Imperfect Solidarities

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In 1919, as racist violence raged with particular ferocity across the United States, W. E. B. Du Bois became concerned that the antiracist periodical he edited, *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, might be harming the children he most wished to help. *The Crisis* itself was in excellent condition. The monthly publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), it had grown in both length and influence since its founding in 1910, expanding from just twenty pages to fifty pages by April 1912 and reaching its peak circulation of over a hundred thousand in 1919. Du Bois, too, was experiencing considerable success: already acclaimed for book-length works like the sociological study *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) and the polyphonic masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk* (hereafter *Souls*, 1903), he was beginning to gain recognition for his editorial work as well. Leading *The Crisis* from its inception until 1934, Du Bois pioneered an editorial strategy that interwove stories of Black achievement with those of racist injustice, using a variety of genres: reportage as well as fiction and poetry; photography and illustrations; and even children’s literature. In keeping with his concern for the well-being of the youngest African Americans, Du Bois published two specifically youth-oriented issues of *The Crisis* each year. Every August, the “Education Number” would feature the beaming portraits of recent graduates; every October,
the “Children’s Number” would include writing for children alongside photographs of children.

Yet in the October 1919 issue of *The Crisis*, Du Bois declared that “in the problem of our children we black folk are sorely puzzled.”¹ In a column titled “The True Brownies,” he began by mentioning the overwhelming popularity of the “Children’s Number,” which—despite its thematic focus—invariably included the news of “some horror,” usually a lynching. As he explained: “This was inevitable in our role as newspaper—but what effect must it have on our children? To educate them in human hatred is more disastrous to them than to the hated; to seek to raise them in ignorance of their racial identity and peculiar situation is inadvisable—impossible.”² In response to this problem, Du Bois laid out a mission for a new magazine, which he called the *Brownies’ Book*. This new publication, he declared, would “be a thing of Joy and Beauty, dealing in Happiness, Laughter and Emulation” and would “teach Universal Love and Brotherhood for all little folk—black and brown and yellow and white.”³ Two months later, in January 1921, the first issue of the *Brownies’ Book* appeared, selling for $0.15 an issue or $1.50 for a year’s subscription: the same pricing as that for *The Crisis*.

But who were the brownies—or, as his title put it, “the true brownies”? In the twenty-four issues published over the next two years, the *Brownies’ Book* would refer to its imagined readers as “our children” or “the children of the sun,” yet without exception the central term—“brownies”—remained undefined. Unlike *The Crisis*, which explicitly announced in its subtitle that it was “A Record of the Darker Races,” the *Brownies’ Book* kept its community of readers opaque: the first issue explained simply that it was “for all children, but especially Ours.”

As several Du Bois scholars have documented, Du Bois’s internationalism was extensively manifest in his personal travels and correspondence, as well as his organizational work with the Pan-African Congresses and his attendance at the Universal Races Congress.⁴ Unlike Gandhi, who began his activism within an imperial frame and then transposed it to a nationalist agenda, or Tagore, who articulated a British Indian subjectivity only to reject both imperialism and nationalism in favor of an internationalist universalism, Du Bois consistently calibrated his national political agenda within an internationalist framework, shifting his emphasis as occasion demanded. Moreover, while Du Bois was prosperous compared to most of his African American contemporaries, he did not command the substantial resources common among his White compatriots, or even among the Indian elite. Conse-
sequently, his travels were initially far less extensive than those of the better-resourced lives discussed in the preceding chapters. As early as the 1920s, for instance, Du Bois had been approached for a lecture tour in East Africa and South Asia, but he could not afford to do it at the compensation offered. As a consequence of these limitations, the print of print internationalism assumes particular importance in assessing Du Bois’s work. As he repeatedly insists, whether in reportage or in fiction, one need not travel to work on the entire world. He argued that print can make such transformations possible, and in accordance with what I call print internationalism Du Bois sent his publications all over the world. The Brownies’ Book, as we will see, had subscribers in western and southern Africa, and The Crisis, in its far longer existence, had subscribers and readers all over the world, even appearing on foreign newsstands.

In keeping with the connective powers of print internationalism, even Du Bois’s most distant readers felt that they too could contribute to his creative works. Thus, for instance, “an old reader of The Crisis and your other literary works” writes from “10,000 miles distant from you and after an absence of more than a quarter of a century from America,” suggesting from the Philippines that Du Bois write a libretto. Another reader identifies himself as an Indian from the modest city of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: he wonders if he too might publish something in The Crisis “on the improvement of Coloured people and other matters pertaining to [their] welfare.” Within India, Du Bois’s texts circulated through the global Anglophone to influence even those who worked primarily in other languages. Prominent Hindi litterateurs like Ramrakh Singh Sahgal (1896–1952) and Banarsidas Chaturvedi (1892–1985), for instance, were readers and admirers of Du Bois’s work, and they even wished to publish Du Bois’s writing in their Indian publications. Even a seemingly U.S.-centered text like Souls circulated well beyond North American shores: Gandhi’s Sabarmati Ashram in western India, for instance, possessed a copy of Souls, and it was eagerly read and admired by prominent Indian leaders.

In sending his writings out across the world, Du Bois won influence and acclaim, but he also attracted criticism. Print internationalism, after all, is not simply an extended vision for a print nationalist agenda, but one that disrupts nationalism through its insistence on larger connections. Thus, for instance, one subscriber was delighted to read The Crisis in his New York City home but horrified when he encountered it abroad. Writing to “discontinue my subscription,” Du Bois’s compatriot explained:
When I was in London last summer I was much shocked to see sandwich men walking along the Strand carrying large posters referring to the lynchings in the United States. . . . There can be no question that this lynching situation is a serious blemish on civilization in the United States, but no matter how seriously anyone is affected, this is no excuse for spreading it broadcast in other countries.\textsuperscript{11}

In objecting to Du Bois’s print internationalism, this disgruntled subscriber objected to its motivating claim: Du Bois undertook print internationalism, after all, because he believed that racism was never simply a national concern.

Du Bois famously posited the color line as a global problem, yet articulating this globality presented daunting rhetorical challenges. In this chapter I examine the \textit{Brownies’ Book} (1920–21); \textit{The Crisis} under Du Bois’s editorship (1910–34); and Du Bois’s novel \textit{Dark Princess: a Romance} (1928), and I demonstrate how, in each instance, print internationalism is articulated both through explicit content and strategic absences. By including many details about non-U.S. contexts but rarely explaining them in a predictable fashion, Du Bois compelled his readers to weave this unity across “the darker races of the world” as they read. The readers of these Du Bois works thus encounter the unity of a printed text that nonetheless lacks clearly articulated connections.

In leading us through these works, I will focus on the strange neologism mentioned earlier: the brownie. At first sight, “brownies” seems like a racial-chromatic deployment: it describes, we might assume, those with brown skin. This apparent simplicity, however, is belied by the modifier “true” in Du Bois’s first column on the topic. He implies a distinction between his “true” brownies and some other brownies, who are not explained in this column but can be easily found in the archival record. These brownies first appear in the early sixteenth century, in the annals of British folklore: according to the \textit{Oxford English Dictionary}, a brownie is “a benevolent spirit or goblin, of shaggy appearance, supposed to haunt old houses, esp. farmhouses, in Scotland, and sometimes to perform useful household work while the family were asleep.” This folkloric creature entered British print culture in the mid-nineteenth century, where it was rapidly put to political use. The Scottish author James Hogg used the brownie to inscribe local culture in his 1818 \textit{The Brownie of Hoggisbeck}, while the English author Juliana Horatia Ewing used her 1865 story “The Brownies” to emphasize the gendered drudg-
ery of domestic work. At the turn of the twentieth century, brownies became pervasive in North American children’s culture as well, through the phenomenally popular works of the Quebecois author Palmer Cox. From the publication of his first brownie story in 1883 to his death in 1924, Cox’s masculine and mobile brownies saturated the worlds of both children’s print culture and everyday consumer goods, advertising everything from Kodak cameras to Ivory soap.\(^{12}\) They became North America’s first mass market brand, comparable only to Disney’s later successes in their saturation of the children’s market in their time. Cox published several books of brownie stories, and each book included a prefatory note: “BROWNIES, like fairies and goblins, are imaginary little sprites, who are supposed to delight in harmless pranks and helpful deeds. They work and sport while weary households sleep, and never allow themselves to be seen by mortal eyes.”\(^{13}\) Cox himself believed that the nomenclature “brownies” was “because of their brown hair and weather-beaten countenances”: he always depicted them as small, squat, and White.\(^{14}\) His brownies expanded into a collection of distinctive characters, differentiated along lines of costume, profession, and nationality: included among their ranks were a dandy, a policeman, a soldier, a sailor, a cowboy, and a clown. Their entourage eventually came to include ten different named nationalities, but their adventures always promoted U.S. imperialism. For instance, in the 1904 bestseller *The Brownies in the Philippines*, Cox’s brownies re-created the U.S. military’s conquest of the Philippine people through their victories over tigers and flying fish. Whereas the brownies of British folklore were solitary, always confined to the home or the field, Cox’s brownies were gregarious and adventurous. They were, in twenty-first-century terms, “early adopters”—his brownies explored the bicycle, the airplane, and the automobile soon after each was invented.\(^{15}\)

Humans and brownies are never simultaneously present in Cox’s world, and the brownies thus substitute a familiar world at a child-friendly scale. Yet in figuring this seemingly friendly world, Cox’s brownies reproduced the exclusions of U.S. racism. In *The Brownies around the World* (1894), for instance, a group of proudly American brownies visited “the native land of each member,” which ranged across Europe, the Middle East, East Asia, and “the Polar regions.”\(^{16}\) Canada was included, but not Mexico; Egypt was included, but no other part of Africa. The Americanness celebrated by Cox’s brownies, and by millions of U.S. children and their families, was thus incapable of accommodating the groups we now know as Black and Latino (or, to use the
gender-inclusive neologism, Latinx): groups that, then as now, formed a significant portion of the U.S. population. Racist exclusion thus formed a constitutive exception in North America’s first mass market children’s brand. On reading Cox’s brownie stories, the children with whom Du Bois was most concerned would have found themselves entirely and emphatically absent.

While Cox’s brownies championed U.S. imperial expansion, another group of Brownies propagated the values of the British Empire through scouting groups for girls. The global scouting movement began with the 1908 publication of the British army officer Robert Baden-Powell’s *Scouting for Boys*. Drawing on his military experience in South Africa, Baden-Powell transformed a hierarchical vision of imperial camaraderie into a horizontal game of imperial brotherhood. His book appropriated imperialism’s subjugated cultures—for instance, by teaching purportedly Native American tracking skills and supposedly Zulu exercises. Children in scouting groups learned these skills to help them serve the British Empire, and in doing so they acquired both the weapons of imperial conquest and its spoils. To distinguish girls’ scouting groups from those of the boys, the girl scouts came to be called Brownies.

Before 1920, then, “brownies” existed in two culturally dominant sources: North American popular culture and British folklore revivals, and in both cases those brownies explicitly supported White supremacy and Anglo-American imperialism. In discussing “the true brownies” in 1919 and naming the “children of the sun” as “brownies,” Du Bois did much more than recast the chromatic condition of racially subordinated children in magical terms: he claimed a term familiar from the dominant culture of Anglo-American childhood. A variety of names, both respectful and offensive, have long been used for persons of African descent in the United States, yet the use of “brownie” for U.S. children of African descent arguably offered more imaginative possibilities than any other name could. What distinguishes Du Bois’s usage of brownie is its creativity: its ability to use a false cognate (brown skin) to enable a resonant match (the brownies of popular culture), thereby spawning a new category of persons—“the children of the sun”—for a better and less racist world yet to come. Du Bois foregrounded his challenge—in the figure of the raced child—to both U.S. and British imperialism.

As this history indicates, the *Brownies’ Book* signals a decisive restructuing of the propaganda of U.S. childhood, shifting the term “brownie” from nationalist imperialism to antiracist internationalism. Whereas Cox’s brownies were exclusively male and the scouting Brownies exclusively female, the *Brownies’ Book* never addressed fe-
male and male children separately. Remarkably for its historical moment, and perhaps even for ours, the Brownies’ Book never spelled out gender-specific behavioral norms for its young readers, emphatically rebutting the constitutive gendering of the brownies of imperialism. In addition, whereas both Baden-Powell’s and Cox’s texts invoked foreign knowledge to affirm readers’ cosmopolitan expertise, the Brownies’ Book printed foreign material in a manner that encouraged further inquiry, often highlighting how much was left to be learned. The Brownies Book, finally, extensively published the work of amateur writers, 98 percent of whom were non-White and the majority of whom were women. The brownies of White publications were written about; the brownies of the Brownies’ Book participated in their inscription, with many of its child readers submitting their writing for publication. Intermixed with puzzles, photographs, and illustrations, each issue of the Brownies’ Book is typical of the editorial and curatorial practices of Du Bois and his collaborators at The Crisis, though it reflects most clearly the vision of one particular collaborator, the African American author Jessie Redmon Fauset, who served as both its managing editor and its main writer, with Du Bois in a supporting role.

