performance" was "Five Guineas payable in advance." Further research may illuminate the amateur performances about which presently we may merely speculate.

Another area for further research involves Downing's activities upon returning to Manhattan in 1917. After being driven from London by German air raids, Downing settled in Harlem. Back in New York City, his internationalist bent sometimes caught the attention of William H. Ferris of the *Negro World*, and he occasionally wrote for the *New York World* and the *Messenger*.⁴⁰ Recalling his presence at the latter magazine's Sunday forums and Saturday afternoon gab sessions, George S. Schuyler remembered Downing as "a walking compendium of Negro history and lore," who "had once been U.S. consul at Luanda" and had "written . . . several plays in England" (146). Having returned from these political and aesthetic outposts, Downing brought his longstanding interest in drama to Harlem. He evidently kept up with the efforts of Du Bois's Krigwa Players Little Negro Theater (Downing, "Samuel" 266) and reportedly became vice president of another African American little theater group, the National Ethiopian Art Theater (NEAT), which claimed James Weldon Johnson as treasurer (Work 53).⁴¹ Also in the early 1920s, Downing arranged for the Quality Amusement Company (affiliated with the Harlem-based Lafayette Players) to produce his final drama, *A Racial Tangle*, which purported to "take . . . place amongst our people in Harlem and Brooklyn, and the characters all are Colored persons such as we meet and talk with every day" ("Race"). The production was either canceled or its details lost, but given the localist and nationalist aesthetics that animated *A Racial Tangle* and Downing's involvement with NEAT, it is fair to say that in Downing we may have not only a lost figure in African American and black diasporic drama but also an intriguingly internationalist prehistory for a decidedly localist little theater movement which, in Du Bois's words, demanded "plays of real Negro life" that were "*About us . . . By us . . . For us . . . Near us*" ("Krigwa" 134).⁴²

In approaching the intertwined legacies of Downing's careers as diplomat and writer, more is at stake than the recovery of one of African American literature's extensive travelers and prolific playwrights. For Downing and other black U. S. diplomats of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ambassadorship became not only an enduring index of identity but a trope informing the ways in which racial and aesthetic representation were both theorized and performed.⁴³ When viewed from this perspective, we may trace for the U. S.'s early black writer-diplomats a legacy extending to the famous black writers and travelers who succeeded them. Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, for instance, also theorized African American engagement with the international world through the trope of ambassadorship, with Wright praising Hughes as a "cultural ambassador" who had "represented the Negroes' case, in his poems, plays, short stories and novels, at the court of world opinion" (600), while Hughes, in one of his Simple stories, signified upon the role of diplomat with the figure of the African American "hip-to-mat," who would tell the "big countries of the world" to "wake up" and "let everybody have civil rights, white, black, yellow, brown, gray, grizzle, or green" (163). Such writers' extensive travel, and indeed geographic and psychic exile, has sometimes led critics to conceive of them as the literary progeny of the Anglo-American modernists. Amritjit Singh, for instance, has remarked that "Wright emerged in the 1950s as a literary descendant of the American expatriate writers of the 1920s whose craft and vision were shaped by European experience and influence."⁴⁴ Singh continues: "But he was also a descendant of slaves who made it his business to shape crosscultural perspectives on issues of identity, race, and colonialism—subjects neglected for the most part by the white Anglo-American modernists" (226). Such an observation of dual literary ancestry is perspicacious, and given their common travel and exile, their common preoccupations with the legacies of slavery, and their common theorization of internationalist speech via the trope of ambassadorship and diplomacy, we should situate Downing (along with other African American writer-diplomats including Frederick Douglass, George Washington Ellis,

James Weldon Johnson, and John Stephens Durham) as part of an alternative and largely unconsidered literary and cultural genealogy of some of African America's most famous "hip-to-mats" and "cultural ambassadors." The works of these earlier writers do not offer pat, transhistorical answers to questions regarding later manifestations of black internationalism, but placing increased critical pressure upon these writers as ambassadors and forerunners will undoubtedly contribute to a remapping of the geopolitical and ethical terrain that became the site of later interanimations of racial, aesthetic, and international representation.

For their insightful questions and suggestions, I am grateful to participants in Michael Chaney's seminar at the 2007 Futures of American Studies Institute. I am also indebted to David Krasner, Heather Nathans, Lotta Löfgren, and Harry Stecopoulos for reading and offering important comments on drafts of this essay.

