49th Parallel An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies

Back to index

"I want to be the rule itself, not the exception that proves it"
The Wind Done Gone: Rewriting Gone With the Wind

Corinna Baschirotto, University of Padua

History is 'cannibalistic', and memory becomes
the closed arena of conflict between two
contradictory operations: forgetting, an
action directed against the past, and the
return of what was forgotten.
[Michel de Certeau[1]]

… they have been hung, and burned, and shot —
and their tyrants have been the historians!

[Lydia Maria Child, Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans, 1833]

This article focuses on the first novel written by author Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone*, an unauthorized parody of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 classic *Gone With the Wind*. Starting from an overview of the legal battle fought over the publication of Randall's book, it attempts to weigh some cultural and linguistic issues implied in the public debate that accompanied the case. It tries to unravel a number of problems raised by the parodic rewriting of a book whose position in – or outside, according to some - the literary canon is all but clearly established. It then proceeds to analyse some crucial aspects of Randall's book, namely her portrayal of a black, previously silenced, history, her articulation of a black aesthetic and her adoption of Black English. Thus, this analysis also revolves around issues of collective memory and national identity. In particular, it interrogates one very powerful source in which collective memory has been shaped, and points to the tensions that result from a questioning of this source.

The Wind Done Gone was scheduled to be published on June 6, 2001, by Houghton Mifflin. However, SunBank Trust, representing the Stephen Mitchell Trusts, which owns the copyright to *Gone With the Wind*, petitioned a court in Atlanta to prohibit the publication of Randall's book. The plaintiff claimed that *The Wind Done Gone* infringed copyright law and argued that the book engaged in "blatant and wholesale theft" of Mitchell's bestseller, being "an unauthorized derivative work which incorporates and infringes upon the fully developed characters, settings, plot lines and other copyrighted elements of *Gone With the Wind*"[2].

As a result, U.S. District Judge Charles A. Panell Jr. granted the Mitchell Trusts a preliminary injunction to prevent the publication of the novel. A month later, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta ruled that the injunction was an "extraordinary and drastic remedy" that "amounts to unlawful prior restraint in violation of the First Amendment". The book was finally allowed to enter the bookshops in June 2001 and stayed on the best-seller lists for weeks. Even though it was already available, lawyers for the Mitchell estate said they would continue the lawsuit in hopes of getting damages. Only one year later, in June 2002, did the two parties finally reach an out-of-court settlement. Under the terms of the agreement, Randall's publisher, Houghton Mifflin, consented to make an unspecified contribution to Morehouse College, an historically black school in Atlanta. In return, the lawyers for Mitchell's estate agreed to stop trying to block sales of Randall's book.

From the vantage point of the after-math, it may be all too easy to speculate over the real problems underlying the debate, which accompanied the case on a national level. However, the brouhaha stirred by Randall's novel and the scope of the problems it touched deserves attention, since they went beyond the mere copyright issue. The petitioner's accusation against the book, despised as a work of "subliteracy" and a mere theft of the original, contained a negative evaluation of Randall's work not simply in relation to its supposed plagiarism. Randall's reversal of *Gone with the Wind's* (henceforth *GWTW*) story and language, together with her parodic treatment of characters, were taken as unauthorized distortions that could harm the original work and its reception. The fact of forcing readers to reflect upon their acceptance of Mitchell's portrait of the old South was considered an inadmissible effrontery, although, as Nobel-laureate Toni Morrison pointed out in her declaration to the court, the "process of being stimulated by one narrative into a writer's own literary invention and creativity is virtually the history of literature"[3]. This same process informed the creation of Mitchell's own story[4].

The action taken against Randall's exploration and explosion of *GWTW*'s story and of its racist stereotypes seems to reveal, more than the limits of her work, a desire to avoid a serious questioning of the national identity, of the past on which this identity rests and of the sources which have most powerfully articulated it. That Randall's attempt was deemed a violation implicitly suggests a kind of ownership over the contested ground of memory, together with a desire to keep in place "the racial structures *Gone With the Wind* describes, depends upon, and about which a war was fought"[5].

As those who submitted a letter of support for *The Wind Done Gone* (henceforth *TWDG*) pointed out, due to "the extraordinary popularity of *GWTW* and its unique mythic status, Mitchell's novel has become a prime source of knowledge about plantation life for much of mainstream America."[6] America's obsession with *GWTW* – as Janelle Collett defined it[7] – began with the publication of the novel in 1936, subsequently grew with the popularity of Selznick's film and does not seem to be receding today. Since its publication, *GWTW* has sold an average of 500,000 copies each year[8], conditioning the nation's popular view of the Civil War period and the Reconstruction Era in the South[9]. Mitchell's single novel is unquestionably among the most popular of popular books ever written. Despite its several historical inaccuracies, in the last sixty years it has been shaping and influencing, more than any other text, American popular memory of the Old South. *TWDG* aims at undermining the myths created and perpetrated by Mitchell's story. It forces readers to question the hypotext's world and "explode the archetypes that have leapt off its pages into America's consciousness."[10]

In spite of its undisputed popularity, *GWTW*'s own status within the literary canon is not without its ups and downs. The story of the book's reception, of its "place, or 'non-place' in American letters",[11] may help us to understand the evolution of modern American intellectual history and is revealing in itself[12]. When *GWTW* appeared in the early summer of 1936, a welter of enthusiasm welcomed it. Particularly outstanding was Henry Steele Commager's review in the front page of the *New York Herald Tribune*[13]. Commager summarized all the virtues critics immediately saw in the novel, appreciating Mitchell's "recreation of life itself" and praising the book's authenticity "in capturing the regional experience"[14] of the South in the Civil War and Reconstruction Era.