The Brownies’ Book under Fauset’s leadership further developed the print internationalism already evident in The Crisis, rendering it child-friendly while retaining an ambitious remit. The result is a periodical attuned, not only to the affective variations of accomplishment and suffering that characterized The Crisis, but also to vast variations in literacy, maturity, and experience among its readers and writers. In addressing Fauset’s print internationalism in the Brownies’ Book, I build on the growing body of scholarship that has highlighted her commitment to extranational allegiances, whether in The Crisis or in her fiction. Much as Du Bois in Dark Princess would champion the liberatory powers of romance and fantasy, arguing that these could enliven minds otherwise constrained by racist oppression, so too Fauset would embrace the freedoms of romantic and fantastical writing, whether in her literary reviews, her nonfiction reportage, her novels, or her editorial work, as part of her print internationalism. Much as Fauset’s fiction situated these worldwide solidarities within the solidity of the domestic sphere, so too did the print internationalism of the Brownies’ Book bring the world home to its young readers and their families.

An investment in writing for and about children permeates Du Bois’s work; that insistence has proven deeply unsatisfying to most of his progressive critics, whether for its escapism or its normative heterosexual conservatism. Some commentators have read Du Bois’s recourse to the
child as the failure of a more substantial political proposal; others have found in that child figure a normative, regulatory script for African American sexual practice. In Du Bois’s texts, as these critics demonstrate, the child functions as a particularly unsatisfying narrative resolution, and this insufficiency reflects, I argue, what Du Bois and Fauset saw as the constitutive conundrum of caring for colored children: the desire to preserve their innocence while preparing them for a racist and often hostile world. The children figured in such publications, consequently, are at once innocent and mature: they are both the wide-eyed and playful kids in the photographs and drawings in the very same issues, and the sophisticated political agents of the text.

The children who preoccupied Du Bois, crucially, are both actually existing, as in the enthusiastic readers of the Brownies’ Book and the “Children’s Numbers” of The Crisis, as well as imagined, as in the infant-savior born at the very end of Du Bois’s novel Dark Princess. By foregrounding the child, both as a political figure and as an imagined reader, these texts challenged the racist infantilization of Black culture in general, by asserting the developmental significance of a Black person’s life cycle. In material terms, moreover, Black people had long been excluded from literacy in the United States, which meant that the adults in most early twentieth-century Black families were not better readers than their children, who were often granted educational opportunities that had been denied to their elders. Consequently, the Black child envisioned by Du Bois was not necessarily opposed to the masterful adult, as was usually the case with literature aimed at White children.

The normative child of U.S. culture is defined, as Kathryn Bond Stockton has argued, as “a creature of gradual growth and managed delay,” demarcated sharply from adults by its constitutive innocence. In contrast, the child figured as a brownie is differentiated from adults, and from the rest of the ordinary world, by its magical indeterminacy. Consequently, much as the Brownies’ Book produced emotionally and politically savvy Black children from existing child readers, the production of a transformative child within the narrative of Dark Princess served a specific role for adults. Despite that novel’s explicit invocation of the genre of romance and the fairy tale, the novel was emphatically adults-only, not only because of its length and complexity but also because of then-scandalous passages depicting extramarital sex. Whereas the topics of racism and inequality render the child’s reading of the Brownies’ Book more serious, and less frivolous, than most children’s literature, the childish world of fantasy saturating Dark Princess restores imagi-
native function to the adult’s reading experience. The child in Du Bois’s writings is best read both textually and paratextually, as the brownie that Du Bois wished to produce: at once serious, thoughtful, and internationally informed as well as imaginative, playful, and astonishingly creative. This is not the child without history: rather, this is the child of history.

By foregrounding children, and then rendering them mysterious brownies, Du Bois emphasizes the acquisition of multiple literacies: linguistic, cultural, and political. In highlighting both the importance of individual maturation and its unpredictable correlation to one’s biological age, Du Bois is able to advance a powerful moral: it is one’s political maturity, and not simply chronological advancement, through time that matters. When we consider reading as a skill that changes over one’s lifetime, we can envisage reading as a process of study rather than a practice of mastery. Consequently, when brownies are central, the imaginative possibilities of the text are rendered as important as its informative properties, a key emphasis in Du Bois’s print internationalism. This brownie-centered print internationalism thus presents ignorance as opportunity, and literacy as transformation, and it transmutes our limited knowledge of other regions into yet another precious chance for education.

The strategies of Du Bois’s print internationalism were first laid out in the pages of The Crisis. In addition to using the strategic pairing of image and text for sophisticated political effects, Du Bois also manipulated the layout and format of words themselves to convey his radical goals. In an editorial from 1915 titled “That Capital ‘N,’” for instance, Du Bois reported on an exchange in the U.S. children’s magazine the Youth’s Companion, which refused to capitalize the word “Negro” on the grounds that they would not capitalize “white men or red men when referring to Anglo-Saxons or Indians.” To rebut this argument, Du Bois invoked what he terms “the smiling gods of logic.” Instead of providing an ideological or grammatical refutation, Du Bois published a minimalist diagram:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{black} & \text{white} & \text{red} \\
\text{negro} & \text{Anglo-Saxon} & \text{Indian}
\end{array}
\]

In simply looking at this pattern of words, and perhaps even without full reading comprehension, anyone might immediately recognize the glaring inconsistency in the pattern. As this example suggests, on Du Bois’s pages, formal details frequently produced substantive arguments.
Du Bois’s production of these carefully staged textual encounters make it particularly difficult to evaluate his internationalist sentiments on the basis of selective quotation. Whether through the pairing of incongruous visuals and texts, or through the sequencing of different kinds of writing, the collage and montage effects of Du Bois’s editing, as Anne Carroll argues, produced “composite texts” that required active, and often uncomfortable, readerly engagement. This formal sophistication was, in part, born of necessity: by using these methods of presentation and narration, *The Crisis* relayed a strong antiracist critique without the explicit statements that would have attracted state persecution. His texts operate as wholes, not as parts: what is said is only as important as what has been implied through the relations, usually unexplained, among the various components of the text as a whole. This interpretive gap, I suggest, introduces an effect into a single-language text akin to that of the untranslated word. It provides a space for projection, fantasy, and imagination, in a text that might otherwise be amenable to closure.

The importance of these gaps, moreover, means that the role of the neologism is less prominent here than in previous chapters. Whereas satyagraha and gitanjali served Gandhi and Tagore as explicit guiding practices, the brownie of Du Bois surfaces as prominently in what is unsaid as what is said. Consequently, in illuminating the role of the brownie in enabling Du Bois’s print internationalism, this chapter will attend to an aspect of his construction of solidarity across what we call the Global South through the reliance on a seemingly unrelated rubric: that of caste. Du Bois’s invocation of caste converts race into class by rendering class inequality inheritable. In an age when racial difference was often seen as biologically determinate, Du Bois used the brownie to imagine a child who would inherit darker skin but not the disadvantages that had accrued to its darker-skinned parents: that is, it would inherit its parents’ color, but not their caste. The differentiation, both national and conceptual, between these two descent-based forms of discrimination becomes crucial for Du Bois’s politics. He is not against class per se, but he objects to the inheritance of class privilege along strictly racial lines.

**CONSUMMATING THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

In a long article titled “Gandhi and India,” published in the March 1922 issue of *The Crisis*, Du Bois spent several pages explaining Indian pol-
itics, and Gandhi in particular, to his readers. He also explained what he had omitted:

India was the contemporary of great Egypt, ancient Assyria and Persia, but unlike her contemporaries of antiquity she lives. They are dead. Through a continuous period running back to most archaic times, she has come with her literature, her religions, her customs—in short—with all that makes her justly proud today. . . . We cannot consider here the interesting facts of her kingdoms and empires, her wars and warriors, of which the Mahabharata so gloriously sings; nor of the coming of Islam and the great empires of the Moguls. It is certainly not possible to write here of Indian society—of caste; of poverty widespread and dazzling wealth; of the depth of illiteracy which grips the country octopus-like and a culture and education as noted for their literary and scholarly achievements as for their far reach back into the haze of unhistorical days; of marriage, home, and family.²⁹

India lives on, while her “contemporaries of antiquity” are “dead,” and in that strange phrase, which unites contemporaneity with antiquity, is signaled the centrality of India for Du Bois’s worldwide vision: India signals both what once was and what could be. Du Bois as journalist is here the voice of the present: writing in the lockstep of newspaper time, he finds that these “interesting facts” cannot be narrated. Four years later, when he began writing Dark Princess in 1926, Du Bois would reach back “into the haze of unhistorical days,” pushing the explicit politics to the background.³⁰

Dark Princess works with the material of Indian anticolonial nationalism to invigorate the creative energies of what is finally a U.S.-focused antiracist effort. The protagonist is Matthew Townes, a talented African American man who, following a few hundred pages of disillusionment with both the liberal and the radical strains of Black American activism, partners, both romantically and politically, with the title’s “dark princess”: Princess Kautilya of Bwodpur, India. He participates, through her acquaintance, in a Berlin Conference of the Darker Peoples of the World, and they ultimately dismiss both Indian anticolonialism and U.S. democracy in favor of an intimately coordinated project of worldwide liberation. At the end of the novel’s passionate plot, these problems are resolved through the birth of Matthew and Kautilya’s messianic, mixed-race, Brahminically blessed baby.
Du Bois deployed print internationalism to forge connections across the Global South, even in situations of disagreement, incomprehension, and divergence. Whereas events like the 1911 United Races Congress could bring diverse peoples together temporarily in a single location, only the printed text could produce a portable solidarity, one whose materiality would keep it from changing dramatically in differently racialized places. In *Dark Princess*, internationalism comes into the United States through the presence of Kautilya; nonetheless, she explains that one need not travel to change the world:

“The black belt of the Congo, the Nile, and the Ganges reaches up by way of Guiana, Haiti, and Jamaica, like a red arrow up into the heart of white America. Thus I see a mighty synthesis: you can work in Africa and Asia right here in America if you work in the Black Belt.”

Detouring through three countries marked by both African slavery and Indian indenture, the “black belt” transforms, via simile, into a weapon directed against “white America.” The “black belt” of Du Bois’s thought usually references the high density of Black people in a geographical region. In Kautilya’s words, however, the belt commences as riverine and unspecified, appearing as metaphor through its lack of capitalization. At once “black belt” and “red arrow,” both river system and land mass, Du Bois’s internationalism maps multiple territories onto one another. These unpredictable correspondences between locations ultimately enable multiple, and simultaneous, political agendas. This geographical vision for antiracist activism is, as I demonstrate in this chapter, essentially identical to our contemporary concept of the Global South.

The term “Global South” originated in the late 1960s, when the axis of global conflict was rearticulated in latitude rather than longitude. No longer were developmental organizations most concerned with the conflict between East and West; instead, they proclaimed that the most significant tension was a “north-south gap” in economic development. This spawned, at first, a quite literal concern with geographical divergence—an influential 1980 report, titled *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, drew a line at 30 degrees north of the equator, with a slight detour to exclude Australia. In time, this cartography generated two metaphorical regions, “the North”—which was prosperous and industrialized—and “the South”—which was not. This geographical metaphor became vastly more popular after 1991, with the dissolution
of the Soviet Union and the concomitant decline of the “Three Worlds Theory.” The category of the “Third World,” long used to designate poorer and previously colonized countries, seemed no longer relevant when the “Second World,” that of socialism, seemed to have collapsed—and one could hardly call them “developing countries” when it was evident that many of these poor regions were not “developing” at all.

The term “Global South” flourished in that post–Cold War context, quickly gaining a following among those who wished to be less “Western-centric, economistic,” and nation-centric in their intellectual and political work. The addition of a modifier to form the phrase “Global South” served to distinguish it from nationally specific usages of “the South” and to emphasize its metaphorical remit. Thus, for instance, by the twenty-first century, medical scholars could use the elasticity of the Global South to argue that the city of Detroit should be included, despite being in the United States—the global North nation par excellence.

Du Bois’s representations of Indian elites in *Dark Princess* sought precisely to form this metaphorical geography. His novel emerged within the shifting landscape of immigration and naturalization law in the early twentieth-century United States, which often singled out those of Asian descent for exclusionary treatment. U.S. citizenship was officially extended to those of African ancestry in the late nineteenth century, yet that period also saw the introduction of anti-Asian restrictions that would not abate for almost a hundred years. Whereas many restrictions focused on nonracial categories—banning polygamists and those with contagious diseases in 1891, and anarchists, beggars, and pimps in 1903—restrictions against Asian immigration historically constituted the only U.S. immigration prohibition on a racial or ethnic basis.

