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Du Bois in Berlin, Du Bois in Atlanta:  
The Affect of Exile in *The Souls of Black Folk*

My paper examines W. E. B. Du Bois's early writing through its layers of multi-directional exile. Du Bois lived in Germany for two years and unsuccessfully applied for funding to stay longer. He also famously moved to Ghana very late in his life. However, he also described many of his other life experiences in terms of exile: as a Northerner living in the South, as a Black man in the United States and especially at Harvard, and even in his studies as an aspiring philosopher-turned-sociologist. I focus on the essays later collected in *The Souls of Black Folk* as moments of successful navigation of the affect of exile—just as he returned from Berlin and took up a position in Atlanta, he blends German literary and philosophical influences with quintessential African musical culture to create highly communicable prose. I argue that Du Bois does not simply reveal international influences, but rather he writes from within the tradition of the German aphorism (*Aphorismus*), especially within his passage on “double-consciousness.” His unique vision as an African American returning *from* Germany thus allows him to see how African spiritual traditions co-create “American culture” alongside the white “other world.”

**Brief Biography**

Thomas W. Howard is a Ph.D. candidate in English and American Literature at Washington University in St. Louis. His dissertation, *Pragmatic Ambiguities: Aphoristic Thinking in the American Nineteenth Century*, examines the aphorism as a poetic method of thinking among nineteenth-century American nonfiction prose writers, especially the Transcendentalists and Pragmatists. Thomas has recently published an article on Thoreau's “aphoristic forest thinking” in *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*. He is currently in Germany on a Fulbright Research Fellowship, being hosted by the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, part of Freie Universität Berlin.