Along with this first enthusiastic wave of criticism, however, the novel also stirred harsh reactions and soon became the target of leftists' and modernists' disdainful dismissals. Malcolm Cowley's review, "Going with the Wind", criticized the book for three main reasons. First of all, for its popularity, which the critic read as a mirror of the depreciable commercialization of literature; secondly, for its Southernism; and finally, for its overdue emphasis on the female characters. *GWTW*'s apparent air of escapism in the face of the contemporary crisis of the 1930s, coupled with its entertaining character and enthusiastic popular reception, were all read as evidence of its poor literary value. Cowley

dismissed it as "an encyclopaedia of the plantation legend"[15]. After him, the cultural and intellectual misogyny typical of the Modernist era led critics to condemn the book as "written by women for women, with a large use of tearful scenes, moonlight and magnolias and all the paraphernalia of the plantation mythology"[16]. The fact that for almost thirty years the academy kept Cowley's review as the final word on *GWTW*[17] is indicative of the general tendency of American culture to read the feminine as synonymous with the popular and thus dismissible[18]. What is more, as Elizabeth I. Hanson observed in her biography of Margaret Mitchell, for a long time even feminist scholars tended to avoid female popular texts, considering them of little value for scholarly investigation: "[T]he popularity of novels by women – whether Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*, or Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* - has prevented them from receiving critical attention and has excluded them from the American literary canon."[19]

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, renewed critical interest in popular culture, the development of reader-response approaches and a new appreciation of the sentimental tradition, have contributed to modify *GWTW*'s position within the canon – if such a thing still exists. Although still largely relegated to the status of a minor, popular and entertaining literary artefact, *GWTW* has become the object of renewed critical attention, largely due to the emergence of forms of criticism that are more and more aware of literature's - as well as criticism's - implication with ideology[20]. As a result, feminist scholars have been investigating and questioning *GWTW* in the light of its immense success. They consider the book's strong appeal for women on the basis of its close links with the female experience of everyday and particularly focus on the book's engagement with the theme of survival[21].

In the light of this critical overview, Alice Randall's parodic rewriting of *GWTW* may be read as a way of contributing to the canonization of Mitchell's book. Writing back to a text always implies the acknowledgment of its cultural import, if not of its literary value. Randall explicitly admits her mixed feelings towards Mitchell's book: having read it when she was twelve, she loved the novel and tried to ignore its explicit and blatant racism. Later on, as she became aware of the power of Mitchell's story in contemporary society, she decided to question the continued and uncritical acceptance of the novel.

Indeed, the reality of slavery remains largely untold in *GWTW*. Its portrayal of the peculiar institution is at best blind and unfailingly benign. Mitchell marginalizes slavery as just one component of southern society and as a factor in the outbreak of the Civil War. She represents plantation life and the bonds between slaves and master within the reassuring frame of family ties and gives no voice to alternative and more realistic views of the reality of repression and violence under slavery. What is more, in Mitchell's representation of characters, individual slaves are never allowed to become "active agents in the story"[22]. Blacks always remain flat, cartoon like caricatures, and their portrayal is overtly racist. They never reach the status of complete human beings, associated as they are to harmless domestic animals, "before emancipation yields to a more virulent depiction of dangerous and powerful beasts in freedom (…) animals that now threaten whites and the social order to which they cling."[23]. Randall's novel can thus be read as a legitimate attempt to right the balance and, occupying "narrative spaces and silences never once touched upon nor conceived of in Mrs. Mitchell's novel"[24], to make the black slaves' voice heard.

TWDG's first important achievement is that it makes the reader question her/his own reception of Mitchell's story. If it is undeniable that several literary critics have attempted similar actions in writing about *GWTW*[25], nevertheless, maybe because the terrain on which literary criticism works is generally reserved for the few, such critical readings have rarely affected the popular reading public. Randall, on the other hand, smartly chose the format of the novel to launch her critique and thus addressed the vast audience of Mitchell's readers, making the effects of her work potentially immense.

Far from attempting to rob *GWTW* of its readers, however, *TWDG* makes them enter another plausible narrative world, which explodes some of the themes of the hypotext and, through parody[26], questions their passive acceptance.

That Randall's novel was given such a controversial reception does not necessarily reflect on the value of her work, but rather serves to illuminate other crucial problems. It reveals the petitioner's limited view and approach to her work and, even more, it shows how problematic the memory of the nation's past still is. The legacy of slavery remains the "closed arena of conflict" Michel de Certeau wrote about[27]. Slavery's historic representation and racist heritage still stir controversial reactions and may even lead, as in this case, to legal battles: "Considering the First Amendment rights properly accorded *Gone With the Wind*, in spite of the pain, humiliation, and outrage its historical representation has caused African Americans, it seems particularly odd for the Mitchell estate to deny this clever but gentle effort to assuage the damage *Gone With the Wind* has caused. That it has asked legal redress does not seem to have embarrassed it."[28]

Furthermore, the accusation that the novel is sub-literate seems to point to a number of issues intimately related to the problem of African American Vernacular English and its literary dignity. Randall's decision to write from a black perspective is carried out through her articulation of a black language and aesthetics, which perfectly match her subject matter. Black English in the US today is a contested minority language too often associated with the presumed "sub-literacy" of its speakers, along with their supposed "non-verbal" or linguistically deficient communication skills[29]. As several highly advertised cases[30] suggest, Black English can easily become a target of sarcastic and superficial perspectives often expressing racial prejudice. What is more, the diffused ignorance of Black English, whose development runs parallel to the peculiar history of the African American community, often hides a political aim (the will to reduce the minority's discursive power by labelling it as "street talk" or "slang") and induces black speakers to linguistic self-hatred. Conversely, resistance to the adoption of Standard English can easily become a way to promote cultural identity and resist the dominant discourse of the white majority. In this sense, Randall's adoption of a black voice and, even more, her representation of the growing awareness of Cynara's own blackness, are extremely relevant to the current issue of minority language legitimization through the exploration of its artistic possibilities.

Looking at *TWDG* from the point of view of its content, the book narrates what could have been, "if *GWTW* was history and not fiction, a part of the story that has been left out or suppressed"[31]. Since *GWTW* "is more powerful than history because it is better known than history"[32], Randall accomplishes a sort of historical revision of *GWTW*'s inaccurate portrait of the South - "a South that never, ever existed"[33] - and manages to include her book as part of that same history.

The novel is written in the form of a diary discovered among the papers of a deceased woman, a diary whose author is the mulatto Cynara. Cynara is the beautiful, intelligent, cultivated half-sister of Mitchell's Scarlett, who, in *TWDG*, is simply referred to as Other. Given the literary genre of the fictive diary, Cynara is both narrator and protagonist of her story. The adoption of the first person narrative places her work within an important tradition of black literature. In the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries, the black subject was often given voice in autobiographical works like the slave narratives; that is autobiographies of slaves who had won their freedom. These works had a strong political impact and were intended to promote the abolition of slavery. The choice of the autobiographical format, in *TWDG*, openly puts Randall's work in the line of the slave narrative genre. In particular, the narrator aims at accomplishing "something like Mr. Frederick Douglass" (7). Nevertheless, she also distances herself from this prestigious antecedent: whereas Douglass wrote in polished, Standard English, Cynara often adopts Black English in her diary.