Du Bois thus wrote about an Asian character in the United States at a time when U.S. citizens could be Black or White but could almost never be Asian. As a consequence, I argue, *Dark Princess* can be read as a troubling of U.S. race politics because of, not in spite of, the titular character’s elite Indian origins. Existing scholarship on *Dark Princess* has frequently resorted to one of two options: either Kautilya is simply an evasion of U.S. race categories, in which case her Indianness is insignificant, or Kautilya is merely a referent for India, in which case the novel’s U.S.-centrism seems problematic. Du Bois’s contemporaries were so struck by the figure of Kautilya that they searched for her among his acquaintances: Herbert Aptheker, for instance, conjectured that there was such a woman at Fisk University, while Mary White Ovington claimed that Kautilya was based on an Indian princess whom
Du Bois had met at the First Universal Races Congress in London in 1911. My reading of *Dark Princess* approaches Kautilya as an entirely fictional character with no specific historical or biographical referent, in keeping with the archival evidence of Du Bois’s research queries, which I discuss later in this chapter. Much as my sustained engagement in the previous chapter with Gandhi’s brief mentions of Black South Africans argued for reading from, rather than through, those textual details, so here my elaborate engagement with the fictional Kautilya’s Indianness advances Du Bois’s Indian references as more than mere accessories to his better-known U.S. goals. I thereby continue the dialectical reading method discussed at the end of the previous chapter, which seize on a text that is about the Global South by writing about India, yet hopes to be read as not principally about India at all: to read, that is, from the metaphor of the “dark princess,” not merely with it or through it. In this instance, this reading requires a kind of literalism that renders the text’s tropes unfamiliar: I will focus on the surface of the text before I discuss its symbolic depths.

For instance, applying the legal realities of the United States in the 1920s to the world depicted in *Dark Princess* has immediate ramifications: Princess Kautilya would have been settled illegally in the United States—in today’s terms, as an undocumented person (or, as some would say, an illegal alien). Her child would be a U.S. citizen because of his birth on U.S. soil and—crucially—his African ancestry. (Children born in the United States to foreigners were entitled to U.S. citizenship after the 1898 judgment in *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, but that judgment excluded those born to foreign rulers like Kautilya—and, in any case, the judgment would not be seen as conclusive until the 1940s.) Even after marrying Matthew, however, Kautilya would have remained ineligible for naturalization, no matter that she was the wife of one citizen and the mother of another (a key contrast with our current immigration regime). The characters of novels are not the people of historical record, yet the symbolic implications are worth noting. Much as Du Bois worked across his oeuvre to center the “black all-mother” as a motor for world belonging, by choosing an Indian mother at a time of U.S. exclusions against Asians, Du Bois once again demonstrated that the U.S. government sinned against maternity, and against children. By constructing a fictional narrative in which the mother of a U.S. citizen would be barred from U.S. citizenship or even residency, Du Bois suggested that the regimes of familial belonging and national belonging in the United States remained fundamentally at odds. Instead,
then, of depicting children as but one component of a proper and respectable bourgeois family, *Dark Princess* reveals the non-White child as a brownie: a magical creature who is both politically and socially disruptive.

In choosing a “dark princess” who was not only Asian but a high-caste Hindu, moreover, Du Bois invoked the confused categorizations of race and caste in his time. The dominant ethnology of the early twentieth-century United States usually divided humanity into four categories: “Caucasoid,” “Mongoloid,” “Negroid,” and “Amerind,” correlating roughly to our contemporary categories of White, Asian, Black, and Native American. Debates surrounding Indian immigration, however, frequently pondered whether a racial distinction should be drawn among Hindus, and not simply against them. In such discussions, prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, high-caste Hindus were argued to be Aryan, and therefore White, while lower-caste Indians were consistently understood as not Aryan, and therefore not White either. These claims were persistent and widespread. In 1916, even Du Bois’s friend Lala Lajpat Rai (1865–1928) emphasized that Hindus and Europeans came from the same racial stock; as late as 1927, the ill-fated Hindu Citizenship Bill argued that Indians had a right to U.S. citizenship because of their Aryan ancestry.

Whereas other claims to Whiteness were often resolved on cultural grounds, the Indian claim to Whiteness in the early twentieth-century United States was invariably figured in ethnological terms. These grounds, however, could shift as needed. As the governments of North America’s Pacific Coast moved from the exclusion of specific nationalities—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian—to the exclusion of a generalized category of “the Asiatic,” the racial contours of these prohibitions became increasingly evident. In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court invoked ethnology to eliminate Japanese claims to citizenship, but a year later it eviscerated ethnology to eradicate Indian claims as well. The racial status of upper-caste Indians would be legally resolved in the 1923 case of *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court pondered: “Is a high-caste Hindu, of full Indian blood, . . . a white person?” Describing “white persons” as “words of common speech, and not of scientific origin,” the Court argued that, despite the scientific truth that “the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu” were of shared Aryan ancestry, “the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today.” Precisely because of these partial and inconsistent privileges, the
problem of Asian racial difference makes racism evident in a manner that Blackness could not. The Japanese were considered “civilized” after the Meiji Restoration (1868), and Indians were recognized as ancestral kin (as “Aryan”), but neither was given full access to the privileges of Whiteness. U.S. racism may be famously centered along a Black/White binary, but as early twentieth-century U.S. citizenship law demonstrates, the U.S. articulation of anti-Asian racism was singularly effective in making White supremacism baldly evident.

As always, the concerns of racism also centered on those of reproduction. In the Thind judgment, Indians’ lack of Whiteness was conclusively demonstrated by the inassimilability of their future children: whereas children of “European parentage quickly merge into the mass of our population,” the Court argued that “the children born in this country of Hindu parents would retain indefinitely the clear evidence of their ancestry.” 41 The discursive possibility of upper-caste Hindus’ Whiteness becomes an enabling condition for Du Bois’s Dark Princess, which he began writing in 1926, shortly after the Thind judgment. Matthew and Kautilya are characterized as racially distinct, and Du Bois thereby renders the novel’s conclusion recognizably a scene of racial intermixture. Yet because U.S. miscegenation law had only targeted the interracial marriages of Whites, this moment of emphatic miscegenation also highlights the possibly White status of an elite Indian person like the fictional Kautilya. In a context wherein the dominant science decried racial mixture as degeneration, the possibilities of joyful sexual intermingling were synonymous with those of democracy. 42

Du Bois engaged the Aryan argument for Indian origins in his non-fiction to reclaim elite ancestry for persons not White. In 1915, in “The Coming of Black Men,” Du Bois described the subcontinent as evolving through contact between Dravidian aborigines and Aryan immigrants. He thereby echoed the race theories of the early twentieth century, yet he changed the debate by defining Dravidians as “Negroes with some mixture of Mongoloid and later of Caucasoid stocks.” 43 He wrote that the Rig Veda, a Sanskrit text composed in the second millennium B.C.E., recounted “the fierce struggles between these whites and blacks for the mastery of India,” featuring Hindu deities both White (Indra) and Black (Krishna). 44 This original conflict soon gave way, in Du Bois’s narrative, to multiracial harmony: “The whites long held the conquered blacks in caste servitude, but eventually the color line disappeared. . . . The whites enlisted in the service of the blacks and fought under Negro chiefs. . . . One of the leading Aryan chiefs was a Negro.” 45 Du Bois’s key intervention here lies not in undermining the Aryan migration thesis but, rather,
in claiming Aryans as Black. Whereas White commentators depicted an ongoing battle in India between White Brahmins and Black Dravidians, Du Bois revealed a subcontinent peopled by Black Brahmins. *Dark Princess*'s central romance, the illegitimate affair between Matthew and Kautilya, explicitly references the Hindu narrative of Radha-Krishna, and in doing so it prefigures Du Bois’s claim of Krishna’s racial (and not just chromatic) Blackness in his 1947 essay “Asia in Africa.” Like the Matthew-as-Krishna tropes of the 1928 novel, the Krishna of that later nonfictional analysis is a Negro. At a time when the caste system was often invoked to justify British colonial rule, Du Bois’s depiction of a country cohered by caste, not ruptured by the color line, was a dramatic rebuke to those who would keep India under Western rule. In contrast to our contemporary understandings of caste and race as intertwined evils, Du Bois used caste to combat race without problematizing the former term, in keeping with the elitist sympathies of his early career. From our vantage point, then, we find a profound political and moral failure: Du Bois was antiracist, but he was not exactly anticaste.

In an attempt to build solidarity among the “colored peoples of the world,” Du Bois worked with the figurual language of color—red, black, yellow, brown—on a problem that he nevertheless saw in materialist terms. For example, Du Bois’s contribution to *The New Negro*, the 1924 anthology edited by Alain Locke that became a landmark collection of the Harlem Renaissance, was published under a distinct section “Worlds of Color,” which contained only his essay, titled “The Negro Mind Reaches Out.” Always attentive to both the material and the figurual, Du Bois there discusses racism and colonialism as constitutive effects of capitalism and modernity, and yet on the same page he wrote of the “vast gulf between the red-black South and the yellow-brown East.” Neither the South nor the East is literally red-black or yellow-brown, but they are, quite literally, “all victims of white colonialism,” which forms the first clause of that same sentence. By the time of *Dark Princess*, in which the Indian love-interest is literally darkened by her difficult experiences of employment, Du Bois’s understanding of race was definitively tied to the exploitation of the working class. I have demonstrated elsewhere that *Dark Princess* reflects a serious engagement with Indian politics; here I build on that work to explore the implications of Du Bois’s reliance on the prejudices of caste.

The rhetoric of caste was central to U.S. debates on race and equality in the nineteenth century, and Du Bois refined these claims as both an activist and a social scientist. A distinguished sociologist, Du Bois possessed a sophisticated understanding of India’s caste system, and the
category of caste surfaces repeatedly in his writings. Whether in lectures with titles like “Caste in America” (1903) and “Profit and Caste” (1925), or in the caste-framed analysis that opens and closes *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), Du Bois recoded Black Americans’ problems as problems for the entire United States, arguing that their treatment suggested the incursion on U.S. soil of the Indian affliction of caste, which has “ruined lives, overturned governments and buried civilizations.”

Class, he accepted, was “perfectly natural and necessary” in “any great and growing nation”; an unchanging and inherited sense of class, however, was profoundly un-American. While this exotic danger chiefly manifested itself, Du Bois explained, in a “color caste” system directed against Black Americans, he warned that it was spreading into the United States as a whole, “growing [into] a feeling that White children of certain social classes do not need high schools, that social standing ought to bestow certain privileges by a sort of divine right and that the man who wrote the declaration of independence was a fool.” Du Bois further argued that restrictions on intermarriage, place of residence, occupation, and educational access along racial lines provide “a true picture of the caste situation in the United States today.” Americans are thus becoming, he implies, akin to the long-colonized inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. For this rhetoric to work, however, Du Bois cannot simply criticize caste: he must also criticize India itself, associating caste, as many Euro-American writers long had, with the downfall of once-great civilizations.

In his work before his 1935 *Black Reconstruction*, caste provides a rhetoric that renders American racism un-American: through his conception of “color caste,” Du Bois reframes the difficulty of being “both a Negro and an American” as a problem with Indian resonances. To emphasize this frightful possibility, Du Bois needs to depict an India that is heavily overwrought by caste and hierarchy, not an India that is moving toward egalitarianism or meritocracy. This necessary emphasis perhaps explains his choice, in *Dark Princess*, of a royal figure with a retinue of servants and minders. In a novel where the Pullman porters and factory workers of the United States receive careful and sympathetic elaboration, the lower-caste figures who attend Princess Kautilya appear without any characterization, serving only to evidence the unyielding dehumanization caused by India’s distinctive stratification.

Du Bois’s print internationalism thus drew on the common Western claim that Indian society, due to caste, was fundamentally inimical to egalitarianism, even as he foregrounded Indian news in his political re-
portage. By retaining this fundamentally civilizational distinction, Du Bois was able to use caste as a phobic object in his struggle against American racism—a racism that, when simply named as such, frequently failed to concern many of his fellow Americans. *Dark Princess* thus demonstrates the complex pleasures of imagined national difference: not only as fantasy, in the delights of Kautilya’s royal existence, but also as phobia, in the nameless drudgery of those born into her servitude. Rendering Indian civilization directly useful to his vision for the Global South necessitated recoding essential incompatibility—casteism versus egalitarianism—as essential complementarity. By centering *Dark Princess* on a romance between a man who happens to be Black American and a woman who happens to be Indian, Du Bois recoded civilizational difference as sexual difference. Much as sexual difference is then represented as that which, because of the dissimilarity, can combine two individuals to produce yet another, Du Bois depicted a caste-ridden society that could nonetheless help the United States, coded as essentially democratic, produce a better world.

The Indian iconography invoked in *Dark Princess* is mostly Hindu, with occasional touches of a Buddhism entirely compatible with Hinduism. The appearance of a Muslim “priest” in the final scene of the novel is the only notable reference to Islam, and it participates in that scene’s vision of interreligious union. Du Bois’s novel constructs easy religious parallels: Hindu mythology for Kautilya’s civilization, and Christian songs for Matthew’s. Du Bois further uses tropes of the guru and of renunciation to develop the politics of his romance, explicitly citing the Gandhian model. Kautilya tells Matthew:

> “And when I saw that old mother of yours . . . I knew that I was looking upon one of the ancient prophets of India and that she was to lead me out of the depths in which I found myself and up to the atonement for which I yearned. So I started with her upon that path of seven years. . . .

> “You had stepped down into menial service at my request. . . . It was now my turn to step down to the bottom of the world and see it for myself. So I put aside my silken garments and cut my hair, and, selling my jewels, I started out on the long path which should lead to you.”

