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Cathryn Halverson
Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

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"Betwixt and Between":
Dismantling Race in *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World*

Cathryn Halverson

Cathryn Halverson has published a variety of articles on early twentieth-century American women writers. She is working on a book about maverick autobiographies and the American West and is an Assistant Professor at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies.

A Burma Lady said to me at Darjeeling you are just betwixt and between. one minute you have a fine time with the lowest cast next minute with the highest Hindoo. one minute you wear a blue suit next minute a dress of 2 cent a yard crape then a little velvet dress with diamond ear rings how can we tell. one minute you stay in a hotel at \$5.00 a day then go to a restaurant and have a 5 cent meal. you're betwixt and between.

One of the most unusual and most neglected American travel narratives of the 1930s, Juanita Harrison's *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* dramatizes the radical revamping of identity that both travel and travel writing engender. Harrison, a working-class African American from Mississippi, wrote her text as a diary of her eight years of work and travel in over thirty European, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries. A utopian record of her picaresque adventures and philosophy of travel, the text reveals how Harrison's mobility made an asset of the markers of race that were such a liability in her southern birthplace. Harrison used her racially ambiguous appearance to "pass," not as a white American but as anything but — a partial list of such personae includes Japanese, French, Arabian, Cuban, Moorish, Indian, Jewish, Greek, and Californian. "Betwixt and between," she also configured herself as a member of various socioeconomic classes, which often determined how she was read ethnically. She asserted in her text, "I am

willing to be what ever I can get the best treatments at being" (75). At the end of her travels, in order to enter the American literary marketplace, Harrison was "willing to be" recodified in highly racial terms, even as her actual text contests this codification.

Little attention has been granted to discussing as such the travel literature of working-class American women. Those female working-class travel texts that are widely known fall under the rubric of slave narratives or captivity narratives; formal coding of women's movement as "travel" is reserved for upper- or middle-class, not to mention white, activity. With the exception of *The Autobiography of Box-Car Bertha* (itself challenged as the invention of its male amanuensis), first-person texts about working women traveling for pleasure or experience remain largely invisible. In contrast, texts chronicling the wanderings of white working-class men do hold a niche in an "institution of American literature" that, to quote Marilyn Wesley's paraphrase of Judith Fetterley, historically "has privileged stories of boys' pursuit of freedom, reluctantly admitted 'novels whose business it is to negotiate the marriage of girls,' and largely omitted almost everything else" (Wesley xvii). Although it may not be the norm for men to enjoy adventure travel on a shoestring or roam the world financed by odd jobs, such enjoyment stands as far from uncommon. Harry A. Franck avowed in his preface to *A Vagabond Journey Around the World* (1910) that "a man *can* girdle the globe without money, weapons, or baggage" (xv). Harrison's text demonstrates that in the early twentieth century a woman could, too.

Harrison's description of her very first destination confronts our class assumptions about travel and women travel writers. She states, "the first look at London I liked it. It was a beautiful morning the maids in their neat blue dresses and white caps was cleaning the brass whitening the door steps and scrubbing the sidewalks" (4). This aestheticized portrait of servants contributing to the appealing quaintness of a foreign scene seems very familiar. As James Clifford remarks, textually servants are often used to represent the "people" of a nation as well as cultural order and continuity (4). Yet in the next sentence, Harrison challenges the pleasure we may have found in the scene she's just created by continuing, "I promised myself when I Looked For a job not to get in a house with such work but instead a apartment." As opposed to the uninvested observer, Harrison puts herself in the place of these women, reminding us that their labor is not just aesthetic but actual, a function of historical choices available to, although not desired by, an outsider such as herself. Through such maneuvers, Harrison unmoors the traveler's gaze.

Harrison further confronts readers' expectations by joining Zora Neale Hurston and other twentieth-century writers in a lesser known African-American literary tradition. Nellie Y. McKay describes this tradition as specific to black women, not men: a refusal to claim victimhood and thus write a black protest text; a desire to focus on individual development and possibility rather than racial identity and the state of "My People, My People," to borrow Hurston's exasperated term, thereby "free[ing] black autobiography from the ideological supremacy of race" (101).¹ Harrison's text thereby constitutes an important addition to what is as yet a relatively small pool of discussed texts

(McKay focuses on Hurston, Marian Anderson, and Lorene Carey). It also challenges the valorization of bourgeois aspiration so prominent in northern black middle-class society in the 1920s and 1930s (see Cripps 48).

Harrison's work opens us to new ways of thinking about travel writing, black women's writing, and the relationship between travel and race: she shows travel along with travel writing itself as dismantling race. Contributing to the rich literature of racial passing, she represents herself not as deceiving others as to her "true" identity, but as possessing multiple identities that vary according to her literal and economic locations. Just as national boundaries appear to dissolve before her, so do racial ones. With its portrayal of the race- and class-transformative power of travel, her text makes explicit what lies implicit in so many travel narratives: Harrison portrays international travel as engendering an economic fluidity that produces a fluidity of racial, ethnic, and/or national identifications, demonstrating how closely geographic, economic, and racial configurations are tied. In doing so, she undercuts prevailing perceptions of African-American women as static, bound by race in immobility.² Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out that although "race, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized to be a fiction," it nevertheless is invoked daily (5). Questioning the belief that race is "natural, absolute, essential" (Gates 6), Harrison shows that through travel race can disintegrate in life as well as in theory.

For the most part composed in an on-the-scene present tense, *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* consists of approximately two hundred and twenty journal entries or letter excerpts highlighting new locations, jobs, and experiences as Harrison slowly circles the globe. She challenges the ideal of feminine vulnerability by using this same ideal to ease her travels: "I being a poor lonely woman of course that lonely look helps me a great deal but there never were one less lonely than I am" (282). Most of her entries describe the first three years of her trip, 1927 to 1930, during which she traveled in Great Britain, western and eastern Europe, the Middle East, and India while sequentially holding numerous jobs. The text includes no entries dated between 1930 and 1934, the period in which Harrison worked in southern France ("the most glories of all my life" [26]) to augment her funds while waiting for an opportune time to visit China. This period may also have been when she wrote or edited much of her text. The last sixth of the diary covers her final and most rapid year of travel in Germany, Scandinavia, Russia, China, Japan, the Philippines, and Hawaii.

Born in Columbus, Mississippi, in 1887, a period cited as the legal and economic "Nadir" for African Americans (Alexander xv), Harrison quit school as a child to begin full-time domestic labor. At thirty, during the peak of the "Great Migration" of southern blacks, she left Mississippi and embarked on a peripatetic series of service jobs in Alabama, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York City, Florida, the Colorado Rockies, Los Angeles, Texas, Kansas, Canada, and Cuba.³ As time permitted, she also enrolled in YWCA or night-school classes that trained her in languages and as "an accomplished lady's maid" (Morris ix). George and Myra Dickinson, employers in Los Angeles, invested her slowly accumulated savings to yield an

annual income of two hundred dollars. By 1927, at the age of forty, Harrison had the means to leave North America and begin traveling the world while supplementing her funds with intermittent employment as a maid, cook, companion, or nurse for households of various nationalities.

Shortly after leaving the United States, Harrison worked for an American family in Paris who encouraged her to record her travels with a book in mind. The daughter of the family, Mildred Morris, eventually served as Harrison's editor in selecting and arranging her writings. Harrison's dedication of the book implies that her text was at least partially compiled from letters she had written to her Los Angeles sponsor: "To Mrs. Myra K. Dickinson: Your great kindness to me have made my traveling much happier if You hadnt been interested in me I never would have tryed to explain my trips also your True and Kindness encourage me and made me more anxious to tell you the way I spent my time" (np).