Cynara's point of view stands for Randall's wish to give voice to a previously untold story. The diary, which she begins on May 25, 1873, at the age of twenty-eight, alternates the recollection of past memories of the pre-war period with present events taking place in the Reconstruction Era. The protagonist lives through two profoundly different periods of the nation's history, which is divided in two by the Civil War, a sort of "new metaphorical crossing of the Red Sea"[34] for America. In the pages of her diary she mixes private and public events; she recollects memories of her childhood as a slave and describes her present life as a free black woman and a concubine.

The book can be read as the story of the growth of her self-consciousness paralleled by the choice of her distinctive, increasingly black, voice. Before analysing Randall's style and the typically black rhetorical devices she uses, it is important to consider some of the historical themes she deals with, since they work as so many revisionist strokes[35] directed against the hypotext's blindness. One of the most significant historical aspects in the book is the revelation of miscegenation as a diffused practice within southern plantation life. Cynara's own birth is the result of miscegenation, since she is the daughter of Mammy, Lady's[36] body slave, and Planter, the character who corresponds to Mitchell's Gerald O'Hara. Sexual intercourse between the white planter and his black female slaves was a diffused practice in the South, and its perpetration was legally safeguarded by the fact that a woman's legal status determined that of her offspring. Cynara is extremely explicit in uncovering white men's sexual exploitation of their black slaves, especially when the latter were young girls. When she remembers her years as a maid at Beauty's brothel, she writes:

> the planters that came to Beauty's didn't need to pay for poontang they could steal back home, so I was usually the only female virgin in the house. Males of that persuasion were frequent visitors. Mainly the planters liked their meat what we liked to call pink – before a girl began to bleed. They had less brats around the place that way (21-22).

The idyllic family ties characterizing the relationship between master and slave in GWTW are thus harshly questioned and the lenses through which whites choose to read blacks are dismissed as over-simplifications, with no correspondence in the novel's world. Cynara cannot accept the Uncle Tom stereotype too often attached to black identity; she does not want "to go in disguise"(7). She prefers to be candid in her depiction of the repressive mechanisms slavery implies.

The violence directed against blacks, both under the siege of slavery and in the Reconstruction Era[37] finds expression in several places of Cynara's account: she speaks of whippings, writes about her experience when she had to stand bare-breasted in a slave auction in Charleston, and bluntly makes the reader aware of the humiliation and dispossessed identity slaves had to suffer:

> It's a pissed bed on a cold night to read words on paper saying your name and a price, to read the letters that say you are owned, or to read words that say this one or that one will pay so much money for you to be recaptured (35).

Throughout her diary she makes repeated reference to important figures of black resistance, from Harriet Tubman[38], the black Moses, to Frederick Douglass, whom she pictures as her literary model and whom she meets in Washington. If Randall's wish to tell another history renders her prose at times too overtly didactic[39], she is successful in providing a completely new view of the historical moment Mitchell dealt with in her novel.

Cynara describes the Reconstruction Era as a new beginning and always keeps her eye focused on Black society, among which she witnesses the emergence of a black middle class, together with the birth of black institutions, such as Fisk and Howard University. The pages of her diary are filled with the spirit of novelty and possibility. In her construction of a black-centred narrative, Randall openly tries "to provoke a new consideration of the Reconstruction period, particularly as it relates to African-American history."[40] After giving us some glimpses of life in post-war Atlanta, Cynara travels to

the capital. There she investigates several novelties peculiar to the society of the time, such as the presence of black congressmen, and also notes the persistent discrimination towards blacks and women alike.

The exploration of these historical themes expands and at the same time successfully questions GWTW's world and characters. In TWDG even characters whose white origins are apparently unproblematic are revealed to have a far more complex family past. Thus, racial purity is replaced by hybridity, which above all is embodied in Cynara but also, unexpectedly, in other characters. Although Other does not know it, even she has black ancestors, since her mother's great-grandmother was "a Negresse" (124). As a result, the book is a revelation and exploration of hybridity[41]. It manages to deconstruct the lies on which the myth of racial purity is built and calls into question the ideological basis of slavery. Hybridity, at the same time, is a source of creativity and allows a fresh look into history and memory. Only in the context of hybridity can TWDG's other story exist: its narrator and her style embody and reflect it.

Duplicity is the rhetorical device governing the book. From one perspective, the two levels of private and public life are simultaneously present in the book. Cynara is constantly mixing references both to society and to her most intimate life. She enjoys the interplay of private and public and investigates the way in which the public affects the private. The air of change and ambivalence so characteristic of the post-war period is thus paralleled by a period of self-discovery and emancipation in Cynara's private life. If the book is an individual story of "a woman, a black woman, who reads her way into writing and writes her way into redemption"[42], it is also a collective history in that it gives voice to what Randall, appropriating Jose Marti's words, calls "our America"[43].

Duplicity governs the symbolism and the structure of the book. Cynara is Scarlett's double, and her life mirrors Scarlett's in many respects. The colour line, which divides Other's whiteness from Cynara's blackness, nicely works as a mirror through which differences are at first marked and later on, with the discovery of Other's hybridity, dissolved. Cynara's childhood is strongly conditioned by her mixed race, which makes her a slave and causes her to be sold. Duplicity structures relations at the cotton farm, since the relationship between Other and Mammy and between Cynara and Lady are symmetrical. At first Cynara is jealous and envious of the privileges Mammy allows her. Other has everything she longs for, above all Mammy's attention. After Mammy's death, however, Cynara slowly comes to realize that slavery makes it impossible to know whether Mammy's feelings towards Other were sincere or forced: "Maybe Mammy loved her and maybe Mammy didn't. Slavery made it impossible for Other to know" (103). In other words, the novel seems to start with an affirmation of racial separateness and then proceeds to unfold its real meaning, finally showing how this duplicity both is and is not real.