Du Bois valorizes Matthew’s African American mother by invoking Brahminical notions of renunciation. In seeking “atonement,” Kautilya
“step[s] down to the bottom of the world” and into “menial service.” She thereby diverges from the story of the Buddha, who never undertook manual labor, and instead impersonates a person of a lower caste, becoming darker skinned in the process.

Du Bois’s willingness to value caste in India (but not in the United States) is further reflected in a distinctly hierarchical vision for India’s liberation in Dark Princess. Kautilya’s position on religion, for instance, is explicitly Brahminical. She desires to “go back to the ancient simplicity of Brahma” and to “clean the slate” of popular religious practices in favor of the Brahminical texts of the Vedas. Whereas Matthew’s program for U.S. uplift requires “distributing wealth more evenly” and “democratic control of industry,” Kautilya’s plan for India requires that “we must first emancipate ourselves. . . . Then we must learn to rule ourselves politically and to organize our old industry on new modern lines,” in search of “our own social uplift” rather than democracy or equality. The romance narrative sutures this unlikely coalition, for Du Bois’s novel is heterosexual not only in its plot but in its very temperament. The romance unfolds between two fantastically attractive characters, who are fundamentally differentiated not only by nationality but also by gender. That attraction—the familiar story of a man loving a woman, and vice versa—is then laminated with the attraction of differences that might be accorded to their variance in race and nation, so that the accomplishment of international solidarity becomes inextricable from their seemingly natural unification, wherein they are different from each other exactly as reproduction intended. Heterosexuality, and the desire across difference espoused within it, thus provides the necessary template for an internationalism rife with essential differences.

Dark Princess culminates with Madhu Chandragupta Singh, the messianic brownie of the novel’s triumphal ending, whose “gurgling, golden self” might generate an antiracist world. The reproductive plot of Kautilya and Matthew’s pairing includes Matthew’s mother, and it is contingent on the child’s recognition not only by the father, Matthew, but also by a panoply of international visitors. It thus figures a reciprocal reproduction through which not just an infant but also a preacher, an ancient woman, and a variety of religious brown men are created. Dark Princess’s wedding scene is too belated to serve the social roles usually accorded to the institution of marriage, for the couple are married only after their union has been sexually consummated. Their child is born out of wedlock, but wedlock follows nonetheless, shifting the emphasis from the act of union to its products. The lyrical narration soon breaks
into disjointed dialogue, without speaker attribution; we then witness “the ancient woman,” presumably Matthew’s mother, perform a speech of ecstatic prayer, which suddenly devolves into a dialogue reported as “The Woman” and “The Man.” Finally, a “pageant” of men “in white with shining swords” emerges from the woods, from which three old men step forward and invoke Krishna, Buddha, and Allah. After all this prayer and ritual, we are shown “a thrill of delight; its little feet, curled petals; its mouth a kiss; its hands like waving prayers.”59 This child, described in nonhuman terms, is a figure we have seen elsewhere in Du Bois’s print internationalism: the magical child figured in the mixed-race brownie.

CRAFTING THE BROWNIES’ BOOK

Du Bois’s 1919 editorial on “the true brownies” suggests that The Crisis, and particularly the October “Children’s Numbers,” were rarely consumed in private or read exclusively by adult readers. They were, rather, part of the family library, and the object of the attentions of people of varying age and maturity, an aspect that surfaces repeatedly in archives and memoirs.60 The Brownies’ Book was thus created to intentionally address a readership—children and younger persons—that The Crisis had interpellated mostly by happenstance. Perhaps as a consequence, we find a two-way traffic between the publications. The Brownies’ Book, for instance, modeled its “Little People of the Month” page, which portrayed exemplary community members, on The Crisis’s recurring “Men of the Month” feature, while The Crisis later adopted the “As the Crow Flies” column that originated in the Brownies’ Book. Both publications share a preoccupation with internationalism, yet the one explicitly intended for children carries its internationalism differently—in many respects, I would argue, more effectively. In The Crisis, internationalism was most often presented as current events and political information, with cursory historical background offered by the writers as needed: its reader was interpellated as a fully literate adult, even if the reality of readers’ skills was likely more varied. The Brownies’ Book, by contrast, explicitly anticipates that it will be read by families, and by readers at different stages of development. As a consequence, it often excludes the most recent newsworthy details, providing instead broad and memorable sweeps of world history and culture. The Crisis, with its urgent title—and its subtitle “A Record of the Darker Races”—
committed to the periodical inscription of the contemporary even as it was often preserved as long as possible by its committed readers. Proclaiming its status as a book, by contrast, the *Brownies’ Book* declared its permanence and specifically encouraged long-term inclusion in the family library. This periodical’s consequential nomination as a “book” is underscored by the “Dedication” limerick, written by Fauset, that concludes its very first issue:

To Children, who with eager look  
Scanned vainly library shelf and nook,  
For History or Song or Story  
That told of Colored Peoples’ glory,—  
We dedicate THE BROWNIES’ BOOK.61

Fauset’s limerick is transepochal and nonnational, and its content challenges the strictures of genre: the children seek the codex format, regardless of the literary forms inside it.

By positioning itself as a periodical for children, the *Brownies’ Book* was able to engage fundamental concerns that were otherwise seen as unworthy of explicit instruction. It could, for instance, decree the very rules of reading. In June 1920, Fauset’s recurring column “The Judge” responded to “the question of questions, the question in comparison with which all other kiddie matters fade into insignificance, and that is WHAT SHALL I READ?”62 Whereas Fauset’s regular column in *The Crisis* had instructed its readers, as its title explained, in “What to Read,” her commentary in the *Brownies’ Book* explained the how of reading instead.63 Before providing a long list of suggested texts, Fauset’s “Judge” persona explained that reading had rules much like those for any game:

1. Don’t skip;  
2. Read straight through;  
3. Finish.

These are the rules of the game just like the base in “I spy” and the ring in marbles. You cannot have a game unless you follow the rules. Skipping is not reading; it is worse than nothing. Reading the end of a story before you have read the beginning is unfair; it is cheating. And in reading, as in other things, when you start a job finish it—get the habit.64
In developing this parallel between reading and play, Fauset implies the sociability of reading: to read here is to follow the rules, so as to “have a game” with the other readers, writers, and editors of this printed world. The three rules she offers may be short and simple, articulated as yet another game requiring fair play. The actual application of these rules of reading to the Brownies’ Book, however, could prove staggeringly complex. The issues are full of gaps—geographical, historical, and generic—and even the photos range widely in their subject matter. To read the Brownies’ Book “straight through”—to “finish,” without “skipping”—is to be tasked with cognitive syntheses of enormous proportions.

The Brownies’ Book pairs fanciful lessons like this one with prose features devoted to explicit didacticism, with the most meaningful instruction generally situated within the space of the family. Through these lessons, the Brownies’ Book insists that “the children of the sun” see themselves within a larger global geography, one both practical and fanciful. This is accomplished, in the nonfiction, through the juxtaposition of various places within successive pages; in the fiction, it often demands a kind of imaginary alignment, as in the “Folk Tales” section of the second issue:

The only thing that is nicer than telling a story is to listen to it. Did you ever stop to think that just as you sit very still in the twilight and listen to Father or Mother telling stories, just so children are listening all over the world,—in Sweden, in India, in Georgia, and in Uganda?65

As with Gandhi’s conception of the audible conversation between the Editor and the Reader that we discussed in chapter 2, here too the print periodical can make conversations audible between parents and children all over the world.

The managing editor of the Brownies’ Book was Jessie Redmon Fauset. Born to an established and respectable, though not wealthy, African American family, Fauset was raised primarily in Philadelphia—a city that, despite its relatively tolerant racial hierarchies, would repeatedly bar her from its educational institutions, first as a student and later as a teacher. Acutely aware of the complex intersections of race and class, she was part of a Black middle class that would form the central topic of her fictional works. She began contributing to The Crisis in 1912 and served as its literary editor from 1919 to 1926, rapidly transforming it into the most distinguished venue for Black literature in the
United States. When Du Bois traveled, which he did frequently, Fauset also served as its managing editor, as for instance from December 1918 to June 1919. Despite her degrees from Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania, her influential interlude at The Crisis, and her fiction and nonfiction publications, she was never able to attain the kinds of full-time leadership positions open to Black men in the U.S. who held similar credentials. Instead, Fauset spent most of her life in the most intellectual career then open to African American women: as a schoolteacher. This particular combination of experiences, nevertheless, made her a perfect editor and lead writer for the Brownies’ Book.

Fauset’s writings for The Crisis, as well as her work in the Brownies’ Book, reflect her commitment to print internationalism: she authored, for instance, a series of profiles on great men of African ancestry all over the world, and a report on the Pan-African Congress of 1921. Much as the Brownies’ Book would reflect an openness to other languages in its publication of African folklore, so too Fauset in The Crisis would conduct French-language writing into the global Anglophone, reviewing and translating works from African and Caribbean writers and showering particular praise on Haitian poetry.

Whereas The Crisis’s “Children’s Number” paired adorable photos of readers’ children with appalling stories of racial persecution, the Brownies’ Book traffics in less obvious contrasts, subordinating its collage effects to the sensitivities of a presumably younger readership. In choosing to understate atrocities, however, it does not abandon complexity, including a rich variety of materials that provoke further inquiry. The inaugural issue opens with a full-page photograph of Zaouditou, the Empress of Ethiopia; the next page, all text, transports us “in the Land of Sure Enough, away down South, in a most wonderful land named Georgia.” The connection between the items is not explained, leaving the reader to envision their commonality: their shared location in what we now call “the Global South.” In putting these two next to each other, moreover, Fauset subverts the usual definitions of the familiar and the exotic: Ethiopia is introduced through the modern medium of photography, in a portrait whose elite subject makes direct eye contact, while Georgia, although in the United States, is presented as a quasi-magical location in a story of “a most wonderful land.” A few pages later, a “dialect poem” (that is, one written in nonstandard English) promises to tell us “the origin of White folks”; a full-page poem in standard U.S. English, titled “Kindergarten Song,” teaches racial unity through four stanzas. Much as the “Origin of White
Folks” poem uses dialect and irony to rich effect, the “Kindergarten Song” that follows subverts the associations of standard English even as it scrupulously follows its rules. Written by the activist and poet Carrie W. Clifford, whose 1911 Race Rhymes collection was explicit in its engagement of U.S. racism, this poem places all of the races together, without copula or explanation. It is patterned simply—it is, after all, a “kindergarten song”—in four verses of four lines, each with an AABB rhyme scheme. Each of the first three verses uses the third line to itemize: “No hair, crinkled hair, straight hair, curls—”; “Red child, yellow child, black child, white—”; “Zulu, Esquimaux, Saxon, Jew.” A similar function is performed in the final stanza, but this time in the fourth line, thus making “White man, red man, black man, tall” the final line of the poem as well. The tight rhyme scheme of the poem renders each term irreplaceable in form much as each is claimed to be in content, even as no effort is made to resolve the relations between them: “tall,” for instance, ends an otherwise chromatic list of white, red, and black. As this example demonstrates, that which aids the novice reader—in this instance, the deployment of a tight rhyme scheme—can also assist the novice internationalist.

Fauset’s choice of fiction reflected a worldwide frame, as she published, and when necessary translated, fiction, poetry, and folktales from across what we now call the global South. Her print internationalism was further reflected in her reportage, for instance, in a continuing interest in Southeast Asian politics. Although Fauset generally delivered international news through a fictional character named “Uncle Jim,” this did not restrain her from providing an impressive amount of detail. For example, a few pages into the inaugural issue, we find ourselves “over the ocean wave.” In the story of that title, likely written by Fauset, the recurring child characters Betty and Philip saw “a picture of two young colored girls” at the movies and recognized them as “some colored folks just like us.” These were the Filipina students Parhata Miran and Carmen Aguinaldo, who were, as the facticity of the included photograph indicates, actually existing persons (unlike Philip and Betty, whose fictionality renders them placeholders for the reader). Uncle Jim explains that “they are colored,—that is their skin is not white; but they belong to a different division of people from what we do.” He then explains Philippine politics, noting that Emilio Aguinaldo (father of the photographed Carmen), though seen as “a bandit, or outlaw” by the United States, was regarded as “a patriot” by his compatriots. The article ends in masquerade: playing at being Filipinos, one child declares: “I am go-
ing to be the bandit!”73 A few months later we receive another lesson on Southeast Asia, this time regarding the then-disputed island of Yap. Betty and Philip recall Uncle Jim’s previous lesson, listing the islands of the Philippine archipelago; Uncle Jim teaches them the history of Yap’s repeated colonization, explaining that its inhabitants “belong to the Colored Peoples of the world.”

As this early example indicates, the dialogue format used here enables Fauset to give us all the newsworth details—the U.S. military interest, the earlier political upheaval—as well as trivia about clothing, money, and culture. The result is a combination of frivolous and serious information that was likely engaging for readers of all ages. Many larger features in the Brownies’ Book assert a transnational genealogy, with pride of place given to “ancient Africa and mysterious Asia”: as the author of one piece exclaims: “The world is really very small and East and West are always meeting!”74 It is likely that the lived world of the Brownies’ Book’s readers was indeed quite small, given the constraints on Black mobility in the early twentieth century, but in the Brownies’ Book East and West are always meeting in a world easily available for Black engagement.