Notes

1. See Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* as well as Campbell, Baldwin, Mullen, Stephens, Nwankwo, and Edwards.

2. For an overview of American Studies' "transnational turn," see Fishkin.

3. For a discussion of black U. S. ministers and ambassadors, see Miller 7-55. For an overview of black U. S. consular officers during this era, see Justesen.

4. See Goldsby's "Keeping the 'Secret of Authorship' " and *A Spectacular Secret* 164-213.

5. A handful of names might be included in this group. George Washington Ellis and John Stephens Durham wrote novels, *The Leopard's Claw* and *Diane, Priestess of Haiti*, respectively. William Henry Hunt and Mifflin Wistar Gibbs wrote autobiographies treating their work as U. S. consuls. Alexander P. Camphor and Richard C. Bundy used their assignments as diplomats in Africa as occasions to collect folklore.

6. See especially *Crisis* issues during 1918.

7. See W. E. to D. F., 16 Nov. 1925, in Decimal File 1910-1929 [DF], 382.1154 Am 3/-, Record Group 59: General Records of the State Department [RG 59]. National Archives at College Park, MD.

8. For further commentary on colonial modernity, see Mignolo and Young 374-78. Generally, I take "colonial modernity" to encompass the cultural formations arising from the global interactions of peoples brought into contact by Euro-American colonialism, which of course had a temporal trajectory of centuries. Within this essay, however, I am specifically addressing colonial modernity's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interactions with a swath of discourses ranging from economic to scientific to political and aesthetic.

9. For more on modernist primitivism, see Clifford, Foster, and North 37-99.

10. In referring to "misrepresentation" and representational "distortion," this essay of course does not mean to imply the possibility of a direct or "true" imitative relationship between signs and things. Using this language, however, is important to understanding the cultural forms in question on their own terms.

11. For Downing's general biographical information, see Contee, Rodgers, and Peterson.

12. Downing to G. L. Rives, 3 Oct. 1888. *Despatches from United States Consuls in St. Paul de Loanda, 1854-93 (DUSC)*, Roll 5, vol. 4.

13. Downing to James D. Porter, 18 Nov. 1887. (*DUSC*, Roll 4, vol. 4.)

14. Downing to the Department of State, 29 Jan 1888, containing Downing's report to G. L. Rives, 12 Jan. 1888. (*DUSC*, Roll 5, vol. 4.)

15. I allude to Warren's essay "Frederick Douglass's *Life and Times*: Progressive Rhetoric and the Problem of Constituency."

16. Downing to George L. Rives, 30 Dec. 1887. (*DUSC*, Roll 4, vol. 4.)

17. Downing to James D. Porter, 14 Nov. 1887. (*DUSC*, Roll 4, vol. 4.)

18. Downing to His Excellency [Grover Cleveland], 18 Nov. 1888. *Grover Cleveland Papers (GCP)*, Series 2, reel 65. See also Downing to G. L. Rives, 18 Aug. 1888. (*GCP*, Series 3, reel 124.)

19. Downing to G. L. Rives, 31 Jan. 1888. (*DUSC*, Roll 5, vol. 4.)

20. This function of African American participation in international diplomacy is observed in Goldsby's explanation of James Weldon Johnson's diplomatic service as tied to a desire "to claim his national identity under the aegis of the state" ("Keeping" 245). A similar logic surfaces in Kaplan's observation of African Americans' work to "prove their national identity as [U. S.] imperial citizens by their participation in wars abroad" (*Anarchy* 163).

21. Though Downing's weekly paper is not known to exist in any archives, it was mentioned in his obituary ("Henry Downing"). In the press, it was variously referred to as either *The Message* or *The Messenger* (see "Was He Ejected" and "Something"). His involvement in the National Colored People's Protective Association (as Chairman of the Executive Committee) was alluded to in several letters of introduction provided in 1893 and 1894 by governors from the states of Ohio, Minnesota, Michigan, and Massachusetts (see "Testimonials" in DF 341.112 D75. RG 59.) The Protective Association "aimed to fight against southern outrages such as lynchings, peonage, and disfranchisement" (Reed 127). At the Columbian Exposition in 1893, the Association held a meeting at which Downing was appointed to the Executive Committee, and Ida B. Wells and Frances E. W. Harper were appointed to the Ladies' Auxiliary Board ("They Will").