If slavery affects everybody, white and black, the reader is forced to go beyond appearances and question colour, identity, and even meaning. In chapter 62, which is particularly long and is situated exactly in the middle of the book, Cynara describes a dance at the Russian embassy. She concentrates on the image of the swirl, evoking the different colours surrounding her and forcing us to enter a verbal swirl through which colours are mixed and confused. After that, the subject's position is questioned: "I'm still playing pronoun games. Who is object; who is subject; is it me, or am I it?"(141). Appearances are shown to be deceitful: "I can't recall how to tell a curing from a killing herb" (143). Everything "collapses or disappears" (144). The chapter closes with the image of R. and Cynara dancing together. While the black Congressman, representing the ideal New Negro, "walks away", bringing with him the feeling of freedom, the dance floor where Cynara is with R. becomes a stage, and their dance is a "cake walk".

The image of the cake walk offers us the interpretive key to understanding Randall's rewriting: the cake walk was seen by whites as an imitation of European quadrilles, much like her book, which contains several elements of Mitchell's *GWTW*. However, the cakewalk is a subversive image because it was used by African Americans as a form of parody and commentary on dances performed by whites. As reported in Houghton Mifflin's Reader's Guide:

> What becomes immediately interesting, complicated, and especially relevant […] is the fact that in many cases, white folks living on great plantations misunderstood the dance to be an imitation of European dance. Many Southern aristocrats perceived the cakewalk to be a gross or vulgar mimicry, which ultimately they found amusing, as an illustration of black inferiority. In truth, the cakewalk was a subtle and critical commentary on the differences between the aesthetics of black and white dance styles. In time, plantation owners began to encourage cakewalk contests or competitions between black dancers. The winning dancer or dance pair were rewarded with a cake, so to win the contest was to "take the cake."[44]

In similar fashion, Randall's book has been read as a mere imitation of the hypotext, while its aim is to provide a critical commentary and a parody of *GWTW*, borrowing its themes, characters and plot, but bending them to its own ends. What is more, the style Randall uses to articulate her parody is distinctively black and distances itself from Mitchell's diction in several respects.

Apart from the choice of the first-person narrative – a standard device in much American writing, from the Puritans to *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn* – several expressive devices contribute to the articulation of a specifically black aesthetics in the book. The insistence on the importance of reading and writing is one of them and echoes other famous black narratives. Until the abolition of slavery, to be a black writer in the Southern States constituted an oxymoron, when not a crime. Literacy was forbidden because it supposedly made slaves unhappy, besides providing them with a means of escape. Thus, the quest for freedom in slave narratives often runs parallel to the quest for literacy.

Cynara's writing is her own way to gain freedom for her mind and body from the spiritual and physical legacy of slavery. Writing allows her to pursue physical and moral independence as well as to emancipate herself as a woman from gender hierarchies. As a matter of fact, literacy and sexuality go hand in hand in this book, and they provide the spaces where Cynara can effectively affirm herself. It was a man, her first and for a long time only lover, R., who taught her to read, in bed: "I praised him for it. His stomach was my first paper, lip rouge was my pencil, and the cleaning rag was my tongue. We learned me well. R. gave me the tools. I learned to write, right on his belly" (12). Cynara learns from the master, and R. thus becomes a god for her: "then he was my God. He taught me how to read and write, and it was as if he created me". However, she then transforms what she learns into a revolutionary means of emancipation. She completely subverts the stereotype of the female as a blank, virginal page to be written upon by the male pen(is) and this subversion is what allows her to gain independence.

Indeed, Cynara acknowledges that illiteracy and ignorance may have saved her some pain: "After some of the things I've read, I know if God had loved me, I'd a been born blind" (35). Still, her growth and her self-respect would be unconceivable without her writing. Not only is she an acculturated woman; she also becomes creative and bends the master's means to her own ends, with her own words. What she yearns for is not simply R's love. She gradually comes to realize that what matters to her is "the music of my way of telling, of being, of seeing" (164), something nobody can teach her and which R. is unable to understand. He is her "creator" and sees her only as "a doll come to life. A pretty nigger doll dressed up in finery, hair pressed for play" (164). What she longs for, however, is mutuality and respect. Cynara slowly recognizes that her life has always been in the hands of someone else, someone more powerful than her: "Someone else has written the play. I wish I could think I was God" (164). As soon as she gains this awareness, she realizes that R. is not the man for her and she decides to follow her own path. This will eventually lead her to another lover with whom she can

develop as a black and as a woman, and also break free from the constrictions of society. She will not live according to the rules of society, but she will rather be "on her own" (198).

In this personal path of self-development, Cynara gives voice to the slaves' culture and expressiveness. The twoness[45] of African American culture is reflected at several points in the book. Slaves are forced to develop a coded language in order to be able to communicate without the master's interference, escape his control, and give a revolutionary meaning to familiar objects and words[46]:

> It's like a code. A code I've got to break before I know anything. First deciphering the letters, then puzzling out how the words, contorted by spelling, read, then trying to decide what these words, put together as they are, mean. (96)

The black tradition thereby becomes double-voiced and signifies[47] upon the white one. The result of slavery is that African Americans had to develop their own aesthetics and language, deeply connected with their collective history. Their need for a coded language is reflected in the shift of meanings, which white words undergo when they enter the domain of black expressiveness. In *TWDG*, reality and appearance are always overlapping and confused, and it is difficult to establish a definitive truth. The motif of the impossibility to distinguish emeralds from peridots and glass constantly recurs in the novel as a symbol of the difficulty of interpreting events and people and attaching a fixed meaning to them. Blacks create "a language that permits the nation its only glimpse of reality, a language without which the nation would be even more *whipped* than it is"[48]. In this language appearance and reality overlap, and events and objects seem always on the point of becoming something different as they acquire a double meaning and reveal a hidden reality.

Moreover, blacks develop a double consciousness, and even their soul is split in two. They are Americans, but at the same time they carry the peculiar burden of their people's history and past. In addition, racist discrimination always reminds them of their "otherness". Cynara's boat trip to London is a good example of this twoness, because it both represents and reverses the Middle Passage. Her self is divided, she is at the same time "one of these new people who sail for pleasure" (156) and an ex-slave who must bear the collective memory of her people: "the me in the other we, I am, fears. We are a sailed people. We sailed to America" (156).