The print internationalism developed through poetry and story was further propagated through Du Bois’s reportage in the Brownies’ Book, which appeared in a recurring feature titled “As the Crow Flies.” Du Bois invented this Crow persona specifically for the Brownies’ Book, and it would become his narrative structure for periodicals like The Crisis and the Amsterdam News as well. In those later pages, which were explicitly designed for adult readers, Du Bois’s Crow was strictly metaphorical, its line of flight literally surpassing established boundaries and trade routes. Suggestive of the idiom used to describe the shortest distance between two points, this Crow always flew homeward, sharing the relevant news of distant lands before (re)turning his gaze to the United States. His dispatches mapped the distance between other places and Black America, connecting them, the idiom implies, with superlative proximity. In reading this narrative structure, scholars have often criticized Du Bois’s tendency to move from international concerns to national ones, arguing that this indicates his fundamental provincialism. I propose, however, that—as the expression suggests—the transformative connection among places, and not the particular regions covered, is the moral of this narrative structure. Through the Crow persona, Du Bois suggests, that the “darker races” are at a surpassable distance from one another, if only “as the crow flies.”
Several scholars have remarked on the black coloring of the Crow as central to its figural role, yet I submit that its trajectory is more significant than its color. The title, after all, is an established idiom, likely suggesting its conventional meaning (that of distance) to most readers rather than its central creature’s appearance. Consequently, the Crow is not a metaphor for African American readers, but a symbol of the unprecedented connections that can be forged through print internationalism. This nonmetaphorical aspect of “As the Crow Flies” is reflected in the format’s origins. In his initial iteration of the column in the first issue of the *Brownies’ Book*, Du Bois’s Crow was literal and, as a consequence, magical. In that first appearance, a first-person narrator named the Crow is accompanied by a child interlocutor, described both as the “Little Boy with the Big Voice” and the “Little Voice with the Big Boy.” In later issues, the Crow speaks to his crowlings: like “brownies,” “crowlings” is a nonce word that nonetheless seems in context both chromatic and self-evident. As the Crow confides: “Don’t you think that Human Folks are just the funniest ever? Sometimes I just quit flying and hold my sides and laugh. ‘Haw, haw—caw, caw!’ I gurgle with delight, because the Earth Folks are so passing queer.”

The Crow’s cawing and hawing gifts the children with a “delighted” distance from the often-terrible world of “Earth Folks” and “Human Folks,” enabling them to both observe and avoid the bitter realities inevitably reflected in the news that the Crow nonetheless reports. Much as the animals of fables and folktales reflect truths about common people, the Crow finds connections across nations, races, and places. The Crow’s aerial distance enables an international perspective and, to use his terms, a “passing queer” point of view. Du Bois and Fauset may not have queered the child, but they have queered “Human Folks.” After a summary of world news, which is mostly war, strikes, and other difficulties, the Crow concludes:

> What I cannot see, is why these Human Folk do not watch us Crow Folk more, and learn how to be happy and free, high up in these wide spaces. Seems to me that the World People live too much cooped up in little dark holes. That’s enough to make anybody act funny.

Soaring above the earth with the Crow, *Brownies’ Book* readers learn about politics in summary form, always progressing from the worldwide back to the national. This first issue, published in the midst of
horrendous racist violence in the U.S., shifts readers’ focus abroad, starting with pronunciation guidance for Irish politics and demographic details about India and Egypt. We then read of “many race riots and lynchings” in the United States, but only for four lines of a three-page spread.

The role of the Brownies’ Book in the appropriate raising of children is explicitly addressed in its third issue. In this early iteration of “The Judge,” Fauset writes separate sections “To Father” and “To Mother.” Whereas she tells Father to avoid excessive corporal punishment—informing him that “the sorrows of your children, although they may seem trivial to you, are just as tragic as any of your own”—she advises Mothers to be more strict, for

the mothers . . . know how hard their lives and their parents’ lives were; they know how many rebuffs and difficulties their children are going to meet; and they try and make this up to them by giving them all the candy they want, by letting them be just as saucy as they will, and by letting them run around wherever they want to.

Now of all the ways of training children’s characters to meet difficulties which they are going to find in the present world of the color-line, these are the very worst.

Fauset’s counsel to Father responds to the racist stereotype of the Black child as impervious to pain; that addressed to Mother hints at the stereotyping of Black children as indolent and extravagant. What unites Fauset’s disparate advice is her consistent emphasis on the deadly seriousness, always suggested but never explicitly written, of the singular vulnerability of Black children in the United States. Fauset concludes: “What you want to do is to strengthen, not weaken, your children. Make them serious, not frivolous; make them thoughtful, not rattle-brained.”

Creating a serious child, however, requires a sensitive approach. The fantasy worlds of children’s literature here operate as sites wherein the inequalities of the real world are revealed and ridiculed, not as spaces of reassurance where morality is always simple. The antiracist critique in the Brownies’ Book is always delivered indirectly, as for instance in a poem by the celebrated poet and playwright Georgia Douglas Johnson. Her contribution, titled “The Ancestor,” reads:
They boasted of their ancestry, and flaunted in his face
The glory of their royal line, the valor of their race;
A moment Tom was clothed in thought,—he was no orator,—
Then shouted,—“Boys, I say, by Jove, I’ll be an ANCESTOR!”

Johnson’s poem pairs the realities of racial chauvinism with the absurdity of its claims. Print internationalism can provide ethical lessons for any age group, but the children’s version, unlike the adult one, carries a generous dose of subversive humor.

The Brownies’ Book operated as a key locus of women’s participation in print culture, not least because of its explicit solicitation of familial reading. It was mostly written by women, as the names on the pieces attest, and so were the letters to the editor, making the Brownies’ Book a space within which women write and read and learn from one another. In the first issue, letters to the periodical were printed with salutations such as “Dear Sir” and “Dear Dr. Du Bois” and even “Dear Crisis,” reflecting its launch as a spinoff from a periodical nearly synonymous with Du Bois himself. Later issues, however, printed these letters without salutations whatsoever, in an implicit recognition of the journal’s guiding editor: not Du Bois, nor any other man, but Jessie Redmon Fauset.

The letter writers to the Brownies’ Book frequently note the particular significance of print. For instance, in a letter in the second issue, Bella Seymour of New York City reports that her daughter asks, “Didn’t colored folks do anything?” Presenting an exchange that Fauset would restage nearly verbatim in her 1924 novel, There Is Confusion, Bella Seymour laments:

> When I tell her as much as I know about our folks, she says: “Well, that’s just stories. Didn’t they ever do anything in a book?” I have not had much schooling, and I am a busy woman with my sewing and my housekeeping, so I don’t get much time to read and I can’t tell my little girl where to find these things. But I am sure you know and that now you will tell her.

For Bella Seymour’s “little girl,” spoken knowledge and “stories” will not do: accomplishments only signify once they have been memorialized through publication—a problem the Brownies’ Book is singularly poised
to assuage. We do not hear from Bella Seymour again, but we do encounter, a few months later, a letter from Hattie Porter. Much as Bella wrote of her daughter from New York City, Hattie writes of her mother from the city of San Francisco:

My mother likes me to sit and tell her stories while she sews. I used to tell her all the fairy tales I ever read. But now I tell her the stories out of The Brownies’ Book. She is so busy, she never gets a chance to look at it. I am trying very hard to write a story nice enough for you to accept, dear Mr. Editor. I work very slowly, but some day I’ll have it finished and will send it to you. If you would just print it! I’d take the book to my mother and say “See what I did!” I know she’d look at it then.85

Hattie’s letter appears in “The Jury”; Bella’s appeared in “The Grown-Ups’ Corner,” and across these issues they respond to each other poignantly. In this world, books are accomplishments, far more than “just stories” told by mothers and daughters to one another. The effect of these cascading names, each of which rarely appears in more than one issue, is that of a dispersed community across what we would now term the Global South. The abundance of these names—woman after woman after woman—is startling to encounter in the archives. We know nothing about these letter writers, yet I mention some of their names here because the volume, and continuity, of their presence across each issue is itself an example of print internationalism at work. Women from a vast variety of locations, who did not directly know one another and may have had no other connection to publishing or activism, were able to congregate through the printed pages of the Brownies’ Book.

This print community of women readers and writers spanned large parts of the world, with several contributions from women in southern and western Africa. These women wrote for children: both for their reading and on their behalf. Yet through their named participation, they both claimed their assigned roles as caretakers of children and exceeded those social bounds, becoming themselves the authors of an eclectic print internationalism. This narrative strategy could be particularly effective in cases of marked cultural difference. For instance, the Liberian activist Kathleen Easmon opens her essay “A Little Talk about West Africa”86 by positioning herself within networks of child-to-child exchange:
Many of you who read *The Brownies’ Book* have already heard stories from many parts of Africa. I am bringing you a greeting from the Brownies on the west coast. If they knew how, they would write you a letter, but as very few of them have an opportunity of going to school, it is customary when they want to tell any one of what is happening in their particular village for them to send a greeting by someone who is travelling.87

The adult here carries the message, and she enables connections across children—and countries—in the process. By the second year, moreover, Fauset was explicitly advising her readers how to behave toward other races. In a staged conversation typical of “The Judge” column, Fauset’s Judge admonishes one of the fictional children for teasing the equally fictional Hong Loo, a “Chinaman.”88 Hong Loo’s right not to be teased is predicated not on his Americanness or even his fundamental humanity but on how Americans might be treated on going to China. The brownie of this story is an actor for world peace, or for world war, depending on how he treats the “laundryman” down the street. The column’s moral, crucially, is at once charmingly exaggerated and utterly accurate, in an age when immigration rights were usually negotiated through arrangements of national reciprocity.89

The internationalism of the *Brownies’ Book* included the publication of material that was challenging in its explicit foreignness. Much as Tagore, as we saw in chapter 1, used unorthodox approaches to translation to bend the global Anglophone to his Asianist purposes, so too did Fauset publish contributions whose use of non-English words enabled the English-language *Brownies’ Book* to unsettle the global Anglophone. In February 1921, for example, Fauset published a short story by the Mozambican intellectual C. Kamba Simango, under the English subtitle “The Lion and the Hare,” but with an untranslated title—“Mphantsholo Ne Shulo”—written boldly across the page.90 The story retains many Ndu words and expressions: we learn how to say “Look at this one—he is very fat” (*Lingiloup ih zinthinya*) and, for the plural, that several people are very fat (*manthikinya*).91 We also learn how to discuss holding or dropping a rock, and the dangers thereof. These phrases may not easily apply to many situations, but they form the narrative crux of this Ndu story of the lion and the hare. Whereas other features in the *Brownies’ Book* encouraged a global sentiment based on interdependence and commonality, this story builds internationalism through
difference: not by domesticating the lion and the hare to the traditions of folklore that American readers might already know but by allowing Simango’s *mpontholo* and *shulo* to retain their original names. Much as Gandhi, as we saw in the previous chapter, untranslated the title of the translated English text of *Hind Swaraj* and thereby enabled its circulation within the global Anglophone, so Fauset and Simango, by retaining Ndau words within these English pages, signaled through the global Anglophone the persistence of the Global South.

Much as *The Crisis*’s “Children’s Numbers” published an array of photographs of readers’ children, the *Brownies’ Book* published such photos in every issue alongside descriptions of their accomplishments. In the second issue, the periodical requests photos of high school graduates and adds: “In fact, whenever you hear of anything that a colored child has done well, hasten to tell us. But, of course, tell the exact truth—don’t exaggerate or over-state.” In the third issue, the editors repeat the request, and add: “And letters! Do have your children write and tell us about their schools, their ambitions, their views of life, in general. A great deal of wisdom comes from the mouth of babes.” By the second year, “The Jury” section was being promoted as a correspondence page, with children encouraged to reply to each other directly through its publishing mechanism.

At that stage, moreover, the collaborative constitution of the *Brownies’ Book* was asserted as proof of its value:

Did you know that 98% of the articles appearing in THE BROWNIES’ BOOK have been written by colored men, women and children? You see we are really creating modern Negro literature. And all of the original drawings—*but one*—have come from the pen of colored artists. . . . This is a stimulus to the expression of modern Negro art.

The readers of the *Brownies’ Book* co-constituted that periodical in their exchanges and contributions, and they also mimicked it through what Ellen Gruber Garvey has termed “writing with scissors.” these readers would cut, paste, and collate various materials to create composite volumes (the nineteenth-century scrapbook) that emulated what they appreciated about the *Brownies’ Book*. At the one-year mark, “The Grown-Ups’ Corner” explicitly requested assistance from its readers, asking for manuscripts and pictures, and encouraging them to recruit new subscribers. While financial pressures were certainly a
consideration, the insistence on inclusion suggests that the editors were soliciting ideas as much as they were hoping to increase funds. Seeking “new and interesting stories about colored children, their interests, their difficulties, the way they live and the places they live in,” the editors were “especially eager” to educate different regions of the U.S. about each other and to have information from “people who have friends in foreign countries where there are dark people.”