Along with the official record of the Morrises as instigators of the text (as recorded by Mildred Morris in her preface), this dedication, with the image of a benevolent Dickinson extending her interest and encouragement to an otherwise reticent and even uncommunicative traveler, suggests that Harrison's publication and even her writing itself were due primarily to the efforts of white patrons. In the actual text, though, Harrison tells a different story, one that highlights her own agency. She writes of the Morrises that "one of the Daughters is a writer and the mother said my travellers should be put into a Book. I told her I would come back [to Paris] after my trip to India and work for nothing if Miss Mildred, the Daughter would help me" (16). She also describes herself looking up the Morrises on her return (243). It is impossible to know how seriously the older Morris intended her words, but one can certainly envision her making the idle, admiring comment so often extended to travelers — "you should write a book!" — and her surprise that it should lead to Harrison camped on her doorstep bartering cooking and cleaning for her daughter's editorial skills. It's not easy to refuse someone offering "free" manual labor and, typically, Harrison profits by exchanging her domestic desirability, along with her sexual desirability the sole commodity she wields, in exchange not for money but for other prizes. (And it's interesting to note where literary production fell in Harrison's hierarchy: not worth usurping a trip to India for.)

Harrison's resistance to conventions of formal writing, coupled with her loosely organized, impressionistic style, may make her appear an unlikely writer. How did such a person ever come to write a book, must less publish it? Sidonie Smith addresses this question in arguing that as a genre, autobiography invites into print "culturally marginalized peoples . . . who are assigned inauthentic voices by the dominant culture" (62). Its flexibility and proliferation of forms, as well as the allure of telling one's own story, make autobiography accessible and appealing. Yet more specifically, Harrison's text also suggests that travel itself demands writing and that writing is an organic component of travel. For one, the simple logistics of travel immerse Harrison in a world of writing. She depends upon Fodor's, YWCA directories, and tour guides to negotiate her way. She frequents public libraries and buys books, newspapers, and magazines that focus on the culture and history of the places she visits. She

successfully sues by mail for compensation from a railroad accident. Being a working traveler necessitates further participation in writing networks as she reads and places advertisements for jobs in English language newspapers and on employment agency bulletin boards; she also collects written references, not for utility but as souvenirs ("the memories of the writer are sweet" [244]). Perhaps most important, her travels lead to extensive correspondence with patrons, past employers, and new friends, and she regularly collects parcels of letters.

This in turn suggests that travel and writing are more profoundly linked than by practicality alone. As in the case of western American overland accounts, which constitute one of the largest body of writings by ordinary people, the belief that one is engaged in "outlandish" experience, whether historical or personal, compels non-writers to write (see Fender). Once on the road, even those who previously wrote very little correspond with friends, family, and new travel acquaintances; they may also attend assiduously to journals. Harrison's dedication to Dickinson suggests how closely the pleasure of travel depends upon writing about it: "Your great kindness to me have made my traveling much happier if You hadnt been interested in me I never would have tryed to explain my trips." Writing, too, links home and travel. Referring to Indian workers moving to a nearby town, Harrison marvels, "they dont read or write so its just like a person was dying no way of getting in touch with them" (65). As the narrative progresses, writing increasingly becomes a means for her to make connections between various places and her experiences there, as well as to relive past events. Writing may have served not only to reinvent identity but also to retain continuity.

Distracted by poor spelling and the like, the reader may initially miss the compelling richness of Harrison's prose. Harrison manipulates language to make it perform in unlikely ways, and her fused sentences typically build towards climactic moments that determine their end. To select just a few examples:

I never go with a Lady because you must pay her carfare they like to stop and have a cup of tea another stop in the Publice House for a glass of beer and another at the W.C. and the time have pass and your little change.
(6)

I visited the Famous Painter Wiertz's Musee the most and best of his pictures are such horrod thoughts.
(264)

the Moon is bright and the houses on the many mountains seem to be touching the sky the snow covered mountains are like pearl just below my cottage are a floor of white Clouds. the darkness of the tall fir trees and tea plants on the mountain sides beside the snow white clouds far below are to wonderful. up and down are the thousand of light as this is a City above and below mountains and clouds the lights seem to mix with the stars.
(140)

We are now on the Sea or I do not know just how to say it as Holland are the Sea itself. While the men were conquering the Sea they also made the parts that they conquered beautiful so neglected the style of their women.

(271-2)

a red room with cream curtains are pretty but when I awoke this morning looked like I was in a great blaze no more red rooms.

(236)

Describing a shipboard meal, Harrison recounts, "We had a wonderful dinner each had a stuffed gosslin I dont know if it is spelled right. but it is the geese's babies Our Pleasant but not very hansom Captain name is Gosslin" (3). Her speculation here over whether her language is "right" constitutes a rare moment in the text. Considering her plethora of spelling errors, this single instance indicates just how confident a writer she usually is, especially since she moves on to make a play on words. Indeed, in describing her response to the Taj Mahal, Harrison asserts that in the more significant matter of representation as opposed to protocol, her language use is superb. She opens by making the conventional gesture of so many travelers confronted with a celebrated spectacle: words fail her. Signaling what a good tourist she is in feeling appropriately moved by the monument, she asserts, "it thrilled me through as the beauty cannot be painted" (133) and again, "it cannot be described eyes must see it" (134). Yet she continues, "As we left [my companion] asked me how it impressed me. the night was getting dark the dew was falling heavy and I said, 'I would just like to put a glass over it I feel I must cover it over.' He said 'That's beautiful'" (133). Recording praise of her words, Harrison suggests that even though the object itself remains beyond language, her accurate representation of emotional response offers indirect access.

As in this instance, Harrison is much more likely to discuss speech than writing. Unlike so many autobiographers, she does not dramatize her own production of her text, which seems to proceed invisibly as a natural outgrowth of travel. She doesn't participate in the text's framing, either; her editor alone provides the supporting materials that include the preface, an occasional footnote, and an explanation for the gap in entries. Yet tellingly, in her very first entry Harrison suggests just how closely writing is bound to the project of travel:

A beautiful June Morning. I arrived at 9 A.M. with my two suit cases the larger one with 2 blue dresses 2 white dresses and one black aprons caps and references. The smaller one with my dress up cloths. and 2 jars of sour cucumber pikles which is so good to keep from being sea sick. Our cabins looked good. I always want a upper berth I dont want anybody making it down on me. I went to the 1st and 2nd Class. Their towels looked more linnen so I took two, the soap smelt sweeter so I took 2 cakes. I went up to the writing room and the paper was the kind you love to touch so I took much and tuked it away in my bunk.

(1)

Just as she secures the upper berth and steals the linen and soap reserved for the class above her, so does she steal the writing material with which she enjoys a sensuous relationship. This entry inaugurates the theme that runs throughout the text, that of getting away with something: tricking men, customs officials, and train workers; getting free food, cheap rooms, illicit entry to public entertainment, and so on. By writing, so too or so especially does Harrison get away with something, appropriating the materials of higher classes unmeant for her. And the use to which she puts the stolen paper amplifies her mischief. In her text, instead of writing on paper "properly" with rules of capitalization, punctuation, and grammar intact, she blithely proceeds without regard to convention not only in form but in content, inventing a shifting self that fits none of her readers' expectations and deters them from "making it down" on her. Travel leads not only to self-transformation but also to writing, which perhaps even more so than travel is itself, as African-American literary traditions attest, a means of transformation.⁴

Wherever Harrison sojourns she insists on a private room, declaring, "my room is my personal self" (122). She refuses to let servants enter even to clean it, turns down appealing jobs if they entail shared quarters, and makes it a policy not to have "Lady Friends" because, unlike men, they would expect to be entertained in her room. Harrison's loving descriptions of many of her rooms are often more developed than those of the sights she visits, and she depicts herself spending blissful days alone in them, sometimes in bed. Such an embrace partially stems from the very public nature of travel, which makes a room a more than usual retreat. Yet although Harrison never explicitly discusses the process of writing and certainly not its requirements, perhaps too it is this "room of her own" that enables her writing and so accounts for her zealous defense. A note of caution, though: Harrison challenges the critic who would make too solemn an analysis of her relationship to writing through assertions such as "when I think of the good things I can get to eat for what the stamp cost I just stick these letters in my case" (293).