Even religious rituals bear a double meaning and are celebrated twice in the book, once in the official ceremony and once among slaves. This is the case with Mammy's funeral, as it is with her tomb, which, unknown to the white masters, is positioned near that of Planter. The secret funeral takes place in the early hours of the morning and becomes the occasion for revealing the hidden history of Cotton Farm and Tata. While whites are blind and see Mammy as "the last of a vanished species and culture – the loyal old servant" (53), Randall undermines this partial vision by putting the slaves at the centre of the unofficial and true story of the plantation and the big house:

> Every column fluted was a monument to the slaves and the whips our bodies had received. Every slave being beat looked at the column and knew his beating would be remembered. […] We, Mammy and me, kept this place together because it was ours […] Right this morning we are burying the mistress of the house. (52)

The novel undoes the stereotypical image of the black slave as "a loving beast of burden" (53). Blacks at times become silently treacherous and are transformed into agents of deception. This representation subverts the over-simplifications of *GWTW* and reveals its partiality and blindness. At one point Cynara observes: "How the white people live surrounded by spies, I don't know. I can't do it. The slime of hatred on every sliver of soap, every sheet smoothed across every

bed" (26). In brief, slaves in her diary are fully-developed characters, the real protagonists of their own history, although ignored and unheard by whites.

The cakewalk is probably the most striking example of black expressiveness in the novel and can be read as a metaphor of the book, which is at once a rewriting and a rebuttal of the hypotext. Cynara's diary always underlines the duplicity of meanings, and at every moment we are reminded of the gap between "words and events" (164). The Yule log, which was traditionally burnt for Christmas at Tata, for instance, is not just a simple log as the whites believed. For while the log was burning, slaves were not whipped, and so it was changed a couple of times so as to make it last longer, without the Master ever realizing that the slaves "kept Christmas longer" (170). The inability of the masters to see beyond their own appeasing racial stereotypes is highlighted throughout the text. As James Baldwin rightly argued, the white man "cannot afford to understand it [the slave's language and culture]. This understanding would reveal too much about himself, and smash that mirror before which he has been frozen for so long"[49]. In other words, America has developed two conflicting images of itself, which are impossible to reconcile: the political power of the land of freedom and equality "is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavements of three millions of [its] countrymen"[50]. This conflict is kept at bay thanks to the myth of white supremacy, which provides a comfortable filter through which it is possible for whites to read and simplify the "other", the black. Randall undermines *GWTW*'s powerful and reassuring stereotypes and shows how partial and racist the picture of the hypotext really was. The black characters in her novel are neither Christ-like nor black rapists. Instead, they are profoundly human.

The centrality of the oral tradition in African American culture is repeatedly pointed out in the book. An important element that enlivens Cynara's voice is her familiarity with songs and rhymes. As a matter of fact, since she was a child, Cynara has invented "little rhymes to sing to [her]self" (3). As she grows, she reads widely and becomes cultivated. Her writing is embedded with learned references, but her assimilation of the master's culture is far from being a passive process. Indeed, she learns to "break rhythms" and "make rhythms", becoming a linguistically active and creative subject. Significantly, this goes along with Cynara's acceptance of herself as a black and a woman. Her creative power parallels her acceptance of blackness, of the "Negressness" in her mind:

> It is not in the pigment of my skin that my Negressness lies. It is not the color of my skin. It is the color of my mind, and my mind is dark, dusky, like a beautiful night. And Other, my part-sister, had the dusky blood but not the mind, not the memory. […] Maybe if the memories are not teased forth, they are lost; maybe if the dance is not danced, you forget the patterns. I cannot go to London and forget my color. I don't want to. Not anymore. (162)

Race here seems to become a matter of mind and choice rather than being linked to biological issues. What is more, blackness lies in memory, the memory of blacks' collective and individual past: "[P]art of the blood memory must be provoked and inspired and repaired, time and again, to become the memory" (163). This memory is preserved through the oral tradition, through the stories and the slave songs Cynara has learnt as a child and which stick with her. Black English is the creation of the collective experience of the black diaspora and Cynara's blackness depends upon her will and ability to preserve it.

One particular song Cynara names in her diary is *Amazing Grace*. She recalls the historical occasion in which the song originated and in her account of the story she has God speak Black English in a very effective passage. *GWTW*'s readers may at first be upset upon reading God's words as follows:

> I ain't saving you ifn' I don't save the ship. And I ain't saving the ship lessen I save the Daddys, and I ain't saving the Daddys without the Mammas and I don't need the Mammas less I save the babies. You is less to me than spit. But if I save the babies, I'll save the Mammas. (165)

By making God speak Black English to the white slave-trader, Randall reveals the power relationships involved in the use of language and debunks the racist hierarchies that find expression in it. God's words are improvisational and inventive, in line with black expressive patterns[51]. What is more, by having God speak the language of the black minority, Randall is affirming its literary dignity in a powerful and original way.

Cynara's language parallels the progress of her self-emancipation. Her narrative voice is both highly sophisticated and coloured, becoming increasingly so as the novel proceeds and as she gains independence. If at the beginning the presence of Black English is largely confined to the reported speech of blacks, as her story and her writing proceed she seems consciously to develop an increasingly speakerly text[52]. Her words are marked by Black English from the very first pages of her diary; but when she gains in awareness and independence, what changes is also her consciousness of the value of her mother tongue. In other words, her language increasingly incorporates influences and inflections, collective memory and individual experience, and references to the hypotext's language and original creativity. Differences melt in her "mongrel tongue". The result of this process may at first feel awkward to Cynara and to the reader alike, but in the end it is where the novel's voice is most original and acquires its own music:

> All these bits and pieces of "edjumacation" I have sewn together in my mind to make me a crazy quilt. I wrap it 'round me and I am not cold, but I'm shamed into shivering by the awkward ways of my own construction. All the different ways of talking English I throw together like a salad and dine greedily in my mongrel tongue. (90)

All along, the narrator enjoys the exploration of the sensuous and sensual possibilities of language. Sacred and profane intermingle in her diction, and language and sexuality seem to be part of the same liberating, communicative process:

> The mystery of making love to myself, for he is me, and I am he, and I know all that he and she want. In the church of this sex I am the preacher and the congregation. He is the preacher and I am the congregation. I am the preacher and he is the congregation. The call becomes the response and the response the call, and I am shouting and falling out.