The *Brownies’ Book* was part of the 1920s flourishing of African American literature and culture that came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. The writers of that period placed particular emphasis on the child, both real and figural, whether through writings aimed at raising the right kind of children or at encouraging respectable, bourgeois domesticity. This focus was, after all, the logical extension of the celebration of novelty attendant in that celebrated moment of the “New Negro,” whose very naming as a “Renaissance” evoked the language of birth.

The focus on the child that emerged in the works of Du Bois, Fauset, and their contemporaries consequently works very differently from the discourse of the child as it is taken up in today’s queer theoretical critiques. The child figured in those scholarly discussions is idealized because that child is viewed as pure and free from the contradictions of actually lived democratic life, and of the burden of history. The child figured in the *Brownies’ Book*, by contrast, approaches citizenship through its denial; adulthood and childhood coexist in the absence of safety and security. The positioning of a mature, sophisticated Black child, as I have shown, has a melancholic tinge: the Black child is sophisticated through the prohibition of youthful pleasures, necessarily knowledgeable due to the omnipresent dangers of racism. Neither bemoaning this maturity nor celebrating it, the *Brownies’ Book* developed a politically responsive vision for the child marginalized by racism.

The internationalism of the *Brownies’ Book*, moreover, can teach us much about Du Bois’s print internationalism more broadly. In a country where Black children worry that they cannot, in fact, become architects or musicians, stories of “Brownies” and of childhoods in faraway places proffer a larger world that would, at the least, offer different challenges and prohibitions. In lived contexts that frequently belittle Black children, the *Brownies’ Book* encourages them to think big: to inculcate an expansive geography and, thereby, an expansive sense of possibility. Internationalism here is more imagination than information—and as such it relies heavily on the correspondence across disparate pages and places.
Whereas Du Bois’s internationalism has generally attracted admiration, his Indian engagements in *Dark Princess* have, for many commentators, proved both a lure and a frustration. If, as the record shows, Du Bois knew so much about Indian history and even corresponded with Indian contemporaries, why did he not yoke his novel more firmly to the actual and the historical? Where intentions cannot be ascertained, archival records can. The research trail for *Dark Princess* evidences a beguiling combination of attention to both the fantastical and the literal.

Initially titled “The Princess and the Porter,” the novel gained its published title through conversation with the publisher, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, which suggested either “Dark Princess” or “Dark Alliance” as a title.103 The title that Du Bois had intended suggests a fairy tale, an impression reinforced by the novel’s opening and closing epigraphs. The titles proposed by the publishing house, by contrast, emphasized its racial politics. On October 11, 1927, Du Bois sent two matter-of-fact query letters regarding the American portions of the novel: the first, to an Illinois senator with a numbered list of questions about local hotels that his protagonist might visit, and the second, to a New York doctor with three questions, and the relevant passages, regarding the protagonist’s medical career.104 His Indian inquiries, however, were far more elaborate. Du Bois sent his manuscript to Lajpat Rai in an exchange that has received some critical attention.105 Already prominent in the Indian nationalist movement, Lajpat Rai wrote to Du Bois on October 6, 1927, seeking material for his rejoinder (*Unhappy India*, 1928) to the American journalist Katherine Mayo’s controversial *Mother India* (1926). He accordingly requested from Du Bois both written details and “some telling pictures of the cruelties inflicted on your people by the whites of America.”106 Du Bois replied a month later, enclosing the last six issues of *The Crisis*, “one picture of a lynching,” and his own request as well. He invited Rai’s “criticism” on a novel that “touches India incidentally in the person of an Indian Princess. I am sending enclosed the pages about her.”107

Whereas Lajpat Rai’s correspondence with Du Bois suggests an easy reciprocity, Du Bois also sought out assistance from another Indian, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, in a much more ambiguous fashion. Scholarship on the novel has often noted Lajpat Rai’s input but not Dhan Gopal Mukerji’s, with the unfortunate consequence of obscuring Du Bois’s unreciprocated aspirations for collaborative authorship, if only for the novel’s Indian portions.108 I highlight this seemingly minor exchange
because it demonstrates the creativity and unevenness that characterizes Du Bois’s approach to the Global South. Whereas his exchange with Lala Lajpat Rai contains the symmetry of two national problems, the one with Dhan Gopal Mukerji has intentionally porous boundaries, perhaps because Mukerji, unlike Lajpat Rai, was not only Indian but Indian American.

On October 29, 1927, eleven days before he would share his manuscript with Lajpat Rai, Du Bois solicited editorial “service” from the Indian American writer Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Du Bois explained in his letter that he had written a novel that “touches slightly upon India”:

I want very much to have someone who knows India and its customs to read three or four pages of the manuscript and criticize any errors or inconsistencies in which I may have fallen. I have never had the pleasure of visiting India and my knowledge is solely from reading and my acquaintanceship with Indians.\(^{109}\)

Du Bois here sought criticism of his “errors and inconsistencies” about an unseen country whose news he followed (and reported) in considerable detail. Mukerji quickly confirmed his desire to read the manuscript, and he sent his comments on November 4, explaining that he had “made slight changes in your narration” so as to “tell the facts that I know accurately.”\(^{110}\) Mukerji in that letter explicitly disclaimed any further ability to “criticize” or “alter” Du Bois’s manuscript, yet within three days Du Bois sent him a numbered list of queries—a list striking enough to merit quoting at length:

1. With regard to the Maharanee, I am, of course, making her do the unconventional thing. She has been twice married yet not married at all. Her boy husband being killed before the marriage was consummated, and her second husband being eighty years of age and died very soon after. Moreover, by her English education she is thoroughly emancipated and has an object in life so great that everything is subordinated to that. Under the circumstances might she not had [sic] chosen this unconventional way to assure the royal succession in Bwodpur?

2. I have called my Indian country Bwodpur, modeling the name after Jodpur, and yet naming in reality Nepal. Is the name Bwodpur sufficiently Indian?
3. In the case of her wedding the American, what representatives of her religion would be present? I want to indicate in her marriage a union of Hinduism, Mohammedism, and Christianity. According to my story she is first married by an American Protestant minister and then comes the pageant of her Indian marriage, and I have indicated three “priests,” two Hindus and a Mohammedan. Would it be wrong to call these men priests? Is my description of the ceremony and the pageant reasonable? And finally, is what she says when she raises the child up, a reasonably possible invocation?

4. Assuming the father of the child was named Matthew Townes and that the Maharane Royal Family of Bwoodpur had the name Chandragupta Singh, would he be christened Matthew Chandragupta Singh?

Du Bois concludes this list with thanks, enclosing “again the last two pages to refresh your memory.”

The questions that Du Bois poses are decidedly unusual, for they are far more speculative than his usual research queries. The first asks for plausibility within the acknowledged confines of “the unconventional thing”; the second asks whether a made-up word is a “sufficiently Indian” name for what is “in reality Nepal”; the third worries about the procedures for a nearly unimaginable multifaith wedding. The fourth question is the easiest one: Du Bois wonders how genealogical naming conventions might collude in this instance, to provide the patronymic as given name (resonant in light of slavery’s disruption of African American genealogy) and the family name as the sign of royal lineage. The plausibility concern here lies in what Du Bois terms the “reasonable” and the “reasonably possible.” These questions, with their imaginative demands, interpolate Mukerji as both foreign informant and fellow fiction writer, rendering him a co-creator of the novel’s concluding scenes. Focusing on the intermarriage plot, Du Bois asks Mukerji to commingle his authorial energies with his own—as though inviting him to join in creating the book’s mixed-race brownie.

As this research trail suggests, Du Bois’s romance novel is built on a complex network of correspondence. The final text is a masterwork of startling relations, pairing a self-made African American with a mysterious Indian royal, in rapid jumps between styles and locales. By corresponding with Indians about his novel in this fashion, Du Bois germinated a print internationalism that was more collaborative than transactional. The exchange with Lajpat Rai is clearly reciprocal; that with Mukerji,
by contrast, goes well beyond the norms of simple factual queries. Much like the crucial correspondence sections that Fauset developed in the print internationalism of the Brownies’ Book, which rendered that volume a dynamic collaboration, so too the complex correspondence of this Dark Princess research trail reflects the interest in collaboration that is formative to Du Bois’s print internationalism. This collaborative approach manifests not only in his private correspondence but also in his publication and annotation of messages from Indian leaders in The Crisis.

On February 19, 1929, Du Bois wrote to Gandhi, requesting an article for publication in The Crisis. Replying to Du Bois, whom he addressed as “Friend,” on May 1, 1929, Gandhi wrote: “It is useless for me even to attempt to send you an article for your magazine. I therefore send you herewith a little love message.” Having requested an article, and received a “little love message” instead, Du Bois proceeded to transform that message into a feature suitable for publication. In the July 1929 issue, Du Bois published Gandhi’s note under the title “To the American Negro,” reproducing a facsimile of Gandhi’s typed message (fig. 5):

Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grand children of slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave-owners. But let us not think of honor and dishonor in connection with the past. Let us realize that the future is with those who would be truthful, pure and loving. For as the old wise men have said, truth ever is, untruth never was. Love alone binds and truth and love accrue only to the truly humble.

Sabarmati,
May 1, 1929
M. K. Gandhi

Gandhi’s note here scrambles past, present, and future, invoking shame and dishonor only to disavow their relevance. Du Bois, in commenting on this note, configured a meaning for The Crisis that cannot be understood as a simple translation of Gandhi’s words. His note, in much smaller, italicized print to the left of Gandhi’s large-font words, functions as both biography and pedagogy. It begins with “Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the greatest colored man in the world, and perhaps the greatest man in the world.” Du Bois then provides some details about Gandhi’s education in England and his public life in South Africa. On arriving in South Africa, Du Bois writes, Gandhi “gave up the law and devoted himself
To the American Negro
A Message from Mahatma Gandhi

Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grand children of the slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave-owners. But let us not think of honour or dishonour in connection with the past. Let us realise that the future is with those who would be truthful, pure and loving. For, as the old wise men have said, truth ever is, untruth never was. Love alone binds and truth and love assure only to the truly humble.

1st May, 1929.

South African Native Conference for the Elliot Farm School (Page 240)

Fig. 5. “To the American Negro: A Message from Mahatma Gandhi,” The Crisis, July 1929, 225. At right is a facsimile of a note from Gandhi, with annotations by W. E. B. Du Bois to its left. At bottom is a posed photograph of several men, seated and standing, with the caption “South African Native Conference for the Elliot Farm School.”
to the Indian people who were being persecuted along with the natives in the land.” During the Boer War, Gandhi served with the Red Cross, “attending friend and foe alike. . . . For twenty years he toiled in South Africa to remove race prejudice.” As Du Bois most certainly knew, this presentation of Gandhi’s behavior in South Africa carefully elided his political relationships with Black and Coloured South Africans, relationships which were, as we saw in the previous chapter, broadly sympathetic but mostly inconsequential. The ambiguous placement of a nested subordinate clause—“devoted himself to the Indian people who were being persecuted along with the natives in the land”—permits the reader to imagine that the “along with” modifies not only the persecution but also the devotion of Gandhi’s work. Similarly, Gandhi’s work with an ambulance corps in support of the British military is presented here as treating “friend and foe alike,” with neither friend nor foe specified.

Du Bois further encourages generous interpretation by juxtaposing the text with a photograph of the South African Natives’ Conference. Gandhi never attended this conference, and we do not see him (or any other Indian-looking person, for that matter) in this image. The reader nonetheless senses, in this juxtaposition of text and image, that Gandhi must have made common cause with his African neighbors. On returning to India, Du Bois’s text explains, Gandhi was disillusioned by “the massacre of Amritsar, and the infamous Rowlatt bills,” at which point he came out for Home Rule and announced his great Gospel of conquest through peace. Agitation, non-violence, refusal to cooperate with the oppressor, became his watchword and with it he is leading all India to freedom. Here and today, he stretches out his hand in fellowship to his colored friends of the West.

Du Bois here acts as both interlocutor and translator: he defines Gandhi for his readership in a specifically Christian idiom, as a colored man preaching a “great Gospel.” Through these strategic additions to Gandhi’s note, both visual and rhetorical, Du Bois renders Gandhi’s particularly Indian politics relevant to his primarily African American readers.

Whereas additive juxtaposition was sufficient for Du Bois’s publication of Gandhi in The Crisis, his engagement with Rabindranath Tagore required both transcription and facsimile reproduction. In 1929 Du Bois also solicited a note from Tagore, which he included in the October “Children’s Number” of The Crisis (fig. 6). Tagore’s note was inscribed,
A Message to the American Negro from Rabindranath Tagore

The writing I may add is in the Poet's own hand.
With regards,
Yours truly,
(Signed) AMITA C. CHAKRABARTY
(Private Secretary to Dr. R. N. Tagore)
The Message, which is reproduced in Mr. Tagore's handwriting on this page, is as follows:
"What is the great fact of this age?
It is that the Messenger has knocked at our gate and all the bars have given way.
Our doors have burst open. The human races have come out of their enclosures.
They have gathered together.
"We have been engaged in cultivating each his own individual life, and within the forced seclusion of our racial tradition. We had neither the wisdom nor the opportunity to harmonize our growth with world tendencies. But there are no longer walls to hide us. We have at length to prove our worth in the whole world, not merely to admiring groups of our own people. We must justify our own existence. We must show, each in our own civilization, that which is universal in the heart of the unique.
"RABINDRANATH TAGORE."