Presumably due to Harrison's persistence and Morris's publishing savvy, Ellery Sedgwick agreed to include two excerpts of Harrison's text in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Coming full circle, these appeared in the fall of 1935, about six months before Harrison completed the journey that itself was said to have been inspired by a magazine travel article.⁵ In 1936 Macmillan compiled Harrison's accounts in full into *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World*, heralded by the announcement, "The clamorous demand for 'More!' which followed publication in Atlantic Monthly last Autumn of condensed portions, is now met with the complete diary" (see *Publisher's Weekly* [25 April 1936]: 1670). The full text seemed also to have enjoyed demand for "More!" and went through nine editions in ten months. Introduced by Adele Logan Alexander, it was recently reprinted as part of a series edited by Gates and Jennifer Burton on African-American women writers, 1910-1940.⁶

Even prior to the text's incarnation in Gates's and Burton's series, *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* was packaged as a text written by an African-American woman in that editors, publishers, and reviewers all emphasized Harrison's race. Perhaps most significantly, the decision to leave Harrison's idiosyncratic

spelling and grammar untouched reflects a desire to signal the extent of the writer's difference from a white, middle-class readership, along with the framing of her text through an editorial voice that attests to its veracity. In the preface to both the *Atlantic Monthly* selections and the book, Morris reinforced this sense of difference by opening with a familiar scenario of black southern poverty: "Juanita Harrison is an American colored woman. . . . Born in Mississippi, she had a few months of schooling before she was ten. Then began an endless round of cooking, washing and ironing" (Morris ix). Following suit, advertisements declared the text "the hilarious but penetrating diary of an American negress" and without exception, reviews named Harrison in their first paragraph as colored or negro.

The reminiscences of Sedgwick, arguably the pivotal figure in securing Harrison national distribution and fondly named by Harrison as her "unseen sweetheart" (quoted in "Juanita" 4), are dismayingly offensive. In his description of Harrison, Sedgwick quite literally as well as metaphorically redomesticates the threatening figure of an African-American woman unfixed by race, class, or geography. Dubbing Harrison the "Black Pearl among Servants," he explains that his thoughts turn to her whenever he has troubles with his maid or cook. For Sedgwick, Harrison's achievements as a traveler or writer are wholly eclipsed by her achievements as a servant. He remembers her as instilling in white readers not envy for her bohemian freedom but jealousy of her domestic labor — which when he met her lay untapped in a Waikiki paradise. Sedgwick paints a portrait of Harrison impossible to reconcile with the Harrison of the text:

As I approached her tent, there was a mighty commotion within. "Sakes alive!" I heard in a syrupy gurgle. "I ain't got a mortal thing on me." But things were found, the tent flap parted, and out came Juanita, her teeth shining under a carmine bandana, her big eyes bright as blobs of Mississippi molasses. "Gord's sake," she cried, "did ever nigger see the like of this!" and she bent double under the weight of her laughter.

(215)

Clearly, Sedgwick cannot look beyond Harrison's body, which he finds so remarkable and insistent. Figured by sugar and topped by the stereotypical bandana, the body of Sedgwick's jolly Harrison dominates his account as he dwells on her unseen nudity, shiny teeth, bright head and eyes, and a voice and laughter so viscous as literally to weigh her down. With his invocation of "Mississippi molasses" (distinct from the molasses of other states?), Sedgwick returns Harrison's body, that of a world traveler who claimed California for her past and Hawaii for her future and countless places in between, back to the South of her birth where, as the body of a black woman, he perceived it as belonging. In both her text and life Harrison dramatized her freedom and mobility, but in his official memoir of his professional life Sedgwick pins her fast, naming her a self-proclaimed "nigger." Like Morris, Sedgwick here supports Robert Stepto's contention that in African-American literature, "artist and authenticator (editor, publisher, guarantor, patron) [compete] for control of

a fiction — usually the idea of history or of the artist's personal history — that exists outside the artist's text and functions primarily as an antagonistic force with regard to this text's imaginative properties" (quoted in Raynaud, "Rubbing" 56).

Yet despite the widespread representation and reception of Harrison as a black woman, the text itself reveals that racially Harrison was difficult to name, repeatedly portraying the confusion that the question of her identity generated. Morris's preface first introduces Harrison as racially ambiguous. Although from the onset she calls Harrison simply a "colored woman" and does not comment on the origins of her Spanish name, Morris provides a careful physical description that implies mixed blood: "fresh olive complexion, long hair braided about her head" (xi). In context, Morris's choice of verb is telling in her description of Harrison's Mississippi childhood as "the sordid life that colored her early years," suggesting that region and poverty themselves contribute to rendering a woman "colored."

More important, Harrison herself disappoints the expectations set up by others' emphases on her race by forgoing defining herself as an African American — of any shade — and making her text a record of African-American experience. In this respect, *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* is very different from the travel narratives of Harrison's contemporaries, roughly speaking, such as James Weldon Johnson's fictional *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Eslanda Goode Robeson's *African Journey*, or Fay McKeene Hershaw's and Flaurience Sengstacke Collins' *Around the World with Hershaw and Collins*. Harrison never articulates an African-American identity and, although she uses these terms to describe others, does not refer to herself as colored, negro, African, or black, much less as (according to Sedgwick) nigger. She does not claim a "people" or express interest in the past, present, or future of African Americans; she never discusses southern or American racism or suggests that she went abroad to escape it. Harrison's text contains remarkably few references to life predating her travels, and her single allusion to past discrimination lies in her comment about Nice that "I always get a comfortable and Home like place to stay for here you never think of your color" (21). Speaking more generally, leaving America, it appears, enabled Harrison to cease to "think of [her] color" and to shuck the monochromatic racial identity of a young, unprivileged, uneducated African-American woman in Jim Crow Mississippi. Writing and publishing the text, itself a form of travel, allows her to continue the journey.

Most readers will perceive Harrison's achievement of a cosmopolitanism that few approach as a triumph over both race and gender prejudice. This former child laborer, very likely the descendent of slaves, claims the world and names it beautiful. Margo Culley remarks that Euro-American women autobiographers generally announce gender in their titles (*Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, *Wyoming Wife*). In contrast, African-American women usually signal race, race and gender both (*A Colored Woman in a Black World*), or, more rarely, gender alone (Culley 7-8). There are only a few exceptions in which the title indicates neither; Hurston's peripatetic *Dust Tracks on a Road* is one and Harrison's, of course, another. The phrase "My Great, Wide, Beautiful World" elides

these markers of identity in favor of proclaiming the world Harrison's own. Yet whereas by doing so the book's title dramatizes racial and gendered triumph, the actual text does not provide an overt narrative of it. Harrison describes events, but does not theorize them in regard to her own history or subjectivity.