The depiction of sexual intercourse is overtly informed by a typically black communicative pattern, modelled on the black sermon and its call and response mode. This mode – deriving from African oral patterns – becomes African American and is at the basis of black rhetorical style both in secular and in sacred discourse[53].

How far this is from Mitchell's ideology and aesthetics is all but too evident. In *GWTW* "erotic misrecognition and political misrecognition go hand in hand"[54] and Scarlett finally seems to welcome her own subordination as she enjoys sex only when Rhett rapes her. She resolutely "clings to her status as a sexual object, never claiming agency or responsibility for her own decisions"[55]. On the opposite side, Cynara strives to obtain her independence as a woman. She fully enjoys her sexual life and freely breaks taboos, repeatedly crossing traditional gender roles. Cynara's depiction of Dreamy Gentlemen – Scarlett's Ashley – as a gay, of Beauty as a lesbian and of her own relationship with the latter, manages to expose the homophobic biases of the society that the hypotext described. While in *GWTW* there was no room for homosexuality, and the hierarchical relationship between genders was substantially reaffirmed in bed (where Scarlett remains a "sexual object"), Cynara reveals and accepts a shifting, emancipated sexuality. As Beauty observes: "Girls will be girls. The men would leave and we'd crawl into bed together like kittens, scratching, pawing, tumbling into sleep" (33-34). Finally, Cynara comes to embody not only racial, but also sexual hybridity. What is more, race and gender are inextricably linked and her emancipation as a woman goes hand in hand with her emancipation as a black. Womanhood and blackness are two sides of the same coin: "One way of looking at it, all women are niggers. For sure, every woman I ever knew was a nigger — whether she knew it or not" (177).

In the end, writing her diary becomes for Cynara a sort of performative speech, an act whose power counterbalances the weight of the words that proclaimed her a sold slave. She sews together the "bits and pieces" (31) of her mother's past and her mother tongue, and manages to give birth to something new. Thus, she refuses to "live white" (158). Even if her skin is quite light, and she could easily pass for a white, as R. demands her to, for Cynara the real problem is "a question of how colored I feel, and I feel plenty colored […] I am colored, colored black, the way I talk, the way I cook, the way I do most everything" (158). Finally, this awareness makes her understand what she aspires to and what she really wants. She does not refuse her blackness but rather embraces it fully and creatively affirms its dignity. As a result, the language in which this blackness finds expression has the right to be a linguistic standard, and manages to subvert the power relations and the racism implied in the label of Black English as a subliterary minority language: "What I want now is what I always wanted and never knew—I want not to be exotic. I want to be the rule itself, not the exception that proves it" (161).

Acknowledgements

This essay would never have been completed without the precious support of the following persons: Prof. Anna Scacchi, who first encouraged me to read the book and then write about it; Professors Annalisa Oboe and Chris Gair for their timely criticism and for pushing me to do my best during the M.A. program in Atlantic Studies, both in Padua and Birmingham. To each of them a heartfelt thank-you.

Works Cited

Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth and Tiffin, Helen, The Empire Writes back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures. London, Routledge, 1989.

Baldwin, James, "If Black English isn't a language, then tell me, what is?" The New York Times, July 29, 1979.

Bartley, Numan V., ed, The Evolution of Southern Culture, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1988.

Belnap, Jeffrey and Fernandez, Raul, eds., José Marti's "Our America": From National to Hemispheric Cultural Studies, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1998.

Bhabha, Homi, The Location of Culture, London, Routledge, 1994.

Boatwright, James, " 'Totin' de Weery Load': A reconsideration of Gone With the Wind" New Republic, September 1, 1973, pp. 29-32.

Cleaver, Eldridge, Soul On Ice, New York, Laurel Dell Publishing, 1968.

Dentith, Simon, Parody, London & New York, Routledge, 2000.

Dillard, J.L., Perspectives On Black English, (Contributions to the Sociology of Language, 4), The Hague & Paris, Mouton, 1975.

Du Bois, W.E.B., The Souls of Black Folk. Essays and Sketches, Chicago, A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903.

Faust, Drew Gilpin, "Clutching the Chains that Bind: Margaret Mitchell and Gone With the Wind", Southern Cultures (Center for the Study of the South, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 5:1, Spring 1999, pp. 6-20.

Ferguson, Charles, and Shirley Brice Heath, eds., Language in the USA, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Gates, Henry Louis Jr., The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro American Literary Criticism, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Hurston, Zora Neale, Tre Quarti di Dollaro Dorati, (tr. it. a cura di) Chiara Spallino. Venezia, Marsilio, 1992.

Hutcheon, Linda, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms, New York, Methuen, 1985.

Johnson, Fern, Speaking Culturally. Language Diversity in the United States, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2000.

Kavanagh, James H., "To the Same Defect: Toward a Critique of the Ideology of the Aesthetic", The Bucknell Review, 27, n.1, Fall 1982, pp. 102-123.

Lakoff, Robin, The Language War, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000.

Lippi-Green, Rosina, English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States, London & New York, Routledge, 1997.

McDowell, Deborah E., The Changing Same, Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995.

Michaels, Walter Benn, Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism, Durham, Duke University Press, 1995.

Pyron, Darden Ashbury, Recasting: Gone With the Wind in American Culture, Miami, University Presses of Florida, 1983.

Randall, Alice, The Wind Done Gone, Boston & New York, A Mariner Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.

Rose, Margaret A., Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-modern, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Saldívar, José David, The Dialectics of Our America, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1991.

Scacchi, Anna, "The Southern Belle as Depression Hero: Re-reading Gone With the Wind", in Brave New Words: Strategies of Language and Communication in the United States of the 1930s, ed. by Biancamaria Bosco Tedeschini Lalli and Maurizio Vaudagna, Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1999, pp. 151-164.

Smitherman, Geneva, Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America. Detroit, MI: Wayne University Press, 1977.

———— "White English in Blackface, or Who Do I Be?", The Black Scholar, May-June 1973, pp. 158-168.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1999.

Tompkins, Jane, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1890*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Yaeger, Patricia, "Race and the Cloud of Unknowing in *Gone With the Wind*", Southern Cultures, 5:1, Spring 1999, pp. 21-28.