Fig. 6. "A Message to the American Negro from Rabindranath Tagore," The Crisis, October 1929, 333–34. At top left, Tagore looks directly at the camera; his handwritten note is reproduced at the bottom right of this page and the bottom left of the following page. Du Bois's typed commentary runs alongside and above Tagore's note.
Many of our readers will peruse these words with a certain prejudice. Here is a man who is colored, who writes with practically nothing of what we are learning to call "race consciousness." His Message is universal. He has risen to something quite above the artificial limitations of race, color, and nation. He recognizes the Messenger of Human Culture as bursting racial bonds. He sees racial and national development as hindrances rather than helps to universal culture. We are all of us black, red, white or yellow. Out under the blazing sun of world news and knowledge, our great duty is to prove our worth to the world and not merely to ourselves. White civilization and white people must justify their worth to the world. Black people and yellow people must do the same. There is no question of domination, of rule, of superiority and inferiority. The Universal which in the heart of the Individual must show itself in every civilization.

This is Tagore's message in a language which neither white nor black Americans can easily understand. White America is provincial and material to the last degree. To its little narrow mind nothing in earth, sky or sea is as rich and efficient as America. But we who criticize white America, have also by our very criticism been forced into provincialism. We are narrow by our own grievances and hate. This is natural, and today perhaps and in this generation, almost inescapable.

Even Tagore himself when he came to America found his environment so narrow and disconcerting that he canceled his engagements and went home. He said in Tokyo, June 16th, that he had canceled his tour of American universities because he was oppressed by the air of suspicion and incrivelity toward Asians.

"I had promised many people in the United States to come here. I came to the United States. The immigration officials asked me to come into the office to present my documents. I entered the office and waited a half-hour. I could hear the official talking and laughing with a lady in the next room. He came to the door, saw me waiting and saw another gentleman. He talked to him for some time.

"Then he beckoned me into his office, without a word, a nod or any sign of civility. He pointed to a chair and began to question me. Did I know the restrictions of time within which I could remain in the country? How long did I expect to remain? Was I prepared to deposit the required amount at the bank? I would leave? Did I know the penalties for staying longer? "His insulting questions and attitude were deeply humiliating. I was not used to such treatment. I had been salutary and most cordially welcomed in Europe. Never had I had such an experience. I went to Los Angeles, stayed there and lectured. But all the time I was impressed by the spirit in the air. The people seemed cultivating an attitude of suspicion and incrivelity toward Asians. I did not at all like it. I could not stay on sufferance, suffer indignities for being an Asian. It was not a personal grievance, but as a representative of all Asian peoples I could not remain under the shadow of such an insult. I took passage without delay.

"I have many friends in America, genuine idealists for whom I have the highest regard. I have read books by their great men which have attracted my heart. I hope they have a great future in carrying on the mission of civilization as it has been begun in the West. I have real respect for the people, but also respect for my own people, colored people. If they must meet such treatment in that country, it is best for any self-respecting Asian not to thrust himself upon its hospitality.

"I was silent when reporters came to me in Los Angeles. I wanted to go away quietly and not create a sensation. I was not used to airing my grievances, it was undignified. But I had an American companion, who felt the insult more keenly than I. He revived the officer, using strong and picturesque American expressions which I had never heard before. Otherwise, it would never have come out.

"Let me emphasize once more that I bear no ill feeling to the American people. I have been received with kindness in the Eastern States, overrun with kindness. People have listened to me with respect and received my message sincerely. That is why it has hurt so much this time. Why does such a country treat the peoples of Asia, colored peoples, all strangers who come within her gates with open minds, in such a manner that they get such an impression as I received?"

Reubin Askew, "The Crisis"
as Du Bois’s text declares, “in the Poet's own hand,” and the facsimile reproduction of that message reads:

What is the greatest fact of this age? It is that the messenger has knocked at our gate and all the bars have given way. Our doors have burst open. The human races have come out of their enclosures. They have gathered together.

We have been engaged in cultivating each his own individual life, within the fenced seclusion of our racial tradition. We had neither the wisdom nor the opportunity to harmonize our growth with world tendencies. But there are no longer walls to hide us. We have at length to prove our worth to the whole world, not merely to admiring groups of our own people. We must justify our own existence. We must show, each in our own civilization, that which is universal in the heart of the unique.

Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore’s note evokes both spirituality and imprisonment, producing a universalist encouragement of the intermingling and “gathering together” of the various “human races,” through “burst open” doors and bars that “have given way.” His message is published in The Crisis in a facsimile version of his handwriting, across two pages and framed by Du Bois’s commentary. Du Bois’s gloss begins, as usual, with biographical material, then reproduces the text of a missive from Tagore’s secretary, “Amiya C. Chakravartz [Chakravarty],” that accompanied the note itself. Du Bois further provides a typeset version of the note, printing it within the body of his lengthy commentary, even as Tagore’s handwriting, containing only two illegible scribbles, looms large across both pages. Tagore’s message, in its anti-imperial and antiracist universalism, says Du Bois, “is in a language which neither white nor black Americans can easily understand.” It is as though the reader of The Crisis might not be able to read, much less understand, Tagore’s message unless Du Bois types it out for him.

In the typed transcription, Du Bois writes of “the forced seclusion of our racial tradition”; the handwritten note, in keeping with Tagore’s imagery elsewhere, mentions “the fenced seclusion of our racial tradition” (my italics). In this moment of print internationalism, “fenced” becomes “forced,” and it bridges two very different contexts in the process. In late colonial India, the fencing off of an essentialized tradition produces
an exclusionary nationalism; in the United States of the same period, ideologies of racial hierarchy find their invidious institutionalization in state-sanctioned racial segregation. Whereas India’s fenced seclusions enable the assertions of anticolonial nationalism, the forced seclusions of the U.S. elevate White citizens above their compatriots.

Even after typing out and delicately editing Tagore’s language, Du Bois worries that his cherished message may still be incomprehensible to the readers of *The Crisis*:

Many of our readers will peruse these words with a certain puzzlement. Here is a man who is colored, who writes practically nothing of what we are learning to call “race consciousness.” His Message is universal. He has risen to something quite above the artificial limitations of race, color and nation. He recognizes the Messenger of Human Culture as bursting racial bonds. . . . The Universal which [is] in the heart of the Individual must show itself in every civilization.

This is Tagore’s message in a language which neither white nor black Americans can easily understand. White America is provincial and material to the last degree. To its little narrow mind nothing in earth, sky or sea is as big and rich and ancient as America. But we who criticize white America have also by our very criticism been forced into provincialism.120

Du Bois celebrates his foreign contributor as “quite above the artificial limitations of race, color and nation.” Tagore’s failure to express “what we are learning to call ‘race consciousness’” is rearticulated by Du Bois as a position that comes after, and not before, the development of an antiracist sensibility. Tagore’s message is “in a language which neither white nor black Americans can easily understand,” but not because it is in Tagore’s primary language of Bengali. Instead, the language problem resides inside the American mind: White America’s “provincial and material” nature has “forced” even its Black critics “into provincialism.” Du Bois ends the gloss—and the two-page feature more generally—by reprinting, in quotes, a lengthy account of how “even Tagore himself when he came to America found his environment so narrow and discourteous that he cancelled his engagements and went home.”121

Du Bois had reported on Tagore’s ill-fated U.S. visit for the African American weekly the *Pittsburgh Courier* only a few months earlier, in an article titled “Indian Philosopher Hits Race Prejudice: Hindu Poet
and British Knight Declare America Has Contemptuous Attitude to All with Skins Not White.” In that article, Du Bois faithfully reported that Tagore said his “poor health prompted his departure”: in keeping with his reticence on the topic to the U.S. press, Tagore described his immigration experience as “very trivial, though unpleasant” and added that he “do[es] not judge American people by that one incident.” Yet in the commentary he provides for Tagore’s note in *The Crisis*, Du Bois proves Tagore’s antiracist anger by including seven paragraphs of quotation from Tagore’s account to the Japanese journal the *Trans-Pacific*:

> The people [in the western United States] seemed to be cultivating an attitude of suspicion and incivility toward Asiatics. I did not at all like it. I could not stay on sufferance, suffer indignities for being an Asiatic. It was not a personal grievance, but as a representative of all Asiatic peoples I could not remain under the shadow of such an insult. I took passage without delay.

This report, which Du Bois obtained by reading an English-language journal published from Tokyo, echoes Japanese protests of the 1924 Immigration Act, which extended the logic of 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to exclude all Asian persons. It thus marked, in legislative terms, the extension of “suspicion and incivility” to all “Asiatics.” As Tagore ruefully wrote, in a quotation reproduced by Du Bois:

> I have real respect for the [American] people, but also respect for my own people, ‘colored’ people. . . . Why does such a country treat the peoples of Asia, colored peoples, all strangers who come within her gates with open minds, in such a manner that they get such an impression as I received?

This question is aimed at some universal thinker: it is unanswerable, by Americans as by America’s “strangers.” It is also the question, in Tagore’s quoted voice, with which Du Bois ends his commentary in *The Crisis*.

Much as Du Bois reshaped his Indian correspondents’ notes for his U.S. publication into collaborative pages through his strategic annotation, so too Du Bois’s own work would be reframed when it was published in an Indian periodical. We now turn to an essay that has been anthologized often and has been quoted frequently for its beautiful
demonstration of Du Bois’s prescient articulation of the Global South. However, the context of its publication has rarely been discussed, and this context, as I demonstrate, shows both the pitfalls and the potential of this now-familiar concept, whether in Du Bois’s time or in our own.

In March 1936 Du Bois’s writing was published in the *Aryan Path*, a Theosophical journal based in Bombay (now renamed Mumbai). Du Bois had been invited to contribute on any topic, and he had replied suggesting that he write on religious divergences and economic cooperation between Indians and American Negroes.126 The editors in New York, however, suggested “some special features of Negro culture,” and Du Bois agreed.127 Some weeks later, however, the Bombay office requested an article on one of Du Bois’s original suggestions, “the methods of increasing the interest and knowledge between Indians and American Negroes.”128

This ongoing editorial exchange reflects the constitutive uncertainty among the editors about the relevance of Du Bois’s expertise to Indian concerns. Even as the early twentieth-century syncretism of Theosophy developed its own narrative of racial intermingling and universal brotherhood, it was broadly uninterested in the kinds of racial struggle that preoccupied Du Bois, which inevitably required recognizing racist oppression and racial conflict.129 Thus, when the *Aryan Path* published Du Bois’s essay on “Indians and American Negroes,” as it was titled in his manuscript version, they did so within a tripartite essay whose title announced a message of racial synthesis: “The World Is One.” In an opening note, titled “East and West,” the editors introduce Du Bois as the “world-famous leader of the Negroes of the U.S.A.”130 They caution readers that his “very thought provoking article . . . needs to be considered from the Indian standpoint,” and they promise to publish a response “from a well-known Indian authority.”131 Du Bois’s contribution, finally titled “The Clash of Colour,” appeared between a meditative opening called “The Clash of Ideals,” by the Frenchman Luc Durtain, and an optimistic conclusion titled “The Emergence of Harmony,” by the Scotsman Miller Watson.132 The first essay described the mystical Orient and the mechanical Occident, while the second positioned Brazil as a postracial utopia. Neither of those articles was provincialized, and neither was promised an Indian response.

Through this framing for publication, Du Bois’s message of solidarity among the colored peoples of the world was subsumed to a narrative of a postracial future, even as the essay itself was not altered: the words printed under Du Bois’s name are, with the exception of the title, con-
sistent with his manuscript version. Whereas the adjacent essays enthu-
siastically addressed an assumed White reader, Du Bois’s essay assumes
an Indian reader and warns that

India . . . has long wished to regard herself as “Aryan” rather than “colored” and to think of herself as much nearer phys-
ically and spiritually to Germany and England than to Af-
rica, China, or the South Seas. And yet the history of the
modern world shows the futility of this thought. European
exploitation desires the black slave, the Chinese coolie, and
the Indian laborer for the same ends and the same purposes,
and calls them all “niggers.” (All quotation marks in the
original)\textsuperscript{133}

Much as Gandhi, writing in 1896, was willing to group the African
“native” and the Indian “coolie” within the same “black laboring
class,” Du Bois in 1936 too understands the laboring class as constitu-
ted by racial hierarchies.\textsuperscript{134} He adds emotional significance through
his pointed use of slurs: Black, Chinese, and Indian are all united un-
der a single pejorative epithet, as “niggers,” in a modern world struc-
tured by White exploitation. He acknowledges the Indo-Aryan thesis
yet suggests that its claims are “futile.” The murky truths of ancestry,
he emphasizes, cannot compete with the modern realities of capitalism.