What Harrison wants most to reflect upon is neither race nor herself but travel. As the title suggests, *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* is both a paean to the joys of travel and a guide to traveling well. Taken as a whole, the text stands as an argument about what constitutes a good traveler as opposed to a superficial tourist. Harrison proposes that it is her own practice that renders "her" world so appealing. Even for those raised in a society where their labor is possessed by others, traveling right leads to possession of their own. In contrast to the "race movies" of the black bourgeoisie that encouraged the formation of rural southerners into "Black Babbitts" (Cripps 55), Harrison asserts that for those of any race, accruing material wealth, power, and professional status is an empty ambition. As she sums up at the end of the text, "Well you have bring out your moth ball smelling cloths and no doubt feel very pleased with the world to be in a caged up Building looking out on others more caged up. I have gone through the same and how grateful I am to myself" (318). In asserting the superiority of her own choices and in offering readers a model of action, Harrison diverges from what is regarded as the norm for "minority autobiography," which David Van Leer states "asserts not one's achievements but only one's presence," in contrast to the "narrative of individual triumph" that characterizes traditional autobiography (166); Van Leer concludes, "as representatives of a victimized group, minority autobiographers do not stand as models or exemplars but only as counterexamples." In refusing the stance of "minority autobiographer," Harrison refuses the identity of victim to claim that of victor.

The parallels between Harrison's title and closing words and those of *Dust Tracks on a Road*, published only five years apart, are striking. Asserting she's "touched the four corners of the horizon," Hurston concludes, "I do not wish to . . . [live] in a space whose boundaries are race and nation. Lord, give my poor stammering tongue at least one taste of the whole round world" (330-1). As participants in McKay's black female tradition of non-victimage, these two African-American writers of rural southern roots both choose to chronicle their lives through literal and metaphorical travel. They also make similar strategic moves despite occupying such different authorial positions — Hurston as a highly educated professional writer and scholar, Harrison as a working domestic and traveler. With her resistance to racial essentialism, the more prolific, public, and widely studied Hurston sheds light on Harrison. At the same time, Harrison provides an essential context for Hurston, herself often read as anomalous and reputed "one of the most enigmatic and elusive figures in black American literary history" (Braxton 146).

In thinking about Harrison, it's useful to turn to Sidonie Smith's discussion of the ways in which Hurston "sought to divert . . . the pressures of the confessional autobiographical mode" while "in the midst of a white culture that kept her identities as black/woman at the fore" (105, 125). Smith builds upon Claudine Raynaud's discovery and analysis of Hurston's dealings with her white editors, her sites of resistance and concession in writing the autobiography they

requested of her (see "Rubbing" and "*Dust Tracks*"). Detailing the various subject positions Hurston claims for herself in *Dust Tracks* (a partial list includes "a destitute teenager, a confident member of the literati, a wanderer, an artist, a collector of tales, a teller of tales, a child, a philosopher, a young girl, a woman, an American, a Negro, an individual, and an inhabitant of the globe"), Smith explains that Hurston "fills her narrative with allusions to 'lies' and 'lying' as well as 'specifying.' Through this linkage of storytelling and lying, Hurston destabilizes the very grounds upon which readers can do the work of interpretation she assigns them. She will not let them fix the autobiographical subject, 'Zora Neale Hurston,' as a unified subject of autobiography" (124, 105). We don't as yet have records of Harrison's dealing with her white editors and publishers, but as I continue with her text, consider how Harrison, too, may have been playing the trickster in order to satisfy both others and herself. The canny practices she depicts herself engaging in throughout the text, especially in regard to her series of travel "disguises," suggests she was similarly canny in constructing her textual identity.

In analyzing her "narrative of individual triumph" Harrison's model of travel warrants discussion. In her book Harrison spells out the various tenets to which one needs to adhere in order to become a real traveler. Her philosophy is founded upon the conviction that the traveler must attempt to incorporate local attentiveness within global ambition, observing individual places closely even while ranging as widely as possible: "I spend a day in a town as though I was going to spend my life there this is for my own conscience" (75). In a less lofty vein, she suggests that successful travel entails getting for free even that which one could otherwise afford, in her case often from amorous males whose expectations of sexual exchange the "manproof" Harrison disappoints. She makes clear that traveling well very much means eating well, too, rarely neglecting to describe the foods that highlight new locales. It also means traveling light, both literally and metaphorically: she prefers to eschew suitcases and to carry her few possessions in her pockets, gloating that she is less encumbered than even a man; she makes it a principle to dislodge travel companions no matter how agreeable, since "when you find the Places alone you enjoy it better" (6). Perhaps most significantly, she models traveling light as being unburdened by loneliness, homesickness, nostalgia, or even a past.

In a sense, though, Harrison's childhood and young adult past of incessant labor is made present in the text by the intensity of the delight with which she embraces leisure and her ability to choose when, where, and how much she wants to work — in contrast to the reality that in the US in the 1920s and 1930s, for all but a privileged few "work was part of the definition of what it meant to be a black woman" (Hine 139). For Harrison abroad, work becomes a matter not just of making a living or accumulating travel funds but of learning about other cultures through close living. She shows even the job search as a way to explore new terrain, on arrival sallying forth "to enjoy some interviews" (27-8). Work also offers stability and simple relief from leisure, and Harrison demonstrates that staving off satiation through alternating travel with work augments the enjoyment of both. She portrays herself as an awesomely competent worker ("I can teach a Spanish maid more in a minute than she can teach

me in a week" [175]), implored by employer after employer to stay on, and clearly takes pride in her skill and desirability. She doesn't, however, show labor as having value in and of itself, and appears little interested in describing her day-to-day tasks. There's nothing of the Protestant work ethic in her text: "I always get a job when I go out to get one but never feel any to glad no matter how good it is. Its when I am ready to give it up that I have the grand feeling" (253).

Most important, Harrison contends that to travel well one must concentrate not on a country's sights but on its people, through working, playing, eating, drinking, dancing, traveling, and flirting with them. Harrison attempts to pass as a native while on the road; while stationary, she grows close to the family employing her. Unlike many travelers, she is committed to languages and studies Spanish, French, Italian, German, and Russian. At the same time, she declares that lack of a common language may facilitate true communication: "I like best to make signs. It would be better if people didnt talk so much" (124).

Again, travel, not race, is Harrison's primary interest. Yet although she does not tackle race explicitly in the ways that much African-American literature and discussions of African-American literary traditions have conditioned us to expect, her text emphasizes that her racial identity, or lack thereof, was a constant factor in her travels. Throughout the text Harrison shows both how her dark but not obviously African looks made her racially and ethnically unreadable, and how she used these looks to her advantage just as she used her status as a lone female. In the text's preface, Morris notes that Harrison's looks masked her age: "Her slight form, fresh olive complexion, long hair braided about her head, made her appear younger than her years" (xi). What Morris does not remark upon but what Harrison's text clearly reveals is how racially deceptive these signs were as well. The hair and skin marked Harrison as not white but did not mark her as black, a gap others' imaginations worked to fill. "Betwixt and between," Harrison confounded people across the world as they griped, "how can we tell," and scrambled to piece together clues.

Harrison replicates this confusion in her text itself, refusing to define her ethnic identity to the reader and instead emphasizing how she puzzled others. She takes great pleasure in recording mistaken guesses, which pepper the book throughout. In Italy she notes that she was thought Chinese, Japanese, or Spanish; in Turkey, French; and in Spain, Argentinean or Moorish. An Egyptian thought her English, although approvingly "not the cold English type" (96). In Syria, she writes, "At Aleppo they thought I was Chinese. Here they think I am Aribian I have no trouble getting into every little nuck and corner" (65); in Hungary "they think I am Italian and am making believe when I say I am American I just leave it to them" (53).