22. For information on Downing's involvement with Dunbar and Coleridge-Taylor, see Downing, "Samuel Coleridge Taylor" 267; the London *Times* makes note of Downing's Pan-African Conference speech in "Pan-African Conference"; Downing wrote the lyrics for "Where the Paw-paw Grows," composed by Montague Ring (pseudonym of Amanda Aldridge, daughter of famed actor Ira Aldridge); Jeffery P. Green mentions that Downing was one of Nina's only associates in London (252).

23. See Downing's incompletely published story/novella "A Black and White Tangle."

24. Downing's leadership of the Players and Playwrights Association is mentioned in Downing to Reginald McKenna, 11 Apr. 1915 (DF 341.112 D75. RG 59).

25. *The African Times and Orient Review's* reviews of Downing's play *The Arabian Lovers* appear in the August and November-December 1913 editions. For reference to other praise for Downing's dramatic work, see "Race Playwright."

26. For Downing's account of his plays' scheduling at the Royal Court Theatre, see Downing to Reginald McKenna, 11 Apr. 1915 (DF 341.112 D75. RG 59). In corroboration of Downing's account of his plays' cancellation due to war, the *Times* ceased announcing performances at the Royal Court between June 10, 1914 and September 17, 1915 (see "Play" and "News"). A reference on December 8, 1914 finds the theatre operating as a workroom giving "employment to Chelsea girls who have lost their work through the war" ("Chelsea").

27. For a gloss of these genres, see Marsh-Lockett 7-8.

28. While copies of Downing's plays are not readily available, collections of these plays are had at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the University of Pennsylvania's Franklin Library, the Library of Congress, and the British Library.

29. Other plays by Downing include *The Arabian Lovers* (1913), which retells an *Arabian Nights* tale in a manner resonating with *The African Times and Orient Review's* pan-African Asianist stance. *Lord Eldred's Other Daughter* (1913) alludes to Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* and implies that a woman from Conakry may be of mixed African and European ancestry. *Incentives* (1914) deals with a British capitalist intent upon providing a war loan to an expansionist nation called "Nightmaria"; however, the capitalist's somewhat shady past as a gold prospector in the western U. S. comes back to haunt him. Downing also published a one-act play, *Placing Paul's Play* (1913), written in collaboration with his wife.

30. It is worth noting that before the play's publication in 1914, Downing declined to include Dennis's phrase as the title, instead referring to the manuscript as "The Statue and the Wasp."

31. Though Johnston had earlier worked to appropriate swaths of African land, he was by 1911 deemed sufficiently sympathetic to interracial unity that he was invited to be a member of the Universal Races Central Executive Committee ("Report" 29). The editors at the *African Times and Orient Review*, however, found ample evidence to suggest Johnston's prejudice ran deeper than he acknowledged ("Mrs. Besant").

32. Booker T. Washington had Johnston as a visitor at Tuskegee in 1908 (Johnston, "Negro"), and a few years later W. E. B. Du Bois would write to James Weldon Johnson regarding a visit with Johnston (Levy 179).

33. Commenting on some of Downing's literary representations, Ida Gibbs Hunt (wife of African American consul William Henry Hunt) remarked that Downing had failed to produce "a sympathetic portrayal of African character and customs." However, she also remarked that Downing "shows . . . that he does not always approve of the European method of dealing with the African" (444). Concerning Downing's economic representations of Africa, we may turn to *Coon's* dedication to May French-Sheldon, an early white female African explorer who endorsed both a European and a U. S. approach to Africa invested in "a particular interweaving of commercial interests with scientific altruism" and "racial uplift" that resonated "with the sorts of 'anti' or 'new' imperialist rhetoric" that rejected the colonialist project's traditional violence (Boisseau 13). Downing was a "stockholder of a considerable

portion of the stock" of French-Sheldon's failed Americo-Liberian Industrial Company, which had aims of growing cotton in Liberia in the first decade of the 1900s (see William Karlin to Secretary of State, 11 Nov. 1925, DF 382.1154 Am 3/- RG 59.). Downing's view of the role of Western capital in Africa was apparently fairly consistent with that of French-Sheldon, as he hoped foreign investments and African American colonization of Liberia "would greatly benefit Liberia, [and] also be very profitable to the United States from a commercial and financial point of view" (see Downing to the Department of State, 8 Sept. 1921 in DF 882.5511/8, RG 59, Microfilm M-0613, Roll 29). It is clear from Downing's writings, however, that his ambitions were not the extension of U. S. or European empires but the uplift of Africa in general and Liberia in particular.