Du Bois explains that the “great difficulty” between Indians and
American Negroes lies in their “almost utter lack of knowledge” about
each other.\textsuperscript{135} This educational problem is only exacerbated by the me-
dia, for
to the editors of the great news agencies, Indians and Ne-
groes are not news. They distribute, therefore, and emphasise
only such things as are bizarre and uncommon: lynchings
and mobs in the Southern States of the United States, dia-
lect and funny stories; and from India, stories of religious
frenzy, fights between Hindus and Mohammedans, the deeds
of masters of magic and the wealth of Indian princes.\textsuperscript{136}

Much as Gandhi had claimed in 1909 that only conflict was seen as no-
table in the annals of history, Du Bois in 1936 builds implicitly on this
thesis, arguing that only peculiarity and violence will be reported when
it comes to non-White people. Whereas contemporary desires for mul-
ticultural understanding frequently emphasize the importance of interpersonal exchange, Du Bois’s internationalist project placed particular emphasis, instead, on literature and print, rather than on direct contact. As Du Bois explains, when Indians come to the United States they meet a peculiar variation of the Colour Line. An Indian may be dark in colour, but if he dons his turban and travels in the South, he does not have to be subjected to the separate-car laws and other discriminations against Negroes in that part of the country where the mass of Negroes live. This public recognition of the fact that he is not a Negro may, and often does, flatter his vanity so that he rather rejoices that in this country at least he is not as other dark men are, but is classified with the Whites.  

Just as the robes of the wealthy in Gandhi’s 1896 pamphlet might have exempted them from the racial restrictions of South Africa, the turban of the traveling Indian can remove him from the oppressed side of the U.S. color line. Perhaps informed by Tagore’s experience of racism on the west coast of the U.S., Du Bois notes that this applies only in the South. Moreover, he warns, if looking “for employment or for citizenship or any economic status,” Indians would “find the tables quite turned.” Instead of personal experience, then, we need “literature directed toward the masses of these two peoples.” He suggests that Indians write for Negro papers, and vice versa, so that we recognize “the fact that these people have common aims.” Through this print internationalism, he advocates “the union of the darker races,” which might create “a new and beautiful world, not simply for themselves, but for all men.”

Following Du Bois’s faith in the powers of print internationalism, I have traced in this section Indians—Gandhi and Tagore—writing for a “Negro” paper, and an “American Negro”—Du Bois—writing for an Indian journal. Yet the Bombay-based Aryan Path finally has little space for the Negro, nor for any criticism of White supremacy, as is demonstrated in the response to Du Bois’s article. Published under the headline “The Union of Colour,” the Kannada leader Subba Rao in the next issue praises Du Bois’s writing but fundamentally disagrees: Indians, he asserts, are not racist, nor do they have anything in common with those of African descent. Rather than the “Union of Color” that Du Bois advocated, Subba Rao argues that the Negro must become a proper American, giving “a cultural content” to his “political citizenship,” while the
Indian must receive “political rights” that recognize his existing “cultural status.” As discussed earlier in this chapter, Du Bois entertained separate agendas of advancement for each group in his novel Dark Princess, but he could do so precisely because of the suturing powers of his heterosexual romance plot: the Black American and the Indian Princess, differentiated by both sex and nation, could quite literally produce the brownie that would liberate the Global South. In the pages of nonfiction prose, as here in the Aryan Path, the articulation of divergence seems irreconcilable with the broader interlinkages enshrined in “the union of color”—or, as we would call it, the Global South.

This debate on whether Indians and Negroes should make common cause continued into a third issue of the Aryan Path, in which the “Correspondence” page ran a section once again titled “The Union of Colour.” It opened with a letter from Du Bois, who positioned Subba Rao’s response as anterior to contemporary African America: “We Negroes in the United States,” he explains, “have repeatedly passed through this phase of reasoning,” which he terms as a “self-denying attitude” with “easily disastrous” consequences. While Subba Rao cautions against efforts to “unite or seem to unite against white people,” Du Bois warns that “there is no hesitancy on the part of the European peoples in thinking of their own destiny and of their work and future without reference to the rest of the world.” Meaningful advancement, he argues, is “impossible” so long as “the children of India, Africa and Negro America are going to be brought up under the incubus of colour caste.” This final term, which surfaces increasingly in his writings in the 1930s, indicates a decisive shift in his understandings of race and caste. Seeking through his print internationalism to work in the prose of fact rather than that of fiction and fantasy, Du Bois moves from the caste-phobic antiracism of Dark Princess to arrive at a “color caste” model that interweaves divergent oppressions in search of worldwide commonality.

In this chapter, by focusing on the brownie of Du Bois and Fauset, we have examined an antiracist movement that departed decisively from racial logics by embracing both inclusivity and impurity. Leaving the racial identity of his decisive neologism undefined, Du Bois articulated a print internationalism of the global color line by espousing a transregional vision that echoes what we now term the Global South. This territorial imaginary was capable of accommodating differences both between political units and within them, yet it could not, in its fictive
nature, avoid generating representations that ultimately served only local needs. We witnessed this repeatedly in Du Bois’s depiction of India, which functioned at once as a treasured comrade in the fight against racism and as a convenient phobic object enabling Du Bois’s castigation of U.S. racism as a distressingly Indian form of caste-based hierarchy.

In New York in December 1921, after two years of active publication, the *Brownies’ Book* published its last issue, which opened with Yolande DuBois’s story of “The Land behind the Sun,” whose protagonist “looked like a little Japanese girl, with a dimpled face, golden-brown in color, and soft jet-black hair” and “pretty almond-shaped eyes.” It continued with a story about Mexico by Langston Hughes, an explanation by “The Judge” of the publication’s poor finances, and then pieces on “Olive Plaatje” and “‘Saint’ Gandhi: The Greatest Man in the World.” Interspersed with riddles, very short stories by children, and plenty of photos, the final issue includes just one long feature that is set in the United States. Fauset’s valedictory note explains that the *Brownies’ Book* was a response to “the great need that exists for literature adapted to colored children, and indeed to all children who live in a world of varied races,” noting as well that they “have had an unusually enthusiastic set of subscribers.” The world of varied races, moreover, had been given material form. The children reading the final issue leaped from Japan to Mexico, and from South Africa to India, all through the print internationalism of the *Brownies’ Book*.

For example, the essay “Olive Plaatje,” written by the composer Sarah Talbert Keelan, provides an obituary of “one interested little subscriber, from Kimberley, South Africa.” Olive Schreiner Plaatje, the sixteen-year-old daughter of South African leader Sol Plaatje, died in 1919 on a South African railway platform, denied any succor on account of her race. Keelan concludes by suggesting that African American children, even under virulent U.S. racism, might be luckier than children elsewhere: “It will thus be seen that while Brownies are a ‘problem’ everywhere, in their own homeland—Africa—their troubles start rather early in life.” As this sentence suggests, her essay thus builds print internationalism even as it discourages international travel: the brownie who reads the *Brownies’ Book* is likely reading from the United States, but nonetheless knows that there are brownies in Africa as well.

Turning the page, readers arrive at an article by Blanche Watson titled “‘Saint’ Gandhi.” Whereas the article about Olive Plaatje fixates on tiny details at the expense of her biographical significance, the piece titled “‘Saint’ Gandhi” is, as the name suggests, fully invested in the
singularity of the non-White person under discussion. Despite this juxtaposition, this article omits any mention of Gandhi’s time in South Africa. The historical-geographical connection between Olive and Gandhi is passed up for a proximity that suggests connection without stating it outright—a connection that would have been obvious to the magazine’s staff and to many of its readers. The gap between Olive and Gandhi is arguably one of orientation—Olive has died, whereas Gandhi persists—but it is also one of simple knowledge. Diligent readers of The Crisis would be familiar with Gandhi’s South African agitations in the 1910s, and hence might find Gandhi’s Indian work right after a story of South African injustice to be logical, appropriate, and even chronologically motivated. For other readers, however, the journal would have appeared random, and its internationalism more eclectic than connective. The connection between the features, after all, is no longer recognizable to most twenty-first-century scholars, who approach Olive’s obituary as though she were simply an example of Africa’s many neglected children, instead of the particular child of a famous South African political leader—the report of her death is intended to shock us precisely because of her relative privilege.152

As this example demonstrates, the text with intentional gaps makes a very specific—and powerful—demand on the reader, one akin to that of a neologism like gitanjali or satyagraha. In both instances, the feature that cannot be deciphered within the dominant code compels the reader to acknowledge, via the limits of her existing expertise, the beguiling opacity of future possibilities. In considering these two practices as analogous, my study of print internationalism bridges a theoretical divide between studies of the African diaspora, on the one hand, and of South Asia and its diasporas, on the other. One influential interpretive tradition within Black studies has theorized that these gaps signal the ruptures of the Afro-diasporic experience, which are then studied through histories of transatlantic travel, political translation, or musical collaboration.153 In the prevailing scholarship, these gaps thereby come to be viewed as slippages within a connected but discontinuous history of Blackness. Within South Asian studies, by contrast, such semiotic interruptions have usually been addressed through the concepts of mimicry and hybridity, or even through the inner/outer dichotomies of (anti)colonial nationalism, whether in the subcontinent itself or in cultures shaped by Indian indenture. In approaching these interruptions, instead, as convergent strategies, I bring together, through my own print
internationalism, what studies predicated on diaspora have frequently kept apart.

This divergence originates, at least in part, within the historical and the rhetorical inheritances of slavery in the Atlantic world. Ideas of the hybrid in the African diaspora point inexorably to those of interracial offspring; studies of hybridity in South Asia and its diaspora, by contrast, have frequently focused on cultural rather than reproductive intermixture. In this manner, the “mimic man” of South Asia and South Asian diasporic postcoloniality possesses a “not-quite-not-white” property that points, in the Black Atlantic, to the “passing plot” and the “tragic mulatto/a” story instead—yet this resemblance is quite literally superficial (because epidermal).

The “one-drop rule” of U.S. racism, after all, makes hybridity legally impossible even as it is repeatedly coerced. The raced individual rendered culturally hybrid under U.S. racism may also be racially “hybrid” through histories of sexual coercion—yet ideologies of White purity in a White supremacist slave society required that racial intermixture be disavowed. In this process, the person of African and European ancestry is categorized only as Black, and that repressed history of divided parentage, at once biological and cultural, may come to reverberate in the split of “double consciousness.” Whereas the project of White supremacy in the United States thus facilitated the production of racially mixed yet officially Black persons, White rule in the Indian subcontinent sought to rework those non-White persons who already existed. In Macauley’s famous 1835 “Minute on Indian Education,” the British sought to produce “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” who could best serve the interests of a White supremacist state.154 In the United States, White supremacy produced persons who were increasingly less Black “in blood and colour” even as it falsely insisted that they were fundamentally Black “in opinions, in morals and in intellect,” perpetuating an essentialist racism in the service of a racist labor regime. In the Indian subcontinent, by contrast, White supremacy demanded purity of “blood and colour,” both in race and in caste, even as it demanded cultural convergence for its own administrative convenience. The British Raj was also a White supremacist regime, but it was one that extracted wealth primarily through indirect rule and extractive trade, not primarily through plantation agriculture. (This schematization, I must note, is not universal: in South Africa, for in-
stance, White supremacism sought both biological and cultural purity in its subjugated populations.) The centrality of South Asia to the theorization of the South Asian diaspora, and of the United States to that of the African diaspora, however, have predisposed these divergent histories to beget divergent theorizations: mimicry for one experience of racist subordination, double consciousness for the other.

The divergence becomes ever more explicable if one attends to the kinds of gaps that have captured scholarly attention: between Africa and its diaspora, in one case, and between the South Asian colonized and their colonizers, on the other. Even when the South Asian diaspora has drawn sustained conceptual attention, creative efforts have generally focused on the transformative effects of indenture and migration, not on the relations between South Asia and its diasporas. As a consequence, we have coinages like “migritude” and “coolietude,” which draw on the Negritude of 1930s Black writers like Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor to articulate the South Asian diaspora through a visceral notion of displacement.155 Racialization as expressed through migration becomes, thus, the object of theorization, whereas in recent studies of Black internationalism, it is often the connections of diaspora, rather than the transformations of migrancy, that attract critical attention.

The print internationalism, staged through narrative in *Dark Princess* and through juxtaposition in the *Brownies’ Book*, can help us to denaturalize this implicit critical consensus, for the print internationalism of the brownie is very different, I would argue, from our contemporary approaches to the Global South. The brownie reaches its visual apotheosis in the image used to conclude the final issue of the *Brownies’ Book*. In a full-page picture, captioned “Good-Bye!” (fig. 7), a young child gazes downward, facing toward us with dark skin, straight dark hair, and small eyes. The image resembles a Japanese woodblock print, and indeed the child’s clothing and his environment, complete with bamboo, suggests a Japanese setting, in a representation evocative of Japanese art forms. Through its referent to another land, it suggests that the farewell of the *Brownies’ Book* comes from elsewhere: it does not emanate from the adults running the magazine, nor is it representative of the magazine’s primarily African American subscribers. Instead, the child that ends the children’s magazine, much like the child that concludes *Dark Princess*, is a figure of racial ambiguity who betokens a future at the end of White supremacy: the ever-undefined, and hence ever-promising, brownie.
Fig. 7. “Good-bye,” from the Brownies’ Book, December 1921, 340. The style of the illustration suggests Japanese woodblock printing.