Harrison belies this last assertion, that she "just leave[s] it to them," through demonstrating that she chose to be perceived as whatever best suited her ends. In Israel: "I have a very Oriental looking scarf I ware most of the time on my head everyone think I am Arabian but are puzzled to see me with such a short french dress and the first thing they ask my Friend If I am Arabi-an then when I ware my little French cap they take me for Jewish. I am willing to be what ever I can get the best treatments at being" (75). The inverse of

this last statement held true as well, in that Harrison was not willing to be what would not procure her good treatment. In Nice, for example, she declares "I no longer own up to be American but are a Cuban" (24), since "the French have not time for [the Americans and English] only to make them pay well for everything and I agree with the French." In various European countries, she claimed not the South as her home but Hollywood, which attracted the kind of attention unlikely to be offered Mississippi.

Harrison's ambiguous economic and racial appearance facilitated her travels, in that her amenability towards both possessing and deploying a slippery persona allowed her to fulfill her desire to penetrate various cultures, "getting into every little nuck and corner," without forfeiting the privileges of the American or European traveler. Harrison actively manipulated her appearance by her dress, as when she learned where not to wear a hat: "If I go out without a hat the Italians do not take any notice of me and always talk right along with me. But if I have on a hat they call me a Chinese or Japanese. You can get along so good if you are not dressed up" (38). In India, she explained, "I started through the quarters with my hat on but found I was out of place so went back and got my Vail then everything went lovely" (94). She took even greater efforts in Boulogne, where she boasted, "I looked so much like one of the Fishman wives that even the coustom offices refused to look through my baggage. most of the women have long hair and dress it in two brads as I do all I laked was ear rings I had 2 pairs in my case Mme. gave me. Well I put on my correll ear rings and was a perfect Boulognesser" (14). Harrison's disguises were good enough to work too well, as when she looked so "aful casty" on an Indian train — "about as low cast as a European can look" (110) — that an upper-caste woman wanted her ejected.

Traveling stamped Harrison as middle-class even as it exposed her as an outsider. Wearing a hat made her look like a rich Asian tourist, eschewing a veil like a well-off western one; traveling sans braids and earring suggested that her luggage concealed expensive goods in need of customs' attention. Ironically, although Harrison wasn't "really" middle-class, she had to dress in costumes designed to deceive in order not to appear so. In native clothing, along with a native identity, she regained the working-class identity she already possessed in the United States.

Resisting the category of "lady," Harrison escaped the conscription of a lady's travel experience. Her foreignness attracted the attention she enjoyed, yet her unprepossessing appearance precluded her from being targeted as a source of largess, as in Djibouti: "in just a few seconds after suluting a few women I has swams around me first they thought I came from Greece after a while they decide I was Chinese as many as could get to me I had to shake hand it was very pleasant. then a woman came up to beg and another let her know she were not to beg me" (161). Just as in England her identity as a servant prevented her from being regarded as a boorish American ("of course they always talk to me as a maid and not as an American" [26]), so in Asia her sociability and lack of affluence prevented her from being "begged." As a traveler, for Harrison working-class status opened rather than closed doors. Of course, on occasion being a lady can be useful too, and in India she successfully applied

for a job as “a nurse companion . . . open for a European lady only” (114-15). As she explained, “I dont mind being a high cast but I want to be a low cast too” (110).

The preceding demonstrates that Harrison’s physical appearance alone did not account for the extent of the stir she caused; her class status was just as perplexingly elusive as her ethnicity, perhaps even more so. As the surprise of an Israeli acquaintance indicates (“This young man have met wealthy American women travelling alone but I am the poorest girl that ever travelled alone” [74-5]), the difficulty in classifying Harrison resulted from the unreadable messages sent not only by her exotic looks and mixed dress but also by her unconventional behavior. Harrison was a mass of contradictions: a single female traveler of independent income who sporadically worked in service positions that she left as soon as she lost interest, she was neither an upper-class lady making her grand tour nor a working-class woman striving to make ends meet, nor was she an underclass “hobo” and even less a middle-class professional taking a well-earned vacation. At once servant and jetsetter, Harrison took equal pleasure in living high and low. With their nonindustrialized economies and favorable exchange rates (“My how powerful rich one can feel in India” [145]), the Middle East and Asia in particular allowed her to indulge both inclinations. Demonstrating both the range of her experiences and the vexation her plasticity provoked, she recalls, “A Burma Lady said to me at Darjeeling you are just betwixt and between. one minute you have a fine time with the lowest cast next minute with the highest Hindoo. one minute you wear a blue suit next minute a dress of 2 cent a yard crape then a little velvet dress with diamond ear rings how can we tell. one minute you stay in a hotel at \$5.00 a day then go to a restaurant and have a 5 cent meal. youre betwixt and between” (141).

Harrison unselfconsciously refers to herself as “European” as the proper term to distinguish herself from the native inhabitants of Asian countries. European, American, and African-American travelers could all be classified by the umbrella term “European,” since divisions between and within western nations became less important in the face of the more significant division between “natives” and the travelers among them. Yet although Asia is where Harrison conceives of herself most broadly — she is simply a European (or sometimes a Christian as opposed to a Hindu or Muslim) — it is also where she takes the most pleasure in noting nuances of race in other women. For example, she describes a group in Burma as making “a beautiful picture a few fair Europeans the Anglo Burmases girls in their cool short frocks some fair some light and some dark. the Burmases Ladies in their bright silk cloth wrapped around their suple bodys then short white waist bracelets of gold bare feet in sandles their black hair slick as an eil and like a black crown on their heads and their soft yellow skin” (150-1). Similarly, she remarks in Madras that “the Anglo-Indian Girls are . . . not as good looking down here as in Bombay and Calcutta. at Calcutta they dress good and pretty have the cleanest teeth and finger nails Bombay come next. Rangoon they have more pleasure and are lovely but not as good dressers and you can see a little trace of that Burma-Chinese blood so are not as good looking as the Indians Anglos. I have had much joy noticing the difference” (153-4). Speaking as a European, Harrison

displaces discussions of her own "blood" onto these exotics, who cover such an expanse of racial and class positioning. Even while she attests to finding joy in the racial differences between other women, she never explicitly discusses her own racial makeup or even claims a racial identity. What she does instead is provide an endless succession of snapshots of how others saw her.

These snapshots resonate with the statement of a contemporary African-American writer, Shirlee Taylor Haizlip: "I have been called Egyptian, Italian, Jewish, French, Iranian, Armenian, Syrian, Spanish, Portuguese and Greek" (15). Yet unlike Harrison, Haizlip goes on to state, "I have also been called black and Peola and nigger and high yellow and bright." Although Harrison repeatedly notes when she was mistakenly identified, what is one to make of her silence about the presumably numerous instances in which she was recognized as African-American? As implied by her almost ethnographic comment, "now no body can cook cabbage to beat the Irish of Cork not even the American Colored Southerners" (8), in her text Harrison does not align herself with southern African Americans or with African Americans in general. She does not, though, name another group with whom she does align herself. From her narrative alone, we can't know how Harrison "really" identified herself racially. What we do know is that she enjoyed her ambiguity and status as a world citizen.

The most precise way Harrison labels herself is as a nonracialized Californian. When greater specificity than "America" appeared necessary, she named not Mississippi but California or Los Angeles as her home. Once she left Columbus, at four years Harrison's sojourn in Los Angeles was her longest in North America; her friendship with the Dickinsons, with whom she remained in lifelong contact, may partially account for her ties to the state.⁷ Certainly, a genuine sense of Californian identity seems to have driven her choice to name California as home, as revealed by stray comments such as, on visiting the American Cemetery in Paris, "I read the names on many [of the headstones] and it were one from every state and many from Calif" (19), or, on discovering that a fellow traveler in Ireland was from Fresno, stating the fact to be a "joy to me" (11).