Young, Robert J.C., Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, London, Routledge, 1995.

Articles on the Web

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com Publisher Houghton Mifflin's page devoted to the legal battle over TWDG, with useful links to Court Papers, Press Statement, Letter of Support, etc.

http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1589/2001_Sept_11/78265990/p1/article.jhtml article by Fred Gloss on The Advocate, Sept. 11, 2001.

http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m1282/9_53/73640886/p1/article.jhtml

"Misanthrope's Corner. Retelling of "Gone with the Wind" from African-American perspective" National Review, May 14, 2001, by Florence King

http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/remember/index.html.

Janelle Collett, "Romanticizing the Old South: A Feminist, Historical Analysis of Gone With the Wind".

---

[1] Michel de Certeau, Heterologies. Discourses on the Other, as quoted in Deborah E. McDowell, The Changing Same. Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995, p.140.

[2] See SunBank v. Houghton Mifflin Company Court Papers, available at Houghton Mifflin's website: http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/randall_url/. All the references to court papers in the text are taken from this website.

[3] Toni Morrison, Declaration to the Court, to be found at Houghton Mifflin's website: http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/randall_url/.

[4] "Mrs. Mitchell is on record as regarding her own work as a radical revision of the 'lavender-and-lace-moonlight-on-the-magnolias people' of earlier novels, and blasted 'the sweet, sentimental novel of the Thomas Nelson Page type". In Toni Morrison, Declaration to the Court.

[5] Toni Morrison, Declaration to the Court.

[6] See the Letter of Support available at: http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/features/randall_url/letter.shtml#authors

[7] Janelle Collett, "Romanticizing the Old South: A Feminist, Historical Analysis of Gone With the Wind", available on line at http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/remember/index.html.

[8] See Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind: Margaret Mitchell and Gone With the Wind", Southern Cultures (Center for the Study of the South, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 5:1, Spring 1999, p. 5.

[9] Mitchell's novel managed to spread its own mythology despite its being at odds with both the prevailing national and the southern mythology of the war. See Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind: Margaret Mitchell and Gone With the Wind", Southern Cultures (Center for the Study of the South, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 5:1, Spring 1999, pp. 6-20.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Darden Ashbury Pyron, ed., Recasting: Gone With the Wind in American Culture, Miami, University Presses of Florida, 1983, p. 9.

[12] For an analysis of the book's reception, see Darden Ashbury Pyron, ed., Recasting,pp. 5-31.

[13] "Commager's review marked the zenith of academic or highbrow celebration of Gone With the Wind." In Darden Ashbury Pyron, ed. Recasting, 1983, p. 6.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Malcolm Cowley's famous dismissal of GWTW was first published in The New Republic, Sept. 16, 1936 and subsequently reprinted in Darden Ashbury Pyron, ed. Recasting, pp. 17-20.

[16] Anna Scacchi, "The Southern Belle as Depression Hero: Re-Reading Gone With the Wind", Brave New Words: Strategies of Language and Communication in the United States of the 1930s, ed. by Biancamaria Bosco Tedeschini Lalli and Maurizio Vaudagna, Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1999, p. 152.

[17] See James Boatwright, "'Totin' de Weery Load': A Reconsideration of Gone With the Wind", New Republic, September 1, 1973, pp. 29-32.

[18] On this sort of attitude, see Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1890´, New York, Oxford University Press, 1985.

[19] Elizabeth I. Hanson, Margaret Mitchell, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1991, p. 4.

[20] "Ideology" is here intended as a lived relation to the real, linked to the subject position within the social. Thus, ideology structures the subject's "seeing" and "feeling" before structuring her/his "thinking" and it constitutes the terrain of social practice where collective imaginations are shaped. See James H. Kavanagh,., "To the Same Defect: Toward a Critique of the Ideology of the Aesthetic", The Bucknell Review, 27, n.1, Fall 1982, pp. 102-123.

[21] See Anna Scacchi, "The Southern Belle as Depression Hero: Re-Reading Gone With the Wind", in Biancamaria Bosco Tedeschini Lalli and Maurizio Vaudagna, eds., p. 153.

[22] Joel Williamson, "How Black Was Rhett Butler?", in The Evolution of Southern Culture, ed. by Numan Bartley, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1988, p.105.

[23] Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind", p. 14.

[24] Toni Morrison, Declaration to the Court.

[25] See, for instance, Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind" and the debate that followed in Southern Cultures, where GWTW's racism was criticized and read in relation to gender oppression: "Thus, for all her ability to see through and to challenge certain basic assumptions of southern life, Scarlett, like Mitchell, remains blind to the most fundamental reality of all: that southern civilization rested on the oppression of four million African Americans whose labour made southern wealth, gentility, and even ladyhood possible". In Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind", pp. 12-13.

[26] The word parody, deriving from the Ancient Greek παρωδία, has acquired a range of different meanings in its long history. If in Greek and then Latin parody signified a specific form of mock poetry or ode, adopting elevated diction and applying it to trivial topics, parodia was also used to denote a more neutral practice of quotation and allusion. Nowadays, parody is predominantly defined as any type of mocking imitation, although this usage is contested by critics, such as Linda Hutcheon, who bring the word back to a more neutral or neoclassical usage in which the element of mockery is absent. Another, opposite tendency, articulated by Margaret Rose in Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-modern, Cambridge, Cambridge Uni. Press, 1993, establishes parody as a comic practice, whose antecedents are to be found in Rabelais and Sterne. See Simon Dentith, Parody, London & New York, Routledge, 2000; Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms, New York, Methuen, 1985.

[27] See note 1 of this paper.

[28] Toni Morrison, Declaration to the Court.

[29] See Geneva Smitherman, "White English in Blackface, or Who Do I Be?", The Black Scholar, May-June 1973, pp. 158-168.

[30] One particularly striking case is that of the Oakland School Board Resolution on Ebonics in 1996. Media treatment of the case was informed by strong racial biases and expressed in harshly sarcastic tones, without taking into serious consideration the position of linguists on the subject. The debate, as Lakoff evidenced, served as a pretext to raise a political issue having to do with racial prejudices directed against minority speakers. See Robin Lakoff, The Language War, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000.

[31] From Houghton Mifflin's web site.