34. See Sheean 203 and Wells 143.

35. Upon taking inspiration from Stein and modeling his writing after Cezanne's paintings, Hemingway wrote to Stein, "[Writing] used to be easy before I met you. Certainly was bad, Gosh, I'm awfully bad now but it's a different kind of bad" (qtd. in Knight 123-24).

36. Downing to William M. Calder, 21 June 1921 (DF, 482.112975/- RG 59). Also during 1917 and before leaving London, Downing saw the publication of *The American Cavalryman*, which is his only completely published novel. The back matter in *Coon* lists the apparently unpublished novels *A Black and White Tangle* (which was incompletely serialized in the *African Times*), *The Shuttlecock*, and *White Wench*. The two latter novels were likely merged to create *The American Cavalryman*.

37. Downing to William M. Calder, 21 June 1921 (DF, 482.112975/- RG 59).

38. Downing to the Secretary of State of the United States, 20 May 1915 (DF 341.112 D75. RG 59).

39. On Downing's club, see Downing to Reginald McKenna, 11 Apr. 1915 (DF 341.112 D75. RG 59).

40. See Ferris's "An African Novel" (1920) (Martin 26-27) and "Books on Liberia" (1922) (Martin 151-52). For Downing's obituary, see "Henry Downing" and "H. F. Downing." For Downing's publications in the *Messenger* see "Samuel Coleridge Taylor" and his short story "Poopie." His article "Protest Over O'Neill's Play Recalls Day of Ira Aldridge" (republished in the *Chicago Defender*) acknowledges the "Courtesy of New York World."

41. For more on NEAT, see Martin.

42. Alain Locke's *The New Negro* (1925) lists Downing's final drama in its compilation of black plays, "Negro Drama: Select List of Plays of Negro Life." This list tends to provide production details when available, but no details are provided for Downing's play (432).

43. For instance, decades after his relatively brief diplomatic work in Luanda, Downing continued using titles such as "Former Consul," "Ex-Consul," and "Late Consul" (see his "Protest" and the frontispiece of his pamphlet *Liberia and Her People*). Historian Allison Blakely has noted that in "the Negro press a consul would be referred to with the title 'Honorable' for the rest of his life, even if he served only for a year in some obscure foreign post" (14).

44. See also Campbell.

"The Amateur Players' Association." *Times* 12 May 1908: 17.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. Eds. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. 1962. London: Oxford UP, 1976.

Baldwin, Kate A. *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1963*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.

Blakely, Allison. "Black U. S. Consuls and Diplomats and Black Leadership, 1880-1920." *Umoja: A Scholarly Journal of Black Studies* 1.1. (Spring 1977): 1-16.

Boisseau, Tracey Jean. *White Queen: May French-Sheldon and the Imperial Origins of American Feminist Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2004.

"Books by Prominent Negroes." Advertisement. *Crisis* July 1917: 149.

Bundy, Richard C. "Folk-Tales from Liberia (In Abstract)." *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 32 (July/September 1919): 406-27.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 1990. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Brown, William Wells. *The Escape; Or, A Leap for Freedom*. 1858. Ed. John Ernest. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2001.

Campbell, James. *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett and Others on the Left Bank*. New York: Scribner, 1995.

Camphor, Alexander P. *Missionary Story Sketches; Folk-Lore from Africa*. 1909. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1971.

"Chelsea Workroom." *Times* 8 Dec. 1914: 1.

Clifford, James. "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern." *Art in America* 73.4 (April 1985): 164-77, 215.

Works
Cited

- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 1902. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1990.
- Contee, Clarence G. "Downing, Henry F." *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*. Eds. Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston. New York: Norton, 1982. 188-89.
- Despatches from United States Consuls in St. Paul de Loanda, 1854-93. Washington, DC: National Archives, 1962.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The End of Colonialism? The Colonial Modern in the Making of Global Modernity." *boundary 2* 32.1 (2005): 1-31. 25 Sept. 2007 <<http://boundary2.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/32/1/1.pdf>>.
- Downing, Henry Francis. *The American Cavalryman: A Liberian Romance*. New York: Neale, 1917.
- . *The Arabian Lovers; Or, The Sacred Jar*. London: Griffiths, 1913.
- . "A Black and White Tangle." *African Times and Orient Review* July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.-Dec. 1913: 23-29, 67-74, 116-21, 161-65, 259-61.
- . *Human Nature; Or, The Traduced Wife, an English Domestic Drama in Four Acts*. London: Griffiths, 1913.
- . *Incentives: A Drama in Four Acts*. London: [n.p.], 1914.
- . *Liberia and Her People*. Intro. by Heywood Broun. [New York]: n.p., 1925.
- . *Lord Eldred's Other Daughter: An Original Comedy in Four Acts*. London: Griffiths, 1913.
- . *A New Coon in Town: A Farical Comedy Made in England*. [London]: n.p., 1914.
- , and Mrs. [Margarita] Downing. *Placing Paul's Play: A Miniature Comedy*. London: Griffiths, 1913.
- . "Poopie." *Messenger* May 1926: 133-36, 154-55.
- . "Protest Over O'Neill's Play Recalls Day of Ira Aldridge." *Chicago Defender* 26 Apr. 1924: 8.
- . "Samuel Coleridge Taylor." *Messenger* July, Sept., and Oct. 1926 and Jan. 1927: 200, 266-67, 298, 319, 8-9.
- . *The Shuttlecock; Or, Israel in Russia, An Original Drama in Four Acts*. London: Griffiths, 1913.
- . *Voodoo: A Drama in Four Acts*. London: Griffiths, 1914.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Folk, Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race*. New York: Holt, 1939.
- . "'Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre': The Story of a Little Theatre Movement." *Crisis* July 1926: 134-36.
- Durham, John Stephens. *Diane, Priestess of Haiti*. *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 69 (April 1902): 387-466.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003.
- Ellis, George Washington. *The Leopard's Claw*. New York: International Authors' Association, 1917.
- . "The Psychology of American Race Prejudice." *The Journal of Race Development* 5 (1915): 297-315.
- Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies— Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004." *American Quarterly* 57.1 (2005): 17-57. 28 Mar. 2007 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_quarterly/v057/57.1fishkin.html>.
- "Foreward" [sic]. *The African Times and Orient Review* July 1912: iii-iv.
- Foster, Hal. "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art." *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 45-70.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies." *Modernism/modernity* 13 (2006): 425-43. 28 Apr. 2007 <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/v013/13.3friedman.html>>.
- Gibbs, Mifflin Wistar. *Shadow & Light: An Autobiography*. 1902. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1995.
- Goldsby, Jacqueline. "Keeping the 'Secret of Authorship': A Critical Look at the 1912 Publication of James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*." *Print Culture in a Diverse America*. Eds. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 1998. 244-71.
- . *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "The Intellectuals." *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Eds. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International, 1971. 5-23.
- Green, Jeffery P. *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain, 1901-1914*. London: Cass, 1998.
- Grover Cleveland Papers*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1958.
- "H. F. Downing, Diplomat and Author, Dies." *Chicago Defender* 3 Mar. 1928: 1.
- Harrison, Hubert. *A Hubert Harrison Reader*. Ed., Jeffrey B. Perry. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2001.
- "Henry Downing." *New York Times* 21 Feb. 1928: 25.
- Hughes, Langston. *Simple's Uncle Sam*. New York: Hill, 1965.
- Hunt, Ida Gibbs. Rev. of *The American Cavalryman*. By Henry Francis Downing. *Journal of Negro History* 3.4 (October 1918): 444-45.
- Hunt, William Henry. "From Cabin to Consulate: The Autobiography of William H. Hunt." Ed. Harold T. Pinkett. Unpublished manuscript.

- Johnston, Harry. "The Negro in America." *Times* 15 Jan. 1909: 6.
- Justesen, Benjamin R. "African-American Consuls Abroad, 1897-1909." *Foreign Service Journal* Sept. 2004: 72-76.
- Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.
- . "Domesticating Foreign Policy." *Diplomatic History* 18.1 (Winter 1994): 97-105.
- . "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture." *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993. 3-21.
- Knight, Christopher J. *The Patient Particulars: American Modernism and the Technique of Originality*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1995.
- Lemke, Sieglinde. *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Levy, Eugene. *James Weldon Johnson: Black Leader, Black Voice*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1973.
- Locke, Alain, ed. *The New Negro*. 1925. Ed. Arnold Rampersad. New York: Simon, 1992.
- MacPhee, A. Marshall. *Kenya*. New York: Praeger, 1968.
- Marsh-Lockett, Carol P. "Other Scribbling Women: African American Female Dramatists." *Black Women Playwrights: Visions on the American Stage*. Ed. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett. New York: Garland, 1999. 3-12.
- Martin, Heather. "National Ethiopian Art Theater." *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. Vol. 2. Eds. Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman. New York: Routledge, 2004. 868.
- Martin, Tony, ed. *African Fundamentalism: A Literary and Cultural Anthology of Garvey's Harlem Renaissance*. Dover, MA: Majority, 1990.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *The German Ideology: Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three and Supplementary Texts*. Ed. C. J. Arthur. New York: International, 2001.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101.1 (Winter 2002): 57-96.
- Miles, Robert, and Malcolm Brown. *Racism*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Miller, Jake C. *The Black Presence in Foreign Affairs*. Washington, D. C.: UP of America, 1978.
- "Mrs. Besant, Sir Harry Johnston and Sir Charles Bruce." *African Times and Orient Review* Sept. 1912: 79-80.
- Mullen, Bill V. *Afro-Orientalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004.
- "News in Brief." *Times* 17 Sept. 1915: 11.
- North, Michael. *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature*. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.
- Nwankwo, Ifeoma Kiddoe. *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005.
- "Pan-African Conference." *Times* 26 July 1900: 11.
- Peterson, Bernard L., Jr. "Downing, Henry F." *Early Black American Playwrights and Dramatic Writers: A Biographical Directory and Catalog of Plays, Films, and Broadcasting Scripts*. New York: Greenwood, 1990. 62-64.
- Pound, Ezra. "The New Sculpture." *Egoist* 16 Feb. 1914: 67-68.
- "A Play on a Will." *Times* 10 June 1914: 5.
- "Race Playwright." *Chicago Defender* 17 July 1920: 6.
- Reed, Christopher Robert. "All the World Is Here!" *The Black Presence at White City*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000.
- "Report of the First Universal Races Congress." *African Times and Orient Review* July 1912: 27-30.
- Rev. of *The Arabian Lovers or The Sacred Jar*. By Henry Francis Downing. *African Times and Orient Review* August 1913: 83.
- Rev. of *The Arabian Lovers; Or The Sacred Jar*. By Henry Francis Downing. *African Times and Orient Review* Nov.-Dec. 1913: 236-37.
- Rodgers, Lawrence R. "Downing, Henry F." *The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature*. Eds. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. 116.
- Schuyler, George S. *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler*. New Rochelle, NY: Arlington, 1966.
- "Shaftesbury Theatre." *Times* 18 May 1903: 12.
- Shaw, George Bernard. *Not Bloody Likely! And Other Quotations from Bernard Shaw*. Ed. Bernard F. Dukore. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
- Sheean, Vincent. *Personal History*. 1935. New York: Modern Library, 1940.

- Singh, Amritjit. Afterword. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1994. 223-45.
- "Something for Colored Men to Read." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 30 Sept. 1892: 9.
- Stephens, Michelle Ann. *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005.
- Stewart, Susan. *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.
- "They Will Visit the Fair." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 29 June 1893: 9.
- "The Unacted Authors' Association." *Times* 10 Mar. 1909: 13.
- "Unacted Plays." *African Times and Orient Review* July 1913: 43.
- Warren, Kenneth W. "Frederick Douglass's *Life and Times*: Progressive Rhetoric and the Problem of Constituency." *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990. 253-70.
- "Was He Ejected for His Color?" *New York Times* 9 July 1892: 7.
- Wells, H. G. *The Soul of a Bishop*. New York: Macmillan, 1917.
- Wilson, Harriet E. *Our Nig; or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. 1859. New York: Vintage, 1983.
- Work, Monroe N., ed. *Negro Year Book: An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1925-1926*. Nashville, TN: A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1926.
- Wright, Richard. "Forerunner and Ambassador." Rev. of *The Big Sea: An Autobiography*, by Langston Hughes. *New Republic* 28 Oct. 1940: 600-01.
- Young, Robert J. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001.

Copyright of African American Review is the property of African American Review and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.