At the same time, though, Harrison suggests that her choice was also motivated by a desire to shore up her personal image. California lent her recognition and prestige. Referring to a Spanish village she visited, she remarked "Elche have many flappers and all are Hollywood fans and all the Picture House show the Calif. Films I am glad I choosed Calif. for my home before I left as every one know it" (192). In particular, as with the Elche "flappers," southern California appeared to facilitate sociability with other women: Harrison mentions of two English girls, "When I told them I was from Los Angeles they thought it just wonderful" (9) and adds later that in Zurich "[t]he Girls think it so lovely I am from far away California and all are so lovely to me" (46). Its racially stereotyped films notwithstanding, the land of Hollywood seems an appropriate imagined place of genesis for a woman who played herself in various roles across the world. Hollywood was also, as Michael Rogin notes, "important in making Americans, in giving people from diverse class, ethnic, and geographic origins a common imagined community" (14). By virtue of her

home state, Harrison claimed a kind of Americanness immediately recognized by those she met. By perceiving and avowing California as her own, perhaps Harrison attempted to elude being defined by race. Unlike Mississippi and the South, California does not suggest black-white polarization, and its movies disseminate internationally a wholesale depiction of "America" that is available for claim even by those it excludes.

Although Harrison made conscious choices about how to present herself to others, it does not appear that she tried to "pass" in the sense of actively working to deceive. Instead, adopting a "don't ask don't tell" philosophy, like Irene Redfield in Nella Larsen's *Passing* she passed occasionally and for convenience, allowing herself or helping herself to be regarded as whatever garnered her the "best treatments." There is one moment in the text, though, in which Harrison alludes to blackness as best kept hidden and signals her complicated relationship to her African ancestry. She records in Paris that

I went out to the Garden d'Acclimatation where they are haveing a exposition of Central Afircanes from the French part of Africa. I climbed over the fence and got in the native village where the Plate mouthed women are. a slip is cut just wide enough in the lip to fit around the rim of a wooden plate they can hardly talk with it only the women have the plates there is about ten of them and they took a fancy to me. I think they saw I had some of their blood I couldnt fool them. the yongest wife was during the Cooking as I hung around the Camp fire she offered me some it was good and I would have accepted to save the price of my supper But the spit run out of her mouth on this plate and often dropped into the pot. When I left I climbed over the fence again so it didnt cost me anything.

(19)

This passage is a dense configuration of Harrison's simultaneous identification and disidentification with these African women. Whereas Harrison may have "fooled" so many others, a confrontation with Africans from Africa makes such deception impossible. This is not to say that the moment is an unhappy one for Harrison: on the contrary, since her blackness allows her to claim "some of their blood," it contributes to Harrison's pleasurable perception of herself as a cosmopolitan. Harrison suggests that the women's recognition of their shared ancestry leads them to take "a fancy" to her, and she leaves open to speculation whether it contributes to her own attraction to them. She lingers by the fire, drawn both to the women and the food they cook, and in so doing transforms a domestic scene staged for entertainment into a real domestic scene affording real food and real sociability. By dodging the entrance fees, Harrison further transforms the interaction. Yet although both appetite and canniness make her hunger for the food the women cook, she perceives it as contaminated by the saliva that spills from their "Plate mouths." Harrison portrays these mouths as deformities inhibiting both clear communication and cleanliness, and she notes that they are limited to women alone.

Harrison's emphasis on the wall that contains the women well represents the difference she perceives between her own experience and theirs, between

that of a Californian and that of "Africans." She is not disgusted or repelled by the women as individuals; nor does she seem disturbed by their display as a curiosity. She implicitly criticizes their treatment by both European and African cultures, however, in portraying the wall that cordons them off from the rest of French society as binding them, more literally, in the same way as do their grotesque mouths. In contrast, Harrison depicts herself as freely roaming the globe and interacting with people from all over the world. She manages to do so by exploiting gender conventions: attracting and manipulating malleable men and wielding the domestic skills that of necessity she acquired as a child. Whereas among the Africans one man has many wives, Harrison shows herself as having many men; like the African women she too labors domestically, but in her case only for her own profit, not for family or the pleasure of tourists.

To avoid paying, Harrison leaves the exhibition by climbing the wall. Having departed Paris for the south of France, she regrets that she didn't have time to throw over the wall to the women the warm coat she no longer needed. Her compassion reveals her feelings both of affinity and distance, as she represents racial identity as closely tied to the extent of one's freedom and power. In contrast to the Africans on display as captured primitives, becoming a relatively wealthy and highly mobile traveler renders Harrison a "European," one in a position to bestow alms. Conversely, Harrison deems a wealthy white American girl (with "show place" homes in Rhode Island and Santa Barbara) who is forced to obey the whims of her mother and mother's lover, "just like a black slave" (28). As Gates asserts, "language use signifies the difference between cultures and their possession of power, spelling out the distance between subordinate and superordinate, between bondsman and lord in terms of their 'race'" (6). Blackness becomes a matter not of bodies but of power.

It's no coincidence that all of the "black" individuals Harrison describes are women. Without engaging in similar musings about men, throughout the text she meditates upon the varying degrees of power and freedom that the women she meets possess. In keeping with the tight link between her own appearance and agency, she is especially interested in how visual markers codify status. Her interest intensifies when she leaves Europe for Asia and the Middle East and women's actual bodies appear increasingly inscribed: veiled, tattooed, or ritually scarred faces; necks, arms, and legs loaded with jewelry; bound feet. In contrast to the apparently unfettered "pheasants" who abound in her text, Harrison suggests that high status for women results in a loss of freedom. She depicts Indian women as particularly constricted: "I have learned that the high castes would like very much to walk and save their Rickshaus fare like I do but of course their caste wont allow it. I enjoy teasing the Girls and ask if they Wish to be free like me to go out in the street at any hour. . . . Now they wish to be like me" (101). Harrison suggests that as one who is cultureless, or rather partaking of the culture of the "nothing but a glob trotter" (294), her own freedom is unlimited. Yet her responses are not simple rejections of unfamiliar practices. Fascinated by the bound feet of Chinese women, she suggests that they are not only aesthetically appealing but perhaps even appropriate: "the feet are just the size of your two fingers together and they have little wooden sandals with high heels and walk only on the round heels and some have nice

slender ankles not broken and they walk without a limp. Some are tall well built women” (297). Harrison goes further to show that the seeming barbarism of the aesthetic practices western women encounter are matched by their own (142).

In discussing an African-American nurse whom she encounters in Rome, Harrison comes close — certainly the closest that she ever does — to discussing her own transformation from an impoverished black child laboring in the rural Jim Crow South to a mobile, urban European woman effortlessly commanding more travel, adventures, jobs, friends, men, and delicacies than she can approach fully exploiting. Harrison enjoys whiling away the afternoon with the nurse, almost exactly her own age (although not the age she claimed for herself in the book), who has moved with her employers from Albany, New York. She recalls,

The last day in Rome I was walking through their largest park I notice setting down on one of the lower Terices a colored nurse about 40 and weigh about 200 lbs. I went and ask her if she spoke English and laughed when she answered “I say I do” She was a joly old Girl I spent the rest of the afternoon She think that the men are the most delightful of all men. She said it seem like a dream To her to have a Hansom Italian kissing Her hand. I hadnt give it much thought but when we got togather we sure did have a good time talking it over. . . . the Family . . . have 4 children she is so sweet and Gentle with them and they love her so.

(36)

As that of a black domestic worker, Harrison’s experience in the United States would in many respects have resembled the other woman’s, her transient work habits and resistance to building enduring relationships with the families she served notwithstanding. However, in naming the other woman a “joly old Girl” and focusing on her age, weight, and close ties with the white children she cared for — in other words, in rendering the woman, despite her northern origins, the southern mammy figure of American myth — Harrison reveals the expanse of difference she felt between herself and the nurse. A similar sense of difference can be detected in her reference to the “55 colored nice fat Mamas” (253) visiting their sons’ graves in France, which recalls her depiction of Indian workers at “a very high class bath place and only high class men come here they just like *nice brown mamas* rubbing them up” (122; emphasis added).

In her home country, more even than most African-American women, the nurse would have been perceived, due to her size, occupation, and disposition, as a maternally sexualized figure, a provider of nurture rather than the object of courtly attention. Yet even this most “colored” of black women, one who unlike Harrison doesn’t have a “slight form, olive complexion” and hair to her waist, enjoys privileges abroad that in the US could barely be imagined. Despite the fact that, true to form, Harrison “hadnt give it much thought,” like “a dream” a change in geography has utterly transformed both her and the nurse’s social identity. This change is registered by the “delightful” way they are treated by the white men who woo them. Harrison was similarly struck in Nice by “on the

Ball room floor Dark colored girls in their evening cloths dancing in the Arms of Hansom White Frenchmen" (22). On the dance floor, at least, even the darkest women interact with white men on equal terms.

In contrast, when Harrison in a figurative sense returned to the United States by virtue of having her work published in the American marketplace, she had to accept once again being cast as the lowly dark other. She apparently was willing to pay this price in exchange for the pride and prestige of authorship and its financial gains, and, perhaps most important, for the opportunity to disseminate her own version of who she was. Alexander worries whether "editors at Macmillan . . . elect[ed] to publish Harrison's book because it so clearly proclaimed its uncelebrated black author as a 'primitive': a lovable yet somewhat clownish Aunt Jemima or latter-day Uncle Remus, whose narrative was readily acceptable to white America as part of a traditional and popular black dialect genre" (xvii).⁸ Harrison's reception as a Negress figured by "blobs of Mississippi molasses" shows that to some extent Alexander's fear is founded. Contemporary reviews of Harrison expressed not only sincere admiration for her courage, vitality, and sense of adventure but also racist condescension.

During the period in which Harrison wrote (as well as previously), many African-American women writers used their texts to counter animalistic stereotypes about black women. It would be interesting if we had a record of their reactions to Harrison's text: did they greet it with dismay? Harrison does not concern herself with whether or not she buttresses racial stereotypes, and she seems unaware that her embodied text might reinforce essentialist readings. Without fear of criticism, she couples her interest in food and men to boast of how she scored chicken dinners, elaborate lunches, amber paste, and other delicacies from avid suitors; with her "snappy eye for flirting" (309) she enjoyed dalliance for its own sake, too. She repeatedly — even obsessively — features her appetites and the ways by which she gratified them, often showing how she used her racially marked but ambiguous appearance in order to multiply the experiences available to her.

In contrast, women writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance such as Marita O. Bonner, Jessie Fauset, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Anne Spencer reveal that their preoccupation with resisting racial stereotypes could constrict their worlds. To take one example, shortly before the start of Harrison's journey Bonner published "On Being Young — A Woman — and Colored." Reminiscent of Harrison's high-caste would-be walkers, Bonner expresses regret that the disapproval of the African-American middle-class community could render a black woman unable even to travel alone from Washington DC to New York without crossing the line of propriety. She writes that her anxious desire to deny the perception of African-American women as "only a gross collection of desires, all uncontrolled" caused her to censure her own behavior (quoted in Wall 4). Seen in comparison to Bonner, Harrison's apparent lack of racial self-consciousness or introspection in her world travels ("I hadnt give it much thought") serves her well. My intention here is neither to valorize nor censure Harrison in comparison to more socially aware and motivated African-American women writers. Rather, it is to show how very different Harrison's text is from those of her better-known contemporaries in the way she works to make race a non-category even while revealing it as everywhere.

In other words, Harrison's radically diasporan identity depends upon the invention of a backdrop of stability, essentiality, and knowability for all of the "natives" she encounters: she displaces onto others the kind of ethnic or national essence that she cannot accept for herself. Harrison portrays throughout the ease with which she locates and comes to know other peoples — the French, Spanish, Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, and so on. Despite detailing a range of personalities, class positions, racial mixtures, and ethnic groups, and despite mapping expatriate and cosmopolitan communities, she presents each group as united through a clearly demarcated identity. The Spanish and French never remind her of Americans or Japanese, or even of Italians or Swiss. Certainly, no one resembles her own chameleonic self. Instead, Harrison represents the people she meets as the world's "pure products," to borrow William Carlos Williams' phrase (quoted in Clifford 1).

Just as the people she meets are "pure" and easily locatable, so is the world through which she moves culturally constant, available to the traveler without the distraction of political and other changes. Although Harrison portrays herself visiting historical sites, in her text history itself takes place offstage. She occasionally hears reports of disaster or upheaval but marvels, "this time last year while I were at each place everything so peaceful" (251), or once in India, "Rioton was very bad last week and I payed so little atention" (113). The four-year period in which history impinged on her travel is simply elided in her text, represented only by the editorial comment, "Because of the unsettled condition in China Juanita determined not to complete her journey around the world at this time but returned to the south of France where she remained until May 1934" (265); after this insertion Harrison's narrative resumes immediately without comment. Harrison portrays a timeless universe in which world events are eclipsed by the always similar daily events of the traveler: moving on, finding a room and job, procuring food, entertainment, acquaintances, experiences. The scene changes, but the world doesn't.

Citing Eric J. Leed, Marilyn Wesley asserts that modern travel "is marred by 'the pervasive feeling that *real* travel . . . is no longer possible'" (39); likewise, James Clifford states, "One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space" (14). Yet despite her very modern rewriting of self, Harrison is not driven by the sense that "real travel," the new, the authentic, continually elude her grasp. Although she relies on an elaborate and commodified system of travel — money exchanges, guidebooks, commercial tours — she never suggests this network stands as a veil between her and the experience of the real. Even one of the world's most vaunted tourist attractions, the Taj Mahal, surpasses rather than fails to meet her expectations. She never laments that she has reached a place too late, after it has succumbed to western or standardized global culture; she is not driven to search out rough guides and roads less traveled; she does not rank the cultural verisimilitude of her experiences. Never disappointed, she greets moments of novelty and familiarity alike with delight. Her travel experience can only create deep envy: not only of her mobility but even more of her endlessly repeated satisfaction. She fulfills again and again the traveler's dream.

Travel presupposes a home that one travels away from and returns to, and the discourse of travel often centers around an endorsement of home. In the

case of the popular culture figure of the hobo, Wesley notes that "the vaunted wanderlust and celebrated freedom of the vagrant lifestyle is countered by actual domestic investment [and] sentimental attachment. . . . One of the likely sources for the derivation of the term *hobo* is 'home-bound'" (80, 82). Harrison's emphasis on sexuality and sensuality affiliates her with blues singers and Hurston in a black women's tradition alternate to that of writers such as Bonner.⁹ She diverges from them, however, in eliding her childhood home and an American past in general. Harrison never returned to Mississippi or expressed desire to do so. Beyond a few wistful references to American turkey and Christmases, she reveals none of the nostalgia for the South or the US that one expects from any expatriate, let alone a traveler of eight years. As if her life began only in Hoboken when she stepped on the ship to England, "happy that I had no one to cry for me," her past, too, is startlingly absent from her text. She makes no references to family, friends, or events in the South previous to her travels.

As opposed to hearkening back to a single originating home, in her utopian travel text Harrison asserts that homes abound, depending simply on the traveler's adaptability: "I look so much Chinese am not at all out of Place" so therefore "every old Place is Home" (296); she is relieved to discover that she doesn't miss past way stations because she "can't help but like the last place best" (20). Yet her repeated assertions of the continual availability of home — "each home have a new beauty and a different comfort so I never long for one of the pass" (267) — are disrupted by a caustic comment that constitutes one of the few instances in which she alludes, however obliquely, to her life prior to travel. Regarding a visit to a former residence in Seville, she states, "it was just like coming home not that I have ever had a home to return to but it must be something like it" (221). Citing Theano S. Terklani, Wesley asserts that "more than a location," home "is a 'culturally constructed' and 'historically contingent' means to identification" (13). Harrison's past as an impoverished laborer during her first thirty years in Mississippi precluded not only the ownership of an actual American home but perhaps also the metaphorical home of a stable identity, acceptable to both others and herself, that could be located in America.

In addition to a backdrop of authenticity, in the text Harrison's perpetual remaking appears to depend on a state of perpetual consumption. Arguably, travel *is* in essence consumption — whether of food, sights, experiences, or people. Harrison, however, depicts an extreme version of this kind of consumption as well as a more intensely pleasurable one. Her omnivorousness is perhaps best represented through the trope of her meals, in all their endlessly unrepeating combinations: "I have enjoyed the trip I had a good lunch of boiled Chicken fried meat balls boiled eggs radishes french rolls fried sweet potatoes cocanuts sweets cakes oranges and a bottle of red wine" (209-10). We might speculate, though, that such consumption can exhaust as well as empower.

It was only through publication that Harrison portrayed herself as securing a home on both fronts. Completing her eight-year trip around the world, she arrived in Waikiki with the intention of settling. Highlighting the fact that her writing has bought her freedom from further household labor, she opens the

epilogue of her text, entitled "NOW," with the statement, "that cheque from the Atlantic Monthly for my article gave joy" (315). She goes on to describe how having received the money, she quit her job, custom designed her "first and only Home" (318) — a large furnished tent — and erected it on the front yard of a Japanese family's home. While there, Harrison plans to swim, cook, and learn to surf and hula dance.

Her choice of Hawaii for her future seems as significant as her choice of Hollywood for her past. Whereas she associates Hollywood with the films that impress other nations, it is in Hawaii that Harrison uses her own writing to establish a semi-private idyll. West even of California, Harrison remains just barely on American territory. Arguably the nation's last western frontier, Hawaii was and continues to be a region of great ethnic variety and mixing that belies the American myth of race as either black or white (and it seems appropriate that Harrison arrived in Hawaii from the Far East as opposed to making the westering journey of American myth). Yet it is also on American ground that, for the first time in the text, Harrison portrays herself besting overt racism in a move that seems to refer to the unwritten subtext of American racism that underpins the rest of her narrative: "When I went to the American YWCA the Lady in charge of the Employment said why did you come here. I advise you to go back as the white People here want only Japanese help Well when I got through talking to her She thought very different as if any nation can keep me from getting a job and the Kind and Place and price I want" (311-12). Even as she shows herself persuading an individual woman, Harrison makes clear that the problem is rooted in "nation." This passage is also the first instance in which she invokes "white People," a term absent from the rest of her text as too general to be useful.

Dubbing Harrison a "mystery woman" in her introduction to the 1996 reprint of *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World*, Alexander expresses hope that Harrison's "carefree existence continued" in Hawaii, worries that Pearl Harbor destroyed it, and speculates that she may have enjoyed "further odysseys" (xviii). As it turns out, she did. Passport records reveal that Harrison lived in Hawaii from 1935 to 1939, leaving before Pearl Harbor to begin a sojourn of over ten years in South America. From 1940 to 1942 she spent three to nine months apiece in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. She then returned to Argentina, where she lived from 1943 to 1950. In 1950, she applied for a new passport in order to travel by train in Bolivia, answering "uncertain" to the query as to when she "intend[ed] to return to the United States to reside permanently." At the age of 63, then, still single and childless, Harrison continued to travel actively. Her new passport photo belies her age, showing a serene, half-smiling, broad-shouldered woman of powerful physical appearance wearing a black ruffled dress decorated with a single flower. In contrast to Sedgwick's remembrance of her as the "Black Pearl among servants," on the application Harrison names her occupation as "author."¹⁰

Notes

1. Harrison's text also can be read productively through the lens of biracial literature discussed by Sollors.

2. Referring to film, James A. Snead states, "One of the prime codes surrounding blacks on screen is an almost metaphysical stasis. The black, particularly the black woman, is seen as eternal, unchanging, unchangeable. (Recall Faulkner's appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*: "They endured")" (26).

3. Due to incorrect information in the text's preface, discussions of Harrison inaccurately represent her as having been born in 1891, leaving Mississippi at sixteen, and beginning her international travels at thirty-six. Passport records reveal, though, that Harrison was born in Columbus on December 26, 1887 and lived there until 1917; she traveled around the world between the ages of forty and forty-eight, not thirty-six and forty-four. We can't know if it was Harrison who led others to believe that she began her travels at the more romantic younger ages, or if her editors chose to represent her so. Harrison does suggest that she regularly claimed to be younger than she was: "the calendar say I am another year old but 1927 find me the same age I was 15 years ago and I expect to be that same age at least 10 years more anyway" (18). Harrison died in Honolulu in 1967 at the age of eighty.

4. Gates states that the eighteenth-century birth of the black literary tradition depended upon the belief that "the recording of an authentic black voice — a voice of deliverance from the deafening discursive silence which an enlightened Europe cited to prove the absence of the African's humanity — was the millennial instrument of transformation though which the African would become the European, the slave become the ex-slave, brute animal become the human being" (11-12).

5. Morris asserts that as a child Harrison "lived with a bright vision of templed cities in foreign lands which she had seen pictured in the stray pages of a magazine" (ix).

6. Alexander glosses the text's primary themes before going on to compare Harrison's journeys with those of Eslanda Goode Robeson and Odysseus. To date, Alexander's brief and occasionally inaccurate introduction (she explains that intermittently for several years she "searched in vain for any record of Harrison's life other than that contained in the introduction to this singular opus and in her text itself" [xv]) remains the only published Harrison scholarship.

7. Not only did Harrison dedicate her book to Myra Dickinson, she also listed George Dickinson, as opposed to a relative, in her 1950 passport application as her emergency contact.

8. Certainly, Sedgwick's portrait of Harrison in *Happy Profession* suggests that at least in hindsight he perceived Harrison with this kind of racist condescension. Nevertheless, his decision to publish Harrison's text probably reflects less a desire to cater to racist stereotypes than his long-standing penchant for publishing the first-person accounts of iconoclastic traveling women with regional American origins. See Halverson.

9. For a discussion of the differences between these traditions, see Wall 18.

10. David Ginsburg enabled this study by his assiduous tracking of Harrison's extratextual life, his search for her real date of birth impelled by the con-

viction that she couldn't have been born in the year of the Rabbit but must be a Tiger like himself (as it turns out, she's a Pig). Thanks also to Licia Calloway and Patsy Yaeger for commentary and guidance on a series of drafts, and to Julie Ellison for support throughout.

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