[32] "A Conversation with Alice Randall", from Houghton Mifflin's web site.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Anna Scacchi, "The Southern Belle as Depression Hero: Re-Reading Gone With the Wind", in Biancamaria Bosco Tedeschini Lalli and Maurizio Vaudagna, eds., p. 164.

[35] Randall's answer as to whether she was assuming the role of a revisionist historian in writing her book is significant in that it provides an interpretive key to the novel's overall aim: "When I was growing up in Detroit, what I like to call Detroit, Alabama, the two phrases my father spoke to me most often were 'Speak up, son, you're not down South,' and 'I want you to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.' I think I prefer to think of myself as a dutiful daughter than as a revisionist historian." From Houghton Mifflin's web site.

[36] "Lady" in Randall's novel corresponds to Mitchell's Ellen O'Hara.

[37] Implicitly quoting Billie Holiday's famous song, Cynara writes: "They are hanging black men all through the trees. Strange fruits grow in the Southern night. It's the boil on the body of Reconstruction, whites killing blacks. They didn't kill us as often, leastways not directly, when they owned us" (83).

[38] Harriet Tubman (1820-1913) was a runaway slave from Maryland who became known as the "Moses of her people". Over the course of ten years, at great personal risk, she led hundreds of slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad. This was a secret network of safe houses where runaway slaves could stay on their journey north to freedom. She later became a leader in the abolitionist movement, and during the Civil War she was a spy and a nurse for the federal forces in South Carolina.

[39] One of the most striking examples of didacticism in the novel is the following: "Othello is just a creation. Maybe just like me. But Robert B. Elliott be real. He be born in Massachusetts (…) James Rapier studied in Canada and now he's in Congress. He's another "historical figure". (…) John Roy Lynch (…) He merits a line in anybody's history of these United States" (115).

[40] "A Conversation with Alice Randall", from Houghton Mifflin's web site.

[41] Hybridity is one of the key terms in postcolonial theory, and most usually refers to "the creation of new transcultural forms from within the contact zone produced by colonization". In Griffiths and Tiffin Ashcroft, The Empire Writes back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures, London, Routledge, 1989, p.118. For Homi Bhabha, cultural hybridity provides a viable alternative to the "exoticism of multiculturalism", and opens the way toward "conceptualizing a [genuinely] international culture". In Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 38. The term, however, remains contested. Robert Young has pointed out hybridity's racist legacy, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has warned against the kinds of hybridist triumphalism that don't engage sufficiently with specific cultural differences. See Robert Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, London, Routledge, 1995; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1999.

[42] "A Conversation with Alice Randall" in Houghton Mifflin's web site.

[43] See Jeffrey Belnap and Raul Fernandez, eds., José Marti's "Our America": From national to Hemispheric Cultural Studies, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1998. In a climatic passage of TWDG, which concentrates in few lines the main points of Afro American history and almost sounds like a black pride manifesto ante litteram, Cynara writes: "I am drunk of the power that is flowing out of his body back to our country, our America. I look around me at these new Negroes, this talented tenth, this first harvest, the brightest minds, the sustained souls, (…) Folks whose fathers were named Fearless and were freed because their master was afraid to own them. The ones who could intimidate from shackles. These beautiful ones. They are as close to gods as we have seen walk the earth. I dance and I see them dance in the darkening night as clouds roll in, covering the stars that shine upon the ones who survived the culling out of the middle-passage, and the mental shackles of slavery;

the group that rose with the first imperfect freedoms to this city, to the Capital, this group of negroes shining brightly as their – as our – flame burns down as our time passes" (201). See also Walter Benn Michaels, Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism, Durham, Duke University Press, 1995.

[44] "Reader's Guide" at Houghton Mifflin's web page.

[45] W.E.B. Du Bois was the first to theorise the characteristic dualism of black American culture: "One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder…" in The Souls of Black Folk, Essays and Sketches, Chicago, A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903, p. 18.

[46] The need to communicate without being understood by the white master is nicely summarized by James Baldwin: "There was a moment, in time, and in this place, when my brother, or my mother, or my father, or my sister, had to convey to me, for example, the danger in which I was standing from the white man standing just behind me, and to convey this with a speed, and in a language, that the white man could not possibly understand, and that, indeed, he cannot understand, until today." In James Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" The New York Times, July 29, 1979.

[47] "The black tradition is double-voiced. […] Signifyin(g) is the figure of the double-voiced, epitomized by Esu's [divine trickster figure] depictions in sculpture as possessing two mouths. [Signification is a process in] how to employ tropes that have been memorized in an act of communication and its interpretation. […] The language of Signifyin(g), in other words, is a strategy of black figurative language use […]." In Henry Louis Gates, Jr. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. xxv and p. 84.

[48] James Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" The New York Times, July 29, 1979.

[49] James Baldwin, "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is? The New York Times, July 29, 1979.

[50] Frederick Douglass, "Fourth of July Oration in Rochester, 1852". Quoted in Eldridge Cleaver, Soul On Ice, New York, Laurel Dell Publishing, 1991, p. 78.

[51] The main characteristics of Black expression are summarized in Fern Johnson, Speaking Culturally, Language Diversity in the United States, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2000. Johnson, in the chapter devoted to "African American Discourse in Cultural and Historical Context" (pp. 113-159) comprehensively isolates the main African American cultural themes, including the connections to the African heritage, black cultural abstractions and cultural artefacts, as well as highlighting black discourse patterns and modes of discourse.

[52] See Henry Louis Gates, Jr, The Signifying Monkey. A Theory of Afro American Literary Criticism, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988. The speakerly text is defined as dealing with the play of voices used in free-indirect discourse. The direct discourse of the black speech used by characters belonging to the black community, and the initial Standard English of the narrator come together to form a third term, a double-voiced narrative. It is a way to represent an oral literary tradition in the written form. Its first example, according to Gates, is to be found in Zora Neale Hurston's Mules and Men and Their Eyes Were Watching God.

[53] See Fern Johnson, Speaking Culturally, p. 150.

[54] Patricia Yaeger, "Race and the Cloud of Unknowing in Gone With the Wind", Southern Cultures, 5:1, Spring 1999, p. 22.

[55] Drew Gilpin Faust, "Clutching the Chains that Bind: Margaret Mitchell and Gone With the Wind", Southern Cultures (Center for the Study of the South, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), 5:1, Spring 1999, p